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<del>#6 draft</del>	<del>Draft National Security Action Memorandum No. _____ Top Secret</del> <i>open 4-16-92 NLJ 91-465</i> 4 p	11/21/63	<del>A</del>
<del>#7a draft</del>	<del>Draft National Security Action Memorandum No. _____ Top Secret</del> <i>open 12-11-91</i> 4 p	11/21/63	<del>A</del>
<del>#8 draft</del>	<del>Duplicate of #7a</del> <i>open 12-11-91</i>		

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NSAM 273 South Vietnam

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November 26, 1963

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 273

TO:           The Secretary of State  
              The Secretary of Defense  
              The Director of Central Intelligence  
              The Administrator, AID  
              The Director, USIA

The President has reviewed the discussions of South Vietnam which occurred in Honolulu, and has discussed the matter further with Ambassador Lodge. He directs that the following guidance be issued to all concerned:

1. It remains the central object of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy. The test of all U. S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contribution to this purpose.

2. The objectives of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of U. S. military personnel remain as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963.

3. It is a major interest of the United States Government that the present provisional government of South Vietnam should be assisted in consolidating itself and in holding and developing increased public support. All U. S. officers should conduct themselves with this objective in view.

4. The President expects that all senior officers of the Government will move energetically to insure the full unity of support for established U. S. policy in South Vietnam. Both in Washington and in the field, it is essential that the Government be unified. It is of particular importance that express or implied criticism of officers of other branches be scrupulously avoided in all contacts with the Vietnamese Government and with the press. More specifically, the President approves the following lines of action developed in the discussions of the Honolulu meeting of November 20. The offices of the Government to which central responsibility is assigned are indicated in each case.

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(page 1 of 3 pages)

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Authority NSC memo 5/23/78  
By MJE, NARS, Date 6/6/78

5. We should concentrate our own efforts, and insofar as possible we should persuade the Government of South Vietnam to concentrate its efforts, on the critical situation in the Mekong Delta. This concentration should include not only military but political, economic, social, educational and informational effort. We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle but of belief, and we should seek to increase not only the control of hamlets but the productivity of this area, especially where the proceeds can be held for the advantage of anti-Communist forces.

(Action: The whole country team under the direct supervision of the Ambassador.)

6. Programs of military and economic assistance should be maintained at such levels that their magnitude and effectiveness in the eyes of the Vietnamese Government do not fall below the levels sustained by the United States in the time of the Diem Government. This does not exclude arrangements for economy on the MAP account with respect to accounting for ammunition, or any other readjustments which are possible as between MAP and other U. S. defense resources. Special attention should be given to the expansion of the import, distribution, and effective use of fertilizer for the Delta.

(Action: AID and DOD as appropriate.)

7. Planning should include different levels of possible increased activity, and in each instance there should be estimates of such factors as:

- A. Resulting damage to North Vietnam;
- B. The plausibility of denial;
- C. Possible North Vietnamese retaliation;
- D. Other international reaction.

Plans should be submitted promptly for approval by higher authority.  
(Action: State, DOD, and CIA.)

8. With respect to Laos, a plan should be developed and submitted for approval by higher authority for military operations up to a line up to 50 kilometers inside Laos, together with political plans for minimizing the international hazards of such an enterprise. Since it is agreed that operational responsibility for such undertakings should

November 26, 1963

pass from CAS to MACV, this plan should include a redefined method of political guidance for such operations, since their timing and character can have an intimate relation to the fluctuating situation in Laos.

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9. It was agreed in Honolulu that the situation in Cambodia is of the first importance for South Vietnam, and it is therefore urgent that we should lose no opportunity to exercise a favorable influence upon that country. In particular a plan should be developed using all available evidence and methods of persuasion for showing the Cambodians that the recent charges against us are groundless.

(Action: State.)

10. In connection with paragraphs 7 and 8 above, it is desired that we should develop as strong and persuasive a case as possible to demonstrate to the world the degree to which the Viet Cong is controlled, sustained and supplied from Hanoi, through Laos and other channels. In short, we need a more contemporary version of the Jordan Report, as powerful and complete as possible.

(Action: Department of State with other agencies as necessary.)

BS

McGeorge Bundy

EXTRA COPIES

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Authority NSS memo 5/23/78  
By MTB, NAPS, Date 6/12/78

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November 26, 1963

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/s/

McGeorge Bundy

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4  
NLJ 91-464  
By JW, NARA, Date 6-24-93

PSAM 273

~~J. Edgar Hoover~~

Approved 4

12/19/63

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Actions Re Viet-Nam

Dean Rusk

Enclosures:

Annexes A and B

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ACTIONS RE VIET-NAM

1. The Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of CIA and the Administrator of AID have reviewed the situation in Viet-Nam with particular reference to actions directed in NSAM 273 and other areas where further action is necessary.
2. The actions taken pursuant to specified paragraphs of NSAM 273 are attached as Annex A.

