

VIET ELECTION SECRET

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SAIGON.

A secret decision was made at last month's Honolulu conference to try to speed up South Viet Nam's elections for a national legislative body—previously announced for late 1967—to "early 1967 or as soon as possible," reliable sources indicate.

The sources attributed the decision to substantial American pressure—including the desire of President Johnson himself—to speed up the vote.

Vietnamese observers view the action as an index of the desire of the Johnson administration to attempt to negotiate a peace settlement here by offering substantial concessions to the Hanoi regime through rearranging the Saigon political and governmental structure.

Premier Nguyen Cao Ky, before the conference, had announced the late 1967 timetable, which would give the government almost two years to pacify large blocs of the rural population now under some Communist control.

Observers here doubt the anti-Communist South Vietnamese government will secure and control a safe proportion of the population by the earlier dates.

The anti-Communist generals, who actually hold the reins of power in South Viet Nam, are considered to be reluctant to support the speed-up, but have little alternative except to do so.

METHODS

Observers believe there are two distinct approaches to negotiation. The first is a formal, "around the table," type of international conference, such as the 14-nation Geneva conference which ended the French Indochina war in 1954. The second is an "under-the-table" agreement made by rearranging the power structure within the Saigon political arena.