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SAIGON, SOUTH VIETNAM—President Lyndon Johnson had <sup>privately</sup> expected New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller to lose his post in the recent American election and was hence considering asking the billionaire Republican to become U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, informed sources disclosed today.

One of the multitudes of White House aides, assistants and lieutenants visiting Vietnam let the word slip out in conversations with officials here. This correspondent was subsequently told the report by a senior official, who was speaking in private.

"I don't suppose Rockefeller had been clued in on this strategy," the source said, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't know how you would tell anyone something like that!

"But, the prediction certainly gives American officials here something to worry about regarding the political forecasting abilities of the President. Remember, he missed by 15 the number of Congressional seats he expected the Democrats to lose during the election.

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The report distinctly suggests that Henry Cabot Lodge, also a ranking Republican, is planning to leave his post as Ambassador here and that the White House was—and perhaps still is—planning to replace him with another prestigious Republican. Recurrent press reports here that Ambassador Lodge planned to leave ~~his~~ his Saigon post have been officially denied. The Ambassador and his wife have recently departed for the United States to visit his family during the Christmas holidays; they are expected to return to Saigon but no one is speculating how many more months Lodge will stay in his post. AFTER THAT

The Democratic strategy of appointing a ranking Republican as Ambassador to South Vietnam—long considered the graveyard of ambassadors, diplomats and generals—was initiated by President John F. Kennedy when he named Lodge to his term here in the midst of the Buddhist crisis in mid-1963. While a Republican Ambassador here, serving a Democratic Administration, created the appearance of a bi-partisan American foreign policy on Vietnam, observers also indicated that in domestic political terms, President Kennedy had "exiled" one of his long-time rivals from Massachusetts and a potential opposition Presidential CANDIDATE candidate.

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In mid-1964, Lodge resigned his post and returned to the United States before the Republican national convention. He was replaced by General Maxwell Taylor, who initiated the bombing of North Vietnam and ushered in the arrival of the first American combat ground troops, which he was known to oppose privately. In mid-1965, Lodge replaced Taylor and began his second tour as Ambassador to Vietnam.

During the shift of Ambassadors and the American military build-up within South Vietnam, the American military leaders have gained increasing of the decision-making power while the authority of the Ambassador has shriveled in importance. During the October visit of Secretary of Defence Robert S. McNamara sharp disagreements broke out between the Secretary and Ambassador Lodge, reliable sources report. The first area of disagreement revolved around American military officials usurping more control from the American military civilian agencies; McNamara approved; the Ambassador Lodge disapproved; These functions included military predominance in the field of administration and intelligence on the American side, excluding the functions of the American Central Intelligence Agency. Most of funding for American <sup>C</sup> ~~Civilian~~ Intelligence including CIA here come <sup>S/</sup> from the military defense appropriations, and American military leaders here believe it is HENCE their prerogative to "call the shots."

The second area of disagreement between Lodge and McNamara revolved around how American combat units would be utilised in the total conduct of the war.

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McNamara and the military leaders wanted the American combat units to be deployed against the Communist "hard-hats" main-force units mostly in the Communist stronghold areas, such as C-Zone and the jungles of Central Vietnam. Lodge, however, believed that the most significant Communist threat comes from the guerrillas which control the populated villages, wanted a minimum number of American troops deployed into the jungles and a maximum number to secure the villages from which the Communist guerrillas and political cadre would be sifted out.

Reliable reports here indicate that McNamara and the military leaders ~~are~~ won the disagreement.

"It will difficult to find anyone to replace Lodge," one Western diplomat explained. "Because the post of Ambassador here has become a figurehead."