It was inter-departmentally agreed to take the following immediate steps:

- a. Expedite for further consideration plans for phased operations against North Viet-Nam.
- b. Institute analysis of waterborne traffic into Viet-Nam and develop plans to interrupt infiltration by this means.
- c. Develop for further consideration detailed plans for probes into Laos, including aerial reconnaissance over Laos and Cambodia.
- d. Assess political consequences of "c" above, including what must be done covertly and what Lao Government might agree to.
- e. Expedite high-level economic expert to assist the Ambassador in economic negotiations with the Government of Viet-Nam.
- f. Give the Ambassador the authority to respond favorably and immediately to General Minh's proposal for a "brain trust", hopefully creating whatever type of close advisory arrangement can be mutually worked out.
- g. Send William Jorden of the Department of State to Saigon with a mission of examining evidence to support a new report re-emphasizing Hanoi's control and support of Viet Cong.

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3. There are numerous other actions in the political, intelligence, military, economic and psychological fields which appropriate agencies in Saigon are being instructed to take unless the Ambassador has serious objections. These are listed in Annex B.

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ANNEX A

ACTIONS TAKEN PURSUANT TO NSAM 273

The following actions have been taken pursuant to specified paragraphs of NSAM 273:

Paragraph 5. Action to place military emphasis on the Delta was begun based on findings of the McNamara-Taylor mission. An additional Vietnamese division was shifted to the Delta. Since then, directives have been issued to COMUSMACV to implement an increase in military tempo, improve tactics, maintain full strength in combat elements, accelerate the training and arming of hamlet militia, and consolidate the strategic hamlet program to bring the pace of construction to a level consistent with the Government's capability to provide essential protection and to introduce civic action programs.

Numerous AID actions have been taken designed to increase agricultural production in the Delta. These include an offer to finance a massive grant distribution of fertilizer, expanded grant distribution of pesticides, a program of rice seed multiplication and joint study of possible GVN policy changes to increase the volume of rice production. Additional action has been taken regarding intensification of the hamlet school program, retention of trained hamlet medics and the furnishing of generators and community radio sets.

Paragraph 6. AID has assured the GVN that, subject to Congressional appropriations, the United States will maintain the level of aid provided in FY'63 to the Diem Government. Through the newly established Joint Committee on Economic Policy negotiations with the GVN have begun on desirable changes in GVN economic policies, and we are using the leverage of commercial import financing to bring about these changes. Specifically, AID has proposed to the GVN a program of tax reform and enforcement, the draw-down of GVN exchange reserves up to \$25 million a year, elimination of luxury imports, and measures to increase exports.

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The Joint Staff has undertaken to determine the feasibility of establishing required reserve stocks of ammunition in Viet-Nam as US-owned stocks. The Director of Military Assistance is reviewing what immediate action can be taken in the interim period to establish US ammunition stocks in Viet-Nam. Additionally a study is underway to determine if economies can be made in the helicopter program as between MAP and service requirements. It has been determined that CINCPAC has authority to provide GVN forces serviceable, but not necessarily new, materiel, and this should result in a reduction of MAP costs.

Paragraph 7. A joint CIA-Defense plan for intensified operations against North Viet-Nam, providing for selective actions of graduated scope and intensity, is being prepared in Saigon.

Paragraph 8. It has been agreed between the Department of Defense and CIA that responsibility for support of paramilitary operations into southern Laos will pass from CAS to MACV.

The relevant Departments are preparing a plan of action for cross-border operations into Laos for your consideration. A means of policy control and clearance of such politically sensitive operations is also being worked out by these Departments.

Paragraph 9. US ability to influence Cambodia has been greatly reduced by Sihanouk's request for termination of US aid and by his continued charges of US complicity in Khmer Serei activities. Efforts to locate the Khmer Serei transmitters have not been conclusive, but they continue. Most recent evidence points to Thailand, though the Thais have denied supporting the Khmer Serei movement. Meanwhile, the Cambodians have apparently adopted a less arbitrary attitude toward our aid termination. We have instructed our Ambassador to be forthcoming to the extent Cambodian intentions are sincere and in conformity with our legal requirements and our dignity. The situation has been further complicated by Sihanouk's call for an international conference to guarantee his neutrality. His proposal is directed at Viet-Nam and Thailand and has rendered the chances of Vietnamese initiative to improve relations with Cambodia almost nil. We are now consulting with our allies to help us determine what our response to Sihanouk's proposal should be. Recently reported Cambodian reaction to the deaths of Free World leaders makes relations with Cambodia still more difficult.

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Paragraph 10. MACV has prepared a report on Hanoi's control and supply of the Viet Cong, which is being forwarded after coordination with the Embassy.

