

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
WITHDRAWAL SHEET (PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES)

1069

FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#3 cable	State secret <i>open 5-25-79</i> 20928 from Saigon	6 p 03/01/68	A
#6a memo	State secret <i>open 2-1-80 ip</i> to Secretary from Hughes	12 p 03/02/68	A
#7 memo	State secret <i>open 6-8-81</i> to secretary from Owen	5 p 03/02/68	A
#14 cable	state top secret (gp 1) <i>Exempt</i> 2983 from Moscow	3 p 03/01/68	A
#15 report	state top secret <i>open 5-25-79 ip</i> re: US Force Increase	5 p 03/01/68	A
#16 report	state top secret <i>sanitized</i> re: US Force INcrease	6 p 03/01/68	A
#16a report	state top secret <i>open 5-25-79 ip</i> US Public Opinion	3 p undated	A
#19 letter	state secret <i>open 6-8-81 ip</i> to Walt from Henry Owen	1 p 03/06/68	A
#20 letter	state top secret <i>open 5-25-79 ip</i> to Walt Rostow from Henry Cabot Lodge	1 p 03/06/68	A
#20a memo	state top secret to Secretary from H C Lodge	4 p 03/06/68	A
#21 letter	state top secret to Walt Rostow from H C Lodge	1 p 03/06/68	A
#21a letter	state top secret to president from HC lodge	1 p 03/06/68	A
#21b memo	state top secret to secretary from HC Lodge	5 p 03/05/68	A
#24 note	state top secret to Helms from Bundy	1 p 03/08/68	A
#24a letter	state top secret to Richard Helms from Wm. Bundy	3 p 03/08/68	A

FILE LOCATION

National Security File, NSC History
March 31st Speech, vol. 4

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#29a cable	TO STATE DEPT. 21733 from Saigon TOP SECRET <i>open 7-25-79 mg</i>	8 p 03/11/67	A
#32 report	secret <i>Exempt</i> Aide Memoire	5 p undated	A
#33 memo	secret to secretary from Eugene Rostow <i>open 7-25-79 mg</i>	3 p 03/12/68	A
#40a cable	top secret to Saigon for Amb. from Secretary	2 p 03/05/68	A
#40b cable	top secret Saigon 22096 embtel	3 p 03/14/68	A
#43a cable	top secret to Saigon 131732	5 p 03/16/68	A
#44a memo	secret Decision in Vietnam	5 p undated	A
#48 cable	top secret 22548 from Saigon	5 p 03/20/68	A
#57a memo	top secret <i>open 6-21-79 mg</i> to president from Rusk	4 p 03/25/68	A
#59 cable	xxxx top secret <i>open 7-25-79 mg</i> 138438 to Saigon	4 p 03/28/68	A
#60 cable	top secret 138465 to Saigon	1 p 03/29/68	A
#61 cable	top secret (gp 1) State 139431 to Bangkok, et al	2 p 03/30/68	A
#69a report	secret <i>sanitized 7-25-79</i> talking points for meeting with Dobrynin	3 p 03/31/68	A
#11 memo	top secret <i>open 7-25-79 mg</i> re: Vietnam	6 p undated	A
#12 report	top secret re: Vietnam	6 p undated	A

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FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#13 report	state top secret <i>Exempt</i> re: V&etnam 6 p	undated	A
#13a report	state top secret <i>open 7-25-79 nap</i> re: Vietnam 3 p	undated	A
#13b report	state top secret <i>"</i> re: Vietnam 2 p	undated	A
#28a cable	state secret 21585 from Saigon 5 p	03/09/68	A

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FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#8 cable	<i>decisions per JCS 9-21-78 letter</i> JCS top secret MAC 02984	2 p 03/03/68	A
#17 cable	JCS conf JCS 02445	1 p 03/04/68	A
#31 memo	JCS secret (gp 3) to Walt Rostow from Gen. Wheeler	1 p 03/11/68	A
#34a memo	JCS top secret (gp 1) to president from Gen. Wheeler	6 p 03/11/68	A

