

# Thieu's Plan to Arrest Thousands After Truce

## Saigon

South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu has ordered the arrest and "neutralization" of thousands of persons in the event cease-fire negotiations with Hanoi are successful.

The presidential orders for a police crackdown are known to U.S. officials and have been confirmed by official sources. They would go into effect immediately when a cease-fire became effective.

There are several variations to Thieu's plan. The most severe is one that will go into effect in the event the U.S. reaches a unilateral agreement unacceptable to Thieu.

Such an outcome to the war would have profound political repercussions in

South Vietnam. To guard against disruptions in his regime, Thieu has given the police roundup top priority.

American officials were intentionally kept in the dark about many details of Thieu's planning. The outlines are known in Saigon, however, and also among advisers in the field.

Variouly identified under code names and numbers, the Thieu police plan — as well as many other cease-fire contingency plans conceived in Saigon — has been under intense discussion for several weeks.

The varying levels of the police plan call for "neutralization" of thousands of suspects. Some probably would be held a relatively short period and others indefinitely.

Presumably some estimate of the total number of "suspects" involved is

known to police officials in Saigon. It is, however, very much a secret at the moment. Provincial-level estimates — which run to 100 or more in many provinces — indicate the nationwide total for South Vietnam's 56 provinces and major cities in autonomous zones obviously would run to thousands.

The term "neutralization" is taken from earlier police and clandestine operations — most notably the program directed at Viet Cong agents in hiding or buried in the legal government's woodwork.

The word can mean anything from covert executions to a brief period in detention. American officials discount the likelihood of executions, although they admit they are possible, and the word neutralization has ominous connotations.

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