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ANNEX B

FURTHER ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to actions already taken under National Security Action Memorandum No. 273, November 26, 1963, an inter-agency review of the current situation in Viet-Nam has shown additional actions to be desirable. They are being cabled to the Ambassador for execution unless he has serious objections.

A. POLITICAL

1. Acceleration of a Modified Strategic Hamlet Program.

Background: The new GVN has decided to concentrate on the improvement of existing strategic hamlets to insure that they serve the purposes for which they were created, but has not yet issued concrete guidance for carrying on this program. A Commissariat General for a New Rural Life has replaced the old Permanent Bureau of the Interministerial Committee for Strategic Hamlets, but its responsibilities have not yet been clearly defined.

On the U. S. side a Committee on Provincial Rehabilitation serves as a U. S. coordinating and advisory organ on the strategic hamlet program.

Recommendations:

a) That Embassy Saigon explore with the GVN the adequacy of GVN machinery to coordinate the counter-insurgency program (military clear-and-hold operations and the strategic hamlet program) nationwide and to establish priorities for the assignment of economic and military resources to this program.

b) That U. S. officials in Saigon urge the GVN to push ahead with all deliberate speed on consolidating existing strategic hamlets on a phased basis from more secure to less secure areas.

c) That the GVN be urged to continue the construction of new

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strategic hamlets if there are relatively secure zones where they are needed.

## 2. Revival and Revitalization of the Amnesty Program.

Background: The Diem regime inaugurated a limited amnesty program for Viet Cong in January, 1963, which left persons surrendering in considerable doubt as to their future prospects. While the Diem Government's claim that 15,000 had surrendered under this program is probably grossly exaggerated, a well-devised amnesty program is a vital part of a counter-insurgency program. The new government has concentrated important efforts on gaining the support of the dissident Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects (numbering millions in the Mekong Delta), but has had no time to devote to the program of amnesty for Viet Cong.

### Recommendations:

a) That Embassy Saigon urge early GVN attention to a revitalized amnesty program with forgiveness, for example, to all who served in the Viet Cong prior to the November 1 coup and who surrender by a certain date.

b) That the amnesty program include some promise of economic gain for the defector, such as a homestead or vocational training, or even military service.

c) That the program be given maximum publicity.

## 3. Revival and Revitalization of Land Programs.

Background: The Diem Government instituted both land rental contract and land redistribution programs. The first never received adequate emphasis, and the second virtually lapsed with the spread of the guerrilla war. The former limited rents to 25 percent of the crop. Under the second program the GVN bought the land from landlords and sold it on an installment basis to peasants. (The Communists, of course, gave away land they expropriated.) The GVN still holds undistributed about 625,000 acres of land bought from

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French landowners.

Recommendation:

a) That the new GVN, as an important means of attracting peasant support, revitalize the land rental contract and land redistribution programs, and establish the easiest possible terms for the latter consistent with the government's budgetary problems.

4. Encouragement of Treatment of Peasants with Social Justice.

Background: Under the old regime the peasants were constantly pushed around because of the pressure on provincial and lower officials to meet the central government's desires or to impress Saigon. The completely different attitude of the new government is shown by its prompt discontinuation of forced labor on projects which do not directly benefit the peasant. Despite the good effect of this exemplary attitude at the top, the tendency among officials in non-democratic Oriental states is to push the people around, and the new regime will have to be prepared to deal swiftly and justly with officials displaying the old approach.

Recommendation:

a) That Embassy Saigon encourage the new GVN at every appropriate opportunity to maintain special diligence about official treatment of the peasants with consideration, respect, and justice.

5. Establishment of a Domestic Peace Corps.

Background: The new GVN is considering the establishment of a Youth Corps to enable students to assist in rural development during vacations. This is a laudable idea for establishing links now missing between the urban intelligentsia and the rural masses and for giving the former an opportunity for direct participation in the war effort.

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Recommendation:

a) That Embassy Saigon encourage GVN implementation of this idea.

6. Development of Additional Political Action Techniques.

Background: To further strengthen the political will of the population against the Viet Cong assaults, a political action campaign should be mounted to give the people vehicles for expression of their interests. These vehicles should, to the maximum possible extent, be non-governmental in order to enable the people to use them to represent their interests vis-a-vis the government. This political action campaign should use existing organizations wherever possible, but new ones may need to be established with covert and overt U. S. and GVN assistance.

The Vietnamese Confederation of Trade Unions is the only existing private organization of significance. However, the generals have shown considerable mistrust of its leader, Tran Quoc Buu.

The Tenant Farmers Union, an affiliate of this labor confederation, could be revitalized to good purpose in the countryside. Reaching its peak effectiveness in 1959 with a claimed membership of 300,000, it supported the GVN's land reform program on the local level, organized cooperatives and distributed fertilizer at cost. It lost momentum because of Diem/Nhu mistrust of it as a private organization, but still has a skeleton organization which could probably be expanded.

Recommendations:

a) That Embassy Saigon develop understanding by the generals of the political usefulness of Buu and his organization to the new government.

b) That Embassy Saigon sound out the generals about revitalization of the Tenant Farmers Union and its use for indirectly attracting peasant support to the government.

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c) That the Country Team study the desirability of seeking to establish additional non-governmental organizations for the purpose of building anti-Communist political strength, and recommend a U.S. program of action.

7. Improved Treatment of the Mountain Tribespeople.

Background: Approximately 600,000 of South Viet-Nam's population of 14.5 million belong to one of a large number of mountain tribes. These people, culturally distinct from the ethnic Vietnamese, have long been subject to discriminatory treatment by the Vietnamese and have been particularly subject to clever exploitation by the Communists. Some improvement has, however, taken place in South Vietnamese attitudes and practices toward the Montagnards since 1961.

Recommendations:

a) That an intensive U.S.-GVN study of the land tenure situation in Montagnard areas be proposed to the GVN with a view to providing the Montagnards with some form of title to ancestral lands.

b) That the GVN be urged to increase Montagnard educational facilities at the village and provincial levels.

c) That U.S. officials emphasize on every possible occasion to responsible GVN officials the importance of improved attitudes toward the Montagnards.

8. Dissipation of Rumors About Arbitrary Police Methods.

Background: News stories are appearing of a repetition of arbitrary police methods by the new government. Continuation of such reports will damage the regime's international reputation and harm its domestic political standing. Recent official statements on the number detained and to be tried are steps in the right direction, but further action is needed.

Recommendations:

a) That the new government issue a prompt and comprehensive public statement listing all non-Communists detained, the reasons

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for their detention and the expected disposition of the cases.

b) That the new regime be urged to try Ngo Dinh Can expeditiously.

9. Neutralization of General Ton That Dinh.

Background: Dinh, emotional and ambitious, is the potential Nasser among the generals. Not only is he Minister of Public Security and a frequent, if self-appointed, spokesman for the new government, but he retains command of the III Corps around Saigon and the Commander of the IV Corps in the Mekong Delta is believed close to him.

Recommendation:

a) That Embassy Saigon be urged to seek and use any feasible and appropriate means for neutralizing Dinh, such as separating him from his troop command on the ground that this job plus his ministry are too much for one man.

10. Improvement of Vietnamese-Cambodian Relations.

Background: Immediately following the coup prospects for improved Vietnamese-Cambodian relations appeared favorable. Despite Sihanouk's laying down five difficult conditions for resumption of relations with the GVN, the latter sent their former representative to Phnom Penh on a personal mission. This might have borne fruit if coup rumors against Sihanouk had not emanated from Saigon causing Sihanouk to refuse further attempts. Since then further Sihanouk accusations against the GVN and suggestions of neutralization and subsequent confederation with Cambodia have reduced hopes for improvement almost to the vanishing point. The outlook is further clouded by Sihanouk's demand for Cambodian neutrality being internationally guaranteed through a conference of the Geneva Powers. The GVN considers Sihanouk's proposal highly unnecessary and beamed primarily at Viet-Nam and Thailand. The GVN will be suspicious of any U. S. pressure (and it would have to be heavy) on the GVN to participate in such a conference.

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The Vietnamese-Cambodian border remains a sore point. There is no doubt the Viet Cong make use of Cambodia both as refuge and infiltration route and as a way to smuggle in supplies for their SVN operations. General Harkins has proposed: (a) photo reconnaissance flights on the Cambodian side of the border, (b) clandestine intelligence operations across the border into Cambodia, (c) institution of a "hot pursuit" policy, and (d) rigid inspection and the control of the Cambodian use of the Mekong.

Recommendations:

a) That the GVN should be urged to continue to exercise restraint vis-a-vis Cambodia and to seize the initiative in making concrete proposals. The latter should be such that if accepted they would result in demonstrable improvement in relations and if refused would put Sihanouk on the spot as being the one who rejected generous and practical offers of reconciliation, thus indicating he really did not desire normal relations. Silencing of the Khmer Serei radio and cessation of any GVN support therefor is an obvious step for the GVN.

b) That General Harkins' fourth proposal be approved, but the first three deferred at present because of the likelihood they would drive Sihanouk still closer to Communist China. They can be reconsidered if Sihanouk fails to agree to reasonable GVN proposals for settlement of their problems and cooperation about the border.

II. Improvement of Relations with Laos.

Background: At the present time embassies are maintained in Saigon and Vientiane headed by Charges whose actual diplomatic status is purposely left ambiguous. Work is carried on but not at the desired level. Souvanna has so far refused to accept a GVN ambassador or even to grant formal recognition to the new regime. He claims the former will require tripartite approval by the three sections and the latter must await indications that the new regime has full popular support. At the same time, Vietnamese contact with the right wing faction in Laos (General Phoumi) on military matters continues. Regardless of the state of diplomatic relations, close cooperation between the two military sides is important for the operations we wish to see conducted in the corridor.

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Recommendation:

a) We should not hesitate to urge, when possible, both countries to resume full diplomatic relations and to cooperate militarily. Border cooperation is essential; however, purely military relations should not be carried out without the knowledge of Souvanna.

12. Relations with Other Countries.

Background: Improvement of relations with Thailand appears not only desirable, but possible. Malaysia and the Philippines offer good prospects. It is important that the GVN not just give lip service to their declaration for a desire for friendly relations, but actively pursue them, particularly in Asia. The importance of this in the receipt of third country economic and technical assistance is obvious.

Recommendations:

a) We should endeavor where possible to foster good international relations of the GVN. This is particularly important in Asia to avoid the isolation which was increasing under Diem.

b) An effective Vietnamese spokesman at the UN would help greatly both in presenting the GVN side of the war and refuting Communist Bloc propaganda against it. Generally, the quality of Vietnamese representation abroad should be improved.

B. INTELLIGENCE.

Background: The current volume, accuracy and timeliness of intelligence concerning Viet Cong capabilities, strengths, sources of personnel and supplies, actions and plans are not adequate to serve as a basis for political action or for military planning and operations. Evidence of infiltration is meager while the effectiveness of recent operations suggests that the actual level of personnel and material infiltration may have been seriously underestimated. We also have inadequate data on the reasons motivating the entry into the Viet Cong of such large numbers of people from South Viet-Nam.

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Recommendations:

a) That the National Security Agency be requested to adjust its priorities of effort and allocations of personnel and material, both in Washington and Viet-Nam, as required to break Viet Cong communication codes.

b) That Embassies Saigon, Phnom Penh and Vientiane be directed to develop a combined intelligence acquisition plan designed to produce reliable and timely information concerning the Viet Cong use of the territory of Cambodia and Laos. A directed feature of this plan should be to assign Embassy Saigon overall responsibility for the coordination of U. S. agency efforts in this regard.

c) That U. S. agencies in Saigon, in coordination with the GVN, develop improved prisoner interrogation procedures to produce a rapid and voluminous flow of intelligence on Viet Cong infiltration and on local recruitment in South Viet-Nam (including numbers and motivation).

d) In order to assure the availability of presently unreported, but useful overt information, the Country Team should communicate requirements on a continuing basis to all operating staff, and impress them with the need for greater reporting consciousness.

e) To coordinate the covert and overt collection processes, the Ambassador may wish to appoint a senior official full time for this purpose.

C. MILITARY

Background: Notwithstanding the considerable improvement in the Vietnamese military posture and the newly evident inclination of the Vietnamese to respond more effectively to U. S. military advice, operational, training and conceptual deficiencies still exist.

Recommendations:

a) Combat troops should be employed to their maximum capacity in the performance of combat missions. The average RVNAF Battalion

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(130 total) is engaged in combat missions only 10-15 days of each month. Our objective is 20 days per month of effective operations for all combat forces.

b) The numerous under-manned and non-effective outposts in remote areas are a drain on available military manpower and constitute vulnerable targets for Viet Cong attack. Action to disband unneeded posts and consolidate others in larger and more effective installations is now under way. It must be accelerated.

c) The Vietnamese have thus far failed to assign sufficient numbers of highly qualified Special Forces personnel for counterpart training with our own Special Forces. More emphasis on this program may be needed.

d) The shift of military emphasis to the Delta has been proceeding at a slow pace. It probably should be accelerated. The best available Vietnamese military commanders have not yet been assigned to the Delta, although there is steady progress in this direction.

e) Terrain sweeps, which often fail to inflict casualties upon the Viet Cong forces and contribute little toward consolidating control over areas involved, continue to divert a considerable proportion of the total Vietnamese offensive resources. These ineffectual sweeps are steadily being replaced by the more effective "clear and hold" operations. The process should be accelerated. Specifically there should be an increase in protracted combat patrolling, in which air-supplied patrols remain in the field for periods of several weeks, relying upon ground controlled, quickly responsive direct air support as a major element of their combat power.

f) Concurrent with the consolidation of the strategic hamlet program, particularly in the Delta, the companion program of arming and training an effective hamlet militia requires refinement and invigoration.

g) Manning levels of combat units remain too low. Pressure must be maintained to persuade Vietnamese authorities to bring these units to full strength.

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h) Improvement of Vietnamese capabilities for combined air-sea-ground operations is required.

i) More use should be made of the sea for tactical maneuver. There is also a requirement to increase river operations, in order to deny the Viet Cong these avenues of resupply and secure them for the transportation of essential GVN supplies.

j) Special effort should be applied to the development of effective means for coming to the immediate assistance of strategic hamlets and other points under attack at night.

#### D. ECONOMIC

Background: Additional actions beyond those already taken are necessary to assure that the GVN has the necessary resources for the counter-insurgency program, and takes effective action in the economic field to attract the support of the peasants.

#### Recommendations:

a) That Embassy and AID Saigon continue to urge the GVN to streamline its administrative procedures to bring about a more rapid flow of funds to the provinces, decentralize responsibility and control of resources and assign more effective civil personnel to the Mekong Delta.

b) That Embassy and AID Saigon continue to urge the GVN to assign a qualified deputy to each province chief, with priority to the Mekong Delta, responsible for administering the economic and political aspects of the strategic hamlet program.

c) That AID Saigon and MACV urge the GVN to reactivate its dormant program of military civic action, with emphasis on the Mekong Delta.

#### E. PSYCHOLOGICAL

1. Intensification and Localization of Psychological Operations against the Viet Cong.

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Background: The most effective instrument for inducing the defection of a Viet Cong is another Viet Cong, whether the initial defector goes back to his comrades and persuades them to come out or permits his voice or his writings to be used through radio, loud-speakers or leaflets.

In the past, U.S. representatives encountered chronic obstacles to psychological intelligence. When it was obtained it was usually too late to be of tactical use. U.S. access to prisoners or defectors was rare. These deficiencies should dissipate under the new regime, making possible rapid and thoroughly coordinated psychological operations, using the resources of USIS, CIA, MACV and ARVN PsyWar, and the GVN's Directorate General of Information under the aegis of the existing U.S. Psychological Operations Coordinating Committee, and targeted at specific VC groups or units in the field.

Recommendations:

a) That the Saigon Psychological Operations Coordinating Committee, through its Working Group, begin experimenting (using VC targets of opportunity) with concentrated and intensified tactical psychological operations, using defected members of a unit to induce further defections from the same unit.

b) That the Working Group be supplied with the necessary resources and manpower from all appropriate agencies to accomplish this task, including the redeployment of existing resources.

c) That this program be integrated into the overall amnesty effort.

2. Reassessment and Intensive Research Concerning the Psychological Appeals Influencing Political Action.

Background: It has often been said that the Viet Cong are the only ones in Viet-Nam today with the personal motivation for political action--strong motivations which will cause them to endure the hardships of protracted guerrilla warfare. Yet we have not

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pinpointed exactly what their motivations are. Similarly, we know that the strategic hamlet program has been successful in rallying much of the population to the government in South Viet-Nam. We do not know, however, what specific aspects of the program might have produced political motivation--the example, for instance, of home guards holding out against VC onslaught to a man. Presumably, loyal Vietnamese could have as strong political motivation as the Viet Cong.

Such knowledge could obviously be used to good advantage in devising political action plans and developing propaganda themes.

Recommendations:

a) That the Working Group of the Psychological Operations Coordinating Committee be charged as a priority task with developing precise information on the political motivation of the Viet Cong and those loyal to the GVN.

b) That such information be used in psychological planning and thematic content of our propaganda output.

c) That the Working Group be provided with representation from all appropriate agencies in Viet-Nam and supplied with the resources and personnel needed for this project on a priority basis.

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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November 26, 1963

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 273

TO: The Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense ✓  
The Director of Central Intelligence  
The Administrator, AID  
The Director, USIA

The President has reviewed the discussions of South Vietnam which occurred in Honolulu, and has discussed the matter further with Ambassador Lodge. He directs that the following guidance be issued to all concerned:

1. It remains the central object of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy. The test of all U. S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contribution to this purpose.
2. The objectives of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of U. S. military personnel remain as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963.
3. It is a major interest of the United States Government that the present provisional government of South Vietnam should be assisted in consolidating itself and in holding and developing increased public support. All U. S. officers should conduct themselves with this objective in view. ✓
4. The President expects that all senior officers of the Government will move energetically to insure the full unity of support for established U. S. policy in South Vietnam. Both in Washington and in the field, it is essential that the Government be unified. It is of particular importance that express or implied criticism of officers of other branches be scrupulously avoided in all contacts with the Vietnamese Government and with the press. More specifically, the President approves the following lines of action developed in the discussions of the Honolulu meeting of November 20. The offices of the Government to which central responsibility is assigned are indicated in each case. ✓

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(page 1 of 3 pages)

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Authority

NSC memo 5/23/7P

By

NARS, Date 6/6/78

SecDef Central No.

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November 26, 1963

5. We should concentrate our own efforts, and insofar as possible we should persuade the Government of South Vietnam to concentrate its efforts, on the critical situation in the Mekong Delta. This concentration should include not only military but political, economic, social, educational and informational effort. We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle but of belief, and we should seek to increase not only the control of hamlets but the productivity of this area, especially where the proceeds can be held for the advantage of anti-Communist forces. ✓

(Action: The whole country team under the direct supervision of the Ambassador.)

6. Programs of military and economic assistance should be maintained at such levels that their magnitude and effectiveness in the eyes of the Vietnamese Government do not fall below the levels sustained by the United States in the time of the Diem Government. This does not exclude arrangements for economy on the MAP account with respect to accounting for ammunition, or any other readjustments which are possible as between MAP and other U. S. defense resources. Special attention should be given to the expansion of the import, distribution, and effective use of fertilizer for the Delta.

(Action: AID and DOD as appropriate.)

7. Planning should include different levels of possible increased activity, and in each instance there should be estimates of such factors as:

- A. Resulting damage to North Vietnam;
- B. The plausibility of denial;
- C. Possible North Vietnamese retaliation;
- D. Other international reaction.

Plans should be submitted promptly for approval by higher authority.  
(Action: State, DOD, and CIA.)

8. With respect to Laos, a plan should be developed and submitted for approval by higher authority for military operations up to a line up to 50 kilometers inside Laos, together with political plans for minimizing the international hazards of such an enterprise. Since it is agreed that operational responsibility for such undertakings should

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November 26, 1963

pass from CAS to MACV, this plan should include a redefined method of political guidance for such operations, since their timing and character can have an intimate relation to the fluctuating situation in Laos.

(Action: State, DOD, and CIA.)

9. It was agreed in Honolulu that the situation in Cambodia is of the first importance for South Vietnam, and it is therefore urgent that we should lose no opportunity to exercise a favorable influence upon that country. In particular a plan should be developed using all available evidence and methods of persuasion for showing the Cambodians that the recent charges against us are groundless.

(Action: State.)

10. In connection with paragraphs 7 and 8 above, it is desired that we should develop as strong and persuasive a case as possible to demonstrate to the world the degree to which the Viet Cong is controlled, sustained and supplied from Hanoi, through Laos and other channels. In short, we need a more contemporary version of the Jordan Report, as powerful and complete as possible.

(Action: Department of State with other agencies as necessary.)

*McGeorge Bundy*  
McGeorge Bundy

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(page 3 of 3 pages)

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NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. \_\_\_\_\_

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~~4. It is of the highest importance that the United States Government avoid either the appearance or the reality of public recrimination from one part of it against another, and the President expects that all senior officers of the Government will take energetic steps to insure that they and their~~

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*and the personnel engaged in  
our operations. This is of  
particular importance in  
connection with the new  
SUN Govt officials  
the press*

subordinates (go out of their way to maintain <sup>in Washington</sup> and to defend the unity of the  
United States Government both here and in the field. <sup>with respect to U.S. Govt</sup>

More specifically, the President approves the following lines of

action developed in the discussions of the Honolulu meeting of November 20.

The ~~office or~~ offices of the Government to which central responsibility is  
assigned <sup>are</sup> indicated in each case.

5. We should concentrate our own efforts, and insofar as possible  
we should persuade the Government of South Vietnam to concentrate its  
efforts, on the critical situation in the Mekong Delta. This concentration  
should include not only military but political, economic, social, educational  
and informational effort. We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle  
but of belief, and we should seek to increase not only <sup>the</sup> ~~our~~ <sup>Hamlets</sup> control of ~~land~~ but  
the productivity of this area, <sup>especially where</sup> ~~wherever~~ the proceeds can be held for the  
advantage of anti-Communist forces.

(Action: The whole country team under the direct supervision of the  
Ambassador.)

6. Programs of military and economic assistance should be  
maintained at such levels that their magnitude and effectiveness in the eyes  
of the Vietnamese Government do not fall below the levels sustained by the  
United States in the time of the Diem Government. This does not exclude  
arrangements for economy on the MAP account with respect to accounting  
for ammunition, <sup>or</sup> ~~and~~ any other readjustments which are possible as between

MAP and other U. S. defense resources. Special attention should be given to the expansion of the import, distribution, and effective use of fertilizer for the Delta.

(Action: AID and DOD as appropriate.)

7. With respect to action against North Vietnam, there should be a detailed plan for the development of additional Government of Vietnam resources, especially for sea-going activity, and such planning should indicate the time and investment necessary to achieve a wholly new level of effectiveness in this field of action.

*and higher*

(Action: <sup>state,</sup> DOD, and CIA)

8. With respect to Laos, a plan should be developed for military operations up to a line up to 50 kilometers inside Laos, together with political plans for minimizing the international hazards of such an enterprise. Since it is agreed that operational responsibility for such undertakings should pass from CAS to MACV, this plan should ~~provide an alternative~~ <sup>and submitted for approval by higher authority,</sup> ~~method of political~~ <sup>a redefined</sup> ~~Naisen for~~ such operations, since their timing and character can have an intimate relation to the fluctuating situation in Laos.

(Action: State, DOD and CIA.)

*Guidance for*

9. It was agreed in Honolulu that the situation in Cambodia is of the first importance for South Vietnam, and it is therefore urgent that we should lose no opportunity to exercise a favorable influence upon that country. ~~In particular, measures should be undertaken to satisfy ourselves completely~~

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that recent charges from Cambodia are groundless, and we should put ourselves in a position to offer to the Cambodians a full opportunity to satisfy themselves on this same point.

(Action: State)

10. In connection with paragraphs 7 and 8 above, it is desired that we should develop as strong and persuasive a case as possible to demonstrate to the world the degree to which the Viet Cong is controlled, sustained and supplied from Hanoi, through Laos and other channels. In short, we need a more contemporary version of the Jordan Report, as powerful and complete as possible.

(Action: Department of State with other agencies as necessary.)

McGeorge Bundy

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Nov. 21, 1963

To: Director McCone

This is a draft for discussion with Cabot Lodge, and any comments you wish to make on it before Saturday noon would be welcome.

McG. B.

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(same to Don Wilson)

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NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. The objectives of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of U. S. military personnel remain as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963.

3. It is a major interest of the United States Government that the present provisional government of South Vietnam should be assisted in consolidating itself and in holding and developing increased public support. All U. S. officers should conduct themselves with this objective in view.

4. It is of the highest importance that the United States Government avoid either the appearance or the reality of public recrimination from one part of it against another, and the President expects that all senior officers of the Government will take energetic steps to insure that they and their

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By DC/SF NARA, Date 12-11-91

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subordinates go out of their way to maintain and to defend the unity of the United States Government both here and in the field.

x   x   x   x

More specifically, the President approves the following lines of action developed in the discussions of the Honolulu meeting of November 20. The ~~office or~~ offices of the Government to which central responsibility is assigned <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ indicated in each case.

5. We should concentrate our own efforts, and insofar as possible we should persuade the Government of South Vietnam to concentrate its efforts, on the critical situation in the Mekong Delta. This concentration should include not only military but political, economic, social, educational and informational effort. We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle but of belief, and we should seek to increase not only <sup>the</sup> ~~our~~ control of <sup>hamlets</sup> ~~land~~ but the productivity of this area, wherever the proceeds can be held for the advantage of anti-Communist forces.

(Action: The whole country team under the direct supervision of the Ambassador.)

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MAP and other U. S. defense resources. Special attention should be given to the expansion of the import, distribution, and effective use of fertilizer for the Delta.

(Action: AID and DOD as appropriate.)

7. With respect to action against North Vietnam, there should be a detailed plan for the development of additional Government of Vietnam resources, especially for sea-going activity, and such planning should indicate the time and investment necessary to achieve a wholly new level of effectiveness in this field of action.

(Action: DOD and CIA)

8. With respect to Laos, a plan should be developed for military operations up to a line up to 50 kilometers inside Laos, together with political plans for minimizing the international hazards of such an enterprise. Since it is agreed that operational responsibility for such undertakings should pass from CAS to MACV, this plan should provide an alternative method of political liaison for such operations, since their timing and character can have an intimate relation to the fluctuating situation in Laos.

(Action: State, DOD and CIA.)

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- 4 -

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(Action: Department of State with other agencies as necessary.)

McGeorge Bundy

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By DCB/SE NARA, Date 12-11-94

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(Action: The whole country team under the direct supervision of the Ambassador.)

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- 4 -

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(Action: Department of State with other agencies as necessary.)

McGeorge Bundy

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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November 26, 1963

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 273

TO: The Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense  
The Director of Central Intelligence  
The Administrator, AID  
The Director, USIA

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(page 1 of 3 pages)

Authority NSC memo 5/23/78

By MIE/LW, NARS, Date 9/16/83

November 26, 1963

5. We should concentrate our own efforts, and insofar as possible we should persuade the Government of South Vietnam to concentrate its efforts, on the critical situation in the Mekong Delta. This concentration should include not only military but political, economic, social, educational and informational effort. We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle but of belief, and we should seek to increase not only the control of hamlets but the productivity of this area, especially where the proceeds can be held for the advantage of anti-Communist forces.

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(Action: AID and DOD as appropriate.)

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- A. Resulting damage to North Vietnam;
- B. The plausibility of denial;
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- D. Other international reaction.

Plans should be submitted promptly for approval by higher authority.  
(Action: State, DOD, and CIA.)

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November 26, 1963

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(Action: State.)

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(Action: Department of State with other agencies as necessary.)

*McGeorge Bundy*  
McGeorge Bundy

cc:

Mr. Bundy  
Mr. Forrestal  
Mr. Johnson  
NSC Files  
(page 3 of 3 pages)