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589

FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#4 cable	OSD top secret <i>open 10-19-79 inf</i> to Gen Wheeler from Gen Westmoreland 4 p	undated	A
#4a cable	OSD top secret to Gen. Wheeler from Gen. Westmoreland 5 p	03/02/68 undated	A
#4b cable	OSD top secret " to Gen. Wheeler from Gen. Westmoreland 3 p	03/02/68	A
#4c cable	OSD top secret " to Gen Wheeler from gen Westmoreland 2 p	03/02/68	A
#8a cable	OSD top secret " Text of Gen. Westmoreland's report 2 p	03/03/68	A
#10 report	OSD top secret <i>open 7-22-80 inf</i> Vietnam Staff Study 1 p	undated	A
#18a memo	OSD conf <i>open 10-19-79 inf</i> to WH Situation Room from Cramer 1 p	03/06/68	A
#22a cable	OSD top secret " text of Gen Westmoreland's report 2 p (duplicates #8a)	03/04/68	A
#35 memo	OSD secret " to president from Nitze 2 p	03/13/68	A
#41a cable	OSD top secret " copy of MAC 03572] 1 p	03/15/68	A
#46a cable	OSD top secret <i>sanitized 7-30-81 inf</i> <i>open 8/11/00</i> copy of Saigon 22495 <i>sanitized 3-21-88 NLJ 86-221</i> 6 p	03/19/68	A
#49a report	OSD secret <i>open 10-19-79 inf</i> Additional Financing 5 p	03/20/68	A
#50b memo	OSD secret " to SecDef from Thomas Morris 2 p	03/20/68	A
#50c report	OSD secret " Appendix B to Enclosure A 1 p	undated	A

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6069

FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#2 memo	CIA secret (gp 1) open 4-28-83 in per NLS 81-93 re: Vietnam 11 p	03/01/68	A
#37a memo	CIA top secret Intelligence Memorandum sanitized 4-28-83 in 9 p NLS 81-93 memo released on 9-18-84	03/13/68	A
#47 cable	CIA secret (gp 1) TDCS-314/04632-68 Exempt per NLS 81-93 2 p sanitized 1-9-84 NLS 86-200 sanitized 1-29-01	03/20/68	A
#58a memo	CIA secret SC No. 01253/68 sanitized 4-28-83 in NLS-81-93 1 p	NLS/RAC 99-168 03/28/68	A

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FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION	
	WH TO STATE DEPT FOR CONSULTATION <i>Decisions per NSC</i>	<i>3-31-80</i>		
#39 memo	confidential — <i>open</i> to president from Rostow	1 p	03/14/68	A
#39a memo	confidential — <i>open</i> for record by Rostow	1 p	03/14/68	A
#42 memo	top secret — <i>Open 2/17/82 re NLJ 81-95</i> to president from Rostow	2 p	03/16/68	A + <i>6</i>
#49 memo	secret — <i>open</i> to president from Rostow	1 p	03/20/68	A
#57 memo	top secret — <i>open</i> to president from Rostow	1 p	03/25/68	A
#63 memo	top secret <i>sanitized</i> to president from Rostow	1 p	03/30/68	A
#65 memo	top secret <i>Exempt</i> to president from Rostow	1 p	03/31/68	A
#67 memo	secret — <i>open</i> to president from Rostow	1 p	03/31/68	A
#67a List	secret — <i>open</i> proposed diplomatic actions	2 p	03/31/68	A
#69 memo	secret — <i>open</i> to president from Rostow	1 p	03/31/68	A
#40 memo	top secret — <i>open</i> to president from Rostow	1 p	03/15/68	A

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FORM OF DOCUMENT	NLS-78-648 CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
	WH TO OSD FOR CONSULTATION		
#5 memo	secret <i>open 8-29-80 ip</i> to president from Rostow	1 p 03/02/68	A
#23 memo	secret " to president from Rostow	1 p 03/07/68	A
#23a memo	secret " to Sec. Clifford & Gen. Wheeler from Rostow	1 p 03/07/68	A
#23b cable	Secret <i>sanitized 8-29-80 ip</i> for Gen. Westmoreland from president	1 p undated	A
#27 memo	secret <i>open 8-29-80 ip</i> to president from Rostow	1 p 03/11/68	A
#28 memo	secret " to president from Rostow	1 p 03/11/68	A
#34 memo	top secret " to president from Rostow	1 p 03/12/68	A
#37 memo	top secret " to president from Rostow	1 p 03/13/68	A
#45a letter	secret " to Richard Helms from Gen. Taylor	3 p 02/23/68	A
#46 memo	top secret " to president from Rostow	1 p 03/19/68	A
#50 memo	secret " to president from Rostow	1 p 03/20/68	A
#64 memo	secret " to president from Rostow	1 p 03/30/68	A
#68 memo	secret " to president from Rostow	1 p 03/31/68	A
#41 memo	top secret " to president from Rostow	1 p 03/15/68	A

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90/9

FORM OF DOCUMENT	CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
#18 memo	NO CIA xxxxxxx WH top secret <i>sanitized 9-25-84</i> to president from Rostow 1 p	NW-CBS 27 03/06/68	A
#70 cable	JCS secret MAC 04339 <i>Sanitized 6-7-82</i> <i>per JCS letter 5-8-81</i> 2 p	04/01/68	A

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GENERAL

1 Mar thru 1 Apr 68

March:

1 -- CIA memo, questions on situation in Vietnam -----	C
1 -- Saigon msg, may be entering climatic stage -----	D
2 -- Westmoreland messages, answers to Wheeler questions -----	E
2 -- Rostow msg, enemy may attack 3 March -----	F
2 -- State Intell Note, communist strategy -----	G
2 -- State memo, Vietnam -----	H
3 -- Westmoreland msg, offensive operation -----	I
4 -- Tabbed paper -----	J
Vietnam staff study ----- a	
Strategies in Vietnam ----- b	
Key elements in situation ----- c	
Foreign (Soviet, Chinese) reactions ----- d	
March 1 cable (Thompson) ----- e	
European non-Asian reactions ----- f	
Asian reaction ----- g	
4 -- Wheeler msg to Westmoreland, daily telecons stop -----	K
6 -- Rostow memo, movements around Khe Sanh -----	L
6 -- Owen, State, memo, public opinion -----	M
6 -- Lodge memo, bargaining with the GVN -----	N
6 -- Lodge memo, public opinion -----	O
6 -- White House paper, the enemy offensive -----	P
7 -- Proposed Presidential message to Westmoreland -----	Q
8 -- State letter, communist strategy -----	R

March:

9 -- McCafferty memo, Khe Sanh -----	S
9 -- State paper, alternative Vietnam policies -----	T
11 -- Rostow memo, questions to Westmoreland -----	U
11 -- Saigon msg, post-TET morale -----	V
11 -- Bunker msg, evaluation troops and suggested program -----	W
11 -- Briefing note, impact of B-52 -----	X
11 -- Wheeler memo, program 5 infantry battalions -----	Y
12 -- Aide Memoire, Vietnam -----	Z
12 -- State memo, thoughts about Vietnam ----- <i>E. Rostow</i>	AA
12 -- Wheeler response to Lodge memo -----	BB
13 -- Nitze memo, logistic support of Vietnam operations -----	CC
13 -- Rostow memo, apology to President and Cater -----	DD
13 -- CIA memo, communist threat in I Corps -----	EE
14 -- Cater memo, regarding Wheeler briefing -----	FF
14 -- Rostow memo, Acheson's proposal -----	GG
15 -- Saigon msg, exchange between Rusk/Bunker -----	HH
15 -- Westmoreland msg, I Corps operations -----	II
16 -- Rostow msg, draft directive for team leader -----	JJ
<i>16 -- Sec Rusk message to Amb Bunker</i>	<i>JJ 1/2</i>
18 -- Owen of State memo, Decision in Vietnam -----	KK
19 -- Taylor letter, Helms' appearance before the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board -----	LL
19 -- Saigon msg, meeting of SEA ambassadors and Westmoreland ----	MM
20 -- CIA cable, NVN tactics on peace negotiations -----	NN

March:

20 -- Bunker msg, response to questions -----	OO
20 -- SecDef paper, additional financing -----	PP
20 -- Clifford papers: reserve call-up; M-14 rifle availability; project 100,000 -----	QQ
20 -- JCS memo, answer to another "Screw Idea" -----	RR
20 -- Remarks by the President -----	SS
20 -- SecDef memo, DOD programs, project 100,000, management summary -----	TT
23 -- White House memo, negotiations -----	UU
24 -- President's msg to Westmoreland, appointment as Army CofS---	VV
25 -- Westmoreland's response to appointment -----	WW
25 -- Rusk memo, peace move -----	XX
28 -- CIA memo, possible new offensive in Vietnam -----	YY
29 -- State msg, policy announcement -----	ZZ
29 -- Rusk msg, stand with GVN -----	a
30 -- Katzenbach msg, regarding policy announcement -----	b
30 -- Msg, Khe Sanh battle -----	c
30 -- Rostow memo, Bunker to Honolulu -----	d
30 -- Rostow memo, points with Dobrynin -----	e
31 -- Rostow memo, reaction to advance notice on speech -----	f
31 -- Remarks by the President -----	g
31 -- Bundy paper, diplomatic actions before speech -----	h
31 -- Rostow memo, Wheeler's report -----	i

March:

31 -- State paper, talking points with Dobrynin ----- j

April:

1 -- Abrams msg, Khe Sanh ----- k

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3E

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

1 March 1968

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

I. THE COMMUNIST POSITION

How does Hanoi view the present phase of the war; for example, has Hanoi concluded that a protracted conflict is impossible and that it must gain victory this year or collapse?

1. Hanoi's strategy of revolutionary warfare in South Vietnam has always embraced two propositions: to prepare for a protracted struggle and to seek victory in the shortest possible time. From the introduction of large US forces in 1965, through the summer of 1967 the emphasis was on the probability of a prolonged war of attrition. Some backing away from the protracted war theme became evident in captured documents and Hanoi's propaganda later in 1967. In our view the intensity of the Tet offensive and the exertions being made to sustain pressures confirms that Hanoi is now engaged in a major effort to achieve early and decisive results. Yet the Communists probably have no rigid timetable. They apparently have high hopes of achieving their objectives this year, but they will preserve considerable tactical flexibility.

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GROUP 1

Authority NLS 81-93

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Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification

By ris, NARS, Date 4-28-83

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2. It is still not altogether clear why the Vietnamese Communists chose this course of action at this time. They certainly were not desperate or fearful of early collapse. A reconsideration of their capabilities to succeed in a long war may have been a contributing factor. And they probably regarded the balance of forces as sufficiently favorable to warrant a major and widespread offensive. The fact of Presidential elections in the US may have influenced their decision, and, of course, the tactical advantage of the Tet truce played a role in the immediate timing. In any case, it does not appear that they undertook the present offensive because they had concluded that protracted conflict was no longer feasible for them.

What are the capabilities of the NVA/VC forces to sustain their present offensive, and, if they choose to, continue a prolonged war thereafter?

3. There is no doubt that the Communists have already paid a high price in the present offensive phase. They have not only lost manpower, but also quality resources such as the special units employed in the Tet attacks. Nevertheless, prior to Tet there was apparently a strenuous drive to bring units up to strength with new recruits and upgraded guerrillas. Complete

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guerrilla units also were merged with Local forces to form larger elements. Infiltration of replacements and units from the North has probably been heavier than previously believed. A part of the Main Forces have been withheld from major combat. Finally, an intensive effort to raise new levies is underway in the rural areas, where the Communists now enjoy fuller access. Thus, it is conceivable that the enemy's gross strength is not significantly lower now than it was in the latter part of 1967.

4. The Communist supply position might be a factor limiting combat capabilities in the next few months. Many forces are now deployed away from their bases at the end of longer lines of supply. Expenditures of ammunition and losses of equipment have been relatively high. These factors will be offset in some degree by the extraordinary stockpiling that evidently took place before Tet and by the increased availability of manpower in the countryside which will permit the continued portering of military supplies and food to VC/NVA forces.

5. While not strictly a matter of physical capability, the Communist position is much enhanced, for the time being at least, by their possession of the strategic initiative. Within limits this permits them to choose the time and place of combat and to

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keep US/ARVN forces pinned down and dispersed in static defense of many potential targets.

6. Accordingly, we believe that the NVA/VC forces have the capability to sustain a relatively high level of combat and occasionally to intensify it over the next several months, including rocket and mortar attacks on urban areas and military installations, major battles with US forces and assaults on selected cities. At the same time, the Communists will have resources to consolidate their hold on formerly pacified and contested areas.

7. It is conceivable that the Communists regard the present campaign as so critical to the ultimate outcome of the war that they will commit their full resources to a maximum effort in the near term, even at risk of very high losses. But it is far more likely that they probably will not use their resources in such a reckless manner as to deny themselves the possibility of continuing the struggle well beyond the next several months.

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What is the Communist attitude toward negotiations: in particular how would Hanoi deal with an unconditional cessation of US bombing of NVN and what would be its terms for a settlement?

8. The Communists probably still expect the war to end eventually in some form of negotiations. Since they hope the present military effort will be decisive in destroying the GVN and ARVN, they are not likely to give any serious consideration to negotiations until this campaign has progressed far enough for its results to be fairly clear.

9. If, however, the US ceased the bombing of North Vietnam in the near future, Hanoi would probably respond more or less as indicated in its most recent statements. It would begin talks fairly soon, would accept a fairly wide ranging exploration of issues, but would not moderate its terms for a final settlement or stop fighting in the South.

10. In any talks, Communist terms would involve the establishment of a new "coalition" government, which would in fact if not in appearance be under the domination of the Communists. Secondly, they would insist on a guaranteed withdrawal of US forces within some precisely defined period. Their attitude toward other issues would be dictated by the degree of progress in achieving these two primary objectives, and the military-political situation then obtaining in South Vietnam.

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11. Cessation of bombing and opening of negotiations without significant Communist concessions would be deeply disturbing to the Saigon government. There would be a real risk that the Thieu-Ky regime would collapse, and this would in fact be part of Hanoi's calculation in accepting negotiations.

THE OUTLOOK

What is the likely course of events in South Vietnam over the next 10 months, assuming no change in US policy or force levels?

12. In the assumed circumstances a total military victory by the Allies or the Communists is highly unlikely in the next 10 months. It is manifestly impossible for the Communists to drive US forces out of the country. It is equally out of the question for US/GVN forces to clear South Vietnam of Communist forces. It is possible, however, that the overall situation in this period will take a decisive turn.

13. We think it unlikely that this turn could be in the US/GVN favor. To be sure, Communist forces are now exposed to aggressive counteraction, their supply lines are extended, and some base areas may be vulnerable. Morale may be poor in some of the units which have suffered heavy losses. But we see no

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evidence yet that the GVN/ARVN will be inspired to seize the initiative, go over to the attack, exploit the Communist vulnerabilities, and quickly regain the rural areas. We doubt they have the will and capability to make the effort.

14. Far more likely is an erosion of the ARVN's morale and effectiveness. We do not believe that the GVN will collapse, or that the ARVN will totally disintegrate. But there is a fairly good chance that Communist pressures will result in a serious weakening of the GVN/ARVN apparatus and an end to its effective functioning in parts of the country. In these circumstances, virtually the entire burden of the war would fall on US forces.

15. The Communists too will be weakened by further offensive efforts. Losses will be heavy, combat effectiveness will be lowered, and morale will be damaged by the failure to achieve a complete victory. Even though their situation vis-a-vis the ARVN will be strong, their forces will probably not be in a position to register decisive advances unless they radically escalate the war by an all-out invasion.

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16. In sum, there is a high risk that both the ARVN and GVN will be seriously weakened in the next months, and perhaps decisively so. Our best estimate is that in the assumed circumstances the overall situation 10 months hence will be no better than a standoff.

REACTIONS TO US COURSES OF ACTION

What is the likely NVA/VC strategy over the next 10 months if US forces are increased by 50,000, by 100,000, or by 200,000?

17. We would expect the Communists to continue the war. They still have resources available in North Vietnam and within South Vietnam to increase their troop strength. Their strong logistical effort and their ability to organize and exploit the people under their control in the South enable them to counter US increases by smaller increases of their own. Over a ten-month period the Communists would probably be able to introduce sufficient new units into the South to offset the US maneuver battalion increments of the various force levels given above.

18. We cannot foresee the outcome of future combat resulting from the increase in US forces. The Communists would probably

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have to modify their current tactics, especially if the US increments were large enough to permit the formation of a strategic reserve as well as providing for the partial relief of the ARVN. In some places, they would retreat from the urban areas, trying to hold as much as possible of the countryside.

19. The prospect of heavy US reinforcements might persuade Hanoi to gamble on an all-out invasion from the North to seize Northern I Corps before reinforcements could be committed. It is also possible that the Communists would greatly expand their military pressures in Laos. The purpose of such a move would be to draw off US forces from South Vietnam, and to indicate that, unless the war was ended, the US faced a continued expansion of its commitment.

20. We would not expect the addition of any given number of US troops to change the policy or attitude of the USSR or China. Both would be willing to increase assistance in weaponry and Peking would offer more manpower for North Vietnam. Both would be concerned that the US would still be frustrated and would eventually be led to invade North Vietnam. But neither China nor the USSR would be likely to enter the war in response

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to a US buildup, and neither would be likely to take drastic diversionary moves outside of Vietnam.

21. The general international climate would certainly worsen for the US. There would be greater apprehension that the war in Vietnam would inevitably expand to the point of a US conflict with China, and perhaps even with the USSR. Many countries would blame the US for not trying to negotiate with Hanoi. International pressures for an end to the fighting would increase. At the same time, some US allies in Asia would be relieved that the US chose to reinforce rather than accept an unfavorable political settlement.

What is the likely Communist reaction to a change in US strategy toward greater control over population centers, with or without increased forces?

22. In general the Communists would view this move as a success for their strategy. Their tactical response in such circumstances would depend mainly on the nature of US enclaves. If these were fairly large and embraced much of the outlying countryside, the Communists would believe them to be porous enough to infiltrate and harass, much as they are doing now. If the defensive perimeters were fairly solid, however, the

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Communists would not try to overrun them in frontal assaults. Instead, they would concentrate for a time on consolidating the countryside and isolating the various defended enclaves, in particular interdicting supply lines and forcing the US to undertake expensive supply movements from out of country.

A Communist-controlled regime with a "coalition" facade would be set up in "liberated" areas and attempts at terrorist activity inside the enclaves would be undertaken. Hanoi would hope that a combination of military and political pressure, together with the dim prospect for achievement of the original US aims in the Vietnam struggle, would eventually persuade the US to extricate itself through negotiations.

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Department of State

TELEGRAM

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RR RUEHC
DE RUMJIR 20928 0611245
ZNY SSSSS
R 011130Z MAR 68
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7757
STATE GRNC
BT

CONTROL: 119Q
RECD: MARCH 1, 1968
8:44 A.M.

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MODIS

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STATE letter

[2-79]

Authority

By 108

NARS, Date

7-25-79

FOR SECRETARY RUSK FROM BUNKER

PASS OSD FOR SECRETARY CLIFFORD

1. YOU HAVE NOTED IN A RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT WE MAY BE ENTERING A CLIMACTIC STAGE IN VIET-NAM. I BELIEVE THAT INDICATIONS HERE TEND TO SUPPORT THIS VIEW. THERE ARE MANY FACTORS WHICH MAY HAVE CONVINCED HANOI THAT IT SHOULD GAMBLE ON A BROAD AND CAREFULLY PHASED ALL-OUT EFFORT. THESE INCLUDE OUR STEADY GRINDING DOWN OF THEIR FORCES, THE EFFECTS OF THE BOMBING IN THE NORTH, THE SUCCESSFUL CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS IN SOUTH VIET-NAM, THE BEGINNINGS OF RESULTS ON PACIFICATION, AND POSSIBLY OTHER FACTORS WHICH ARE DIFFICULT TO JUDGE, SUCH AS A REVISED HANOI ESTIMATE OF THE TREND IN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION. WE ARE NOT YET CLEAR ON HANOI'S AIMS, BUT AN ATTEMPT TO ENGAGE US IN NEGOTIATIONS IN 1968 AFTER SUCH A

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MILITARY EFFORT, COMBINED WITH ITS CURRENT DIPLOMATIC AND PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE, IS ONE POSSIBILITY.

2. I THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL AT THIS POINT TO REVIEW THEIR'S CURRENT ANALYSIS OF HANOI'S THREE-PHASE STRATEGY (SAIGON 18561 AND 19925). THE FIRST PHASE INVOLVED MILITARY EFFORTS TO SEIZE TERRAIN, TO CREATE AS MUCH DESTRUCTION AS POSSIBLE, TO BUILD UP HEAVY CASUALTIES, AND TO PIN DOWN GVN AND ALLIED TROOPS IN THE NORTHERN I CORPS AND CENTRAL HIGHLAND AREAS. SECOND, TO CONTINUE TO HARASS THE CITIES, INTENSIFY INFILTRATION, INCREASE POPULAR TENSION, AND BUILD

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SECTION 1 OF 2

UP THE GUERRILLA FORCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE. THIS WOULD INCLUDE INTERRUPTING SUPPLIES FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE TO THE CITIES, PINNING DOWN TROOPS IN URBAN AREAS, AND FACILITATING POLITICAL SPOILAGE IN THESE AREAS THROUGH PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION. THIRD, TO UNDERMINE THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM BY EXTENDING VC CONTROL IN THE COUNTRYSIDE THROUGH A COUNTER-PACIFICATION PROGRAM. THIEU THOUGHT THAT FOLLOWING THESE THREE EFFORTS, HANOI WOULD DECIDE WHETHER TO NEGOTIATE, IF HER POSITION REMAINS STRONG ENOUGH, OR TO FADE AWAY. THIEU BELIEVES THAT HANOI AND THE NLF WILL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THIS PACE UNTIL THE END OF THE YEAR OR EARLY 1969, BEFORE MOVING CLEARLY IN ONE OF THE TWO INDICATED DIRECTIONS.

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I AM INCLINED TO AGREE THAT EVEN WITH HIGHER LOSSES THEY HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CONTINUE AT LEAST THROUGH THE SUMMER AND INTO THE FALL AT THIS GENERAL LEVEL OF ACTIVITY, UNLESS WE AND THE GVN ARE ABLE TO POSE NEW PROBLEMS FOR THEM BY GOING ON THE OFFENSIVE ON BOTH THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL FRONTS.

3. HANOI'S PRESUMED CHANGE IN STRATEGY PRESENTS BOTH A HEIGHTENED RISK AND AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY FOR US. WE MUST AT ANY REASONABLE COST ELIMINATE ENEMY CHANCES OF MAJOR GAINS, ESPECIALLY IN THE TWO NORTHERN PROVINCES, LEST THIS UNDERMINE ALREADY SHAKEN SOUTH VIETNAMESE MORALE. WE SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE QUICK TO EXPLOIT THE OPPORTUNITY CREATED BY THE ENEMY'S HEAVY LOSSES IN THE TET OFFENSIVE, AND POSSIBLY IN A SUBSEQUENT THUA THIEN-QUANG TRI ACTION. IF THE GVN CAN, AS WE HOPE, RECOVER QUICKLY ENOUGH FROM THE TET ONSLAUGHT AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY THE NEW SITUATION AND WE CAN INITIATE COUNTER-OFFENSIVES IN CERTAIN AREAS WHILE CONTAINING THE NVA IN NORTHERN I CORPS, THE COMBINED EFFECT MAY BE TO PUT HANOI UNDER SUFFICIENT PRESSURE TO SHORTEN ITS PLANNED TIME FRAME.

4. WE ARE PUSHING THE GVN LEADERSHIP AS HARD AS WE CAN TO GET FORCES OUT INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE AND TO COUNTER-ATTACK

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WHERE FEASIBLE, TO ACCELERATE CIVIL RECOVERY, AND TO RALLY THE PEOPLE IN A POLICY OF NATIONAL UNITY. WE BELIEVE THAT WE

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ARE GETTING SOME RESULTS FROM THE GVN IN WHAT ARE ADMITTEDLY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THEM, BUT AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE IT IS ESSENTIAL TO BEAR IN MIND WHAT HUMAN RESOURCES WE HAVE TO WORK WITH HERE IN ASSESSING THE POSSIBILITIES FOR MORE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MORE RAPID PROGRESS.

5. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF COMPLEMENTARY MEASURES WHICH ONLY WASHINGTON CAN TAKE, HOWEVER. THEY INVOLVE FACTORS WHICH WE CANNOT FULLY JUDGE FROM HERE, BUT WHICH WE BELIEVE COULD POWERFULLY REENFORCE THE GVN EFFORT AND PERHAPS ULTIMATELY CONTRIBUTE TO SHORTENING THE WAR.

A) FIRST, WHILE WE RECOGNIZE THE MANY PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THE EARLY DESPATCH OF A LIMITED NUMBER OF ADDED COMBAT TROOPS TO VIET-NAM, WE BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD REENFORCE OUR ABILITY TO EXPLOIT THE ENEMY'S HEAVY LOSSES AND PERHAPS TO MAKE NEW MOVES TO DEAL WITH INFILTRATION THROUGH LAOS, AS INDICATED BELOW.

B) SECOND, ACCELERATED MODERNIZATION OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES IS OF MILITARY AND MORALE IMPORTANCE. THE INTRODUCTION OF RUSSIAN-DESIGNED ASSAULT RIFLES, LIGHT AND

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HEAVY MACHINE GUNS, ANTI-TANK ROCKETS AND ARTILLERY ROCKETS INTO VIET CONG MILITARY UNITS HAS INCREASED THE ENEMY'S COMBAT POWER TO A MAJOR DEGREE AND HAS ADVERSELY AFFECTED MORALE OF THE VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES, SINCE THEY ARE NOW OUT-GUNNED AT BATTALION LEVEL AND BELOW. THIS SUBJECT HAS BEEN ADDRESSED BY GENERAL WESTMORELAND THROUGH MILITARY CHANNELS.

C) THIRD, THE ENEMY'S TET OFFENSIVE HAS GIVEN US AN OPPORTUNITY TO UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SAN ANTONIO FORMULA AS A PREREQUISITE TO ANY CESSATION OF THE BOMBING IN THE NORTH AND TO TALKS WITH HANOI. BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND YOU HAVE RECENTLY REAFFIRMED THIS POSITION AND THIS HAS REASSURED THE GVN LEADERSHIP. I SHOULD POINT OUT HERE THAT THE TET OFFENSIVE HAS CLEARLY HAD AN EFFECT HERE OF HARDENING THE GVN'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE POSITION ON NEGOTIATIONS AND RELATED QUESTIONS SUCH AS THE STATUS OF THE NLF AND OVERT

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CONTACTS WITH IT. IN FACT, WITH THE PRESENT STATE OF VIETNAMESE MORALE, FOLLOWING THE SHOCK OF THE TET ATTACKS AND THEIR AFTERMATH, I BELIEVE THAT AN EARLY MOVE BY US TO ENGAGE IN BILATERAL TALKS WITH HANOI WOULD HAVE A MOST DAMAGING POLITICAL EFFECT HERE. CONTINUING CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE GVN ON THESE MATTERS AND THE LATTER'S INCLUSION AT AN EARLY STAGE IN ANY

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NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI ASSUME EVEN GREATER IMPORTANCE NOW.

D) IN ASSESSING OUR BOMBING POLICY IN THE NORTH, WE CAN SEE SOME ADVANTAGE IN INCREASING THE PRESSURE ON HANOI BY ADDING CERTAIN MILITARY TARGETS, PROVIDED THEY ARE OF MILITARY VALUE AND DO NOT INCREASE SUBSTANTIALLY THE LIKELIHOOD OF GREATER CIVILIAN DEATHS AND CASUALTIES. CERTAIN DECISIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN TAKEN IN THIS SENSE AND PERHAPS THERE IS NOTHING MORE THAT SHOULD BE DONE IN THIS DIRECTION, THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT HANOI EXPECTED RETALIATION FOR THE TET ATTACKS, HOWEVER. WE HAVE BEEN FOREBEARING IN RECENT WEEKS AND MONTHS IN OUR EFFORT TO INDICATE TO HANOI THAT WE WERE READY TO TALK, BUT THEIR RESPONSE HAS BEEN THE SERIES OF VICIOUS ATTACKS IN SOUTH VIET-NAM OVER THE TET HOLIDAYS AND THEIR DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE DESIGNED TO PUT PRESSURE ON US.

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Department of State

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TELEGRAM

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3758
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CONTROL: 155Q
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10:39 A.M.

~~SECRET~~ SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 20920

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FOR SECRETARY FROM BUNKER

PASS OSD FOR SECRETARY CLIFFORD

E) I URGE PROMPT COMPLETION OF CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND APPROPRIATE RESPONSES SHOULD HANOI INTRODUCE SPECTACULAR NEW WEAPONRY OR OTHER MAJOR NEW MILITARY MOVES. EXAMPLES OF THIS ARE POSSIBLE ENEMY BOMBING SOUTH OF THE DMZ, ATTACKS ON OUR CARRIERS, USE OF THