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U.S. Is Said to Have Blocked Visit by Chau, Thieu Foe

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 27—

The United States blocked a visit here by a South Vietnamese Deputy, Tran Ngoc Chau, last summer after the embassy in Saigon had advised that his trip would displease President Nguyen Van Thieu, authoritative quarters said here today.

This decision by the State Department came according to highly placed informants, at the time when President Thieu began the pressure against Mr. Chau that led to his arrest and trial three weeks ago, when he was sentenced to 10 years at hard labor.

The charges against Mr. Chau in a Saigon military court were that he maintained illegal and criminal contacts with his brother, a North Vietnamese intelligence captain, Tran Ngou Hion, despite secret information conveyed to the Saigon Government by a high-ranking American official in July, 1969, that Mr. Chau had acted with the knowledge and approval of the United States Embassy and the Central Intelligence Agency.

First Move Last Summer

As reconstructed from Administration, Congressional and other sources here, the first effort by Mr. Chau's American friends to save him from prosecution by the Thieu regime, which regards him as a political foe, came last summer when it was first recognized that he was in danger of arrest and trial.

John Paul Vann, chief of the Rural Pacification Program in

the Mekong Delta, testified at a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last month that he had presented "in detail" the background of Mr. Chau's association with the United States Government at a meeting in July, 1969, with Tran Thien Khiem, who was then Deputy Premier and now is Premier.

Mr. Vann testified that he informed Mr. Khiem of Mr. Chau's status with the authorization of his immediate superior, the Deputy Ambassador, William P. Colby.

The United States Government has not, however, publicly conceded that Mr. Chau was acting in concert with American political and intelligence officials.

Mr. Vann's testimony before the senate foreign relations committee was heavily censored by the State Department and was returned to the committee this week pending a decision on its release.

Bunkers Role Repealed

Mr. Vann's testimony, according to senatorial sources, also touched at length on the alleged delays by Ellsworth Bunker, the United States Ambassador in Saigon, in carrying out instructions from the State Department to intervene in favor of Mr. Chau.

At about the time Mr. Vann conferred with the Deputy Premier, a number of Mr. Chau's American friends in South Vietnam arranged for him to visit the United States. But when Mr. Chau applied for a visa, he was refused one. Informants here said this was done on Mr.

Bunker's recommendation, based on the belief that President Thieu would resent Mr. Chau's departure.

Mr. Chau's concern was communicated to Senator J. W. Fulbright of Arkansas, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. He is reportedly to have suggested to Under Secretary of State Elliot L. Richardson that the Administration intervene.

Mr. Richardson cabled instructions to Mr. Bunker on Dec. 23—the date was erroneously reported in The Times today as Dec. 22—to raise the Chau case with President Thieu and inform him of the Administration's desire to see the charges dropped.

Officials confirmed yesterday that Mr. Richardson followed up the first cable with a second one on Feb. 7, when it developed that Mr. Bunker had conveyed softened expression of American concern to lower ranking South Vietnamese officials.

As a result, Mr. Bunker met Mr. Thieu on Feb. 10, when he was informed that the case was already in the hands of the military court.

Before his audience with Mr. Thieu, Mr. Bunker was relaying assurances to the State Department that even if tried, Mr. Chau would not be imprisoned.

Meanwhile, the Administration continued to maintain silence on the Chau case.

The State Department's spokesman, Robert J. McCloskey said today that he would not comment on any aspect of the case and did not anticipate

that comment would be forthcoming.

In Key Biscayne, Fla., where President Nixon is spending the Easter holiday, the White House press secretary, Ronald O. Ziegler said that there "is no displeasure on the part of the President whatsoever in relation to Ambassador Bunker's handling of his post in Saigon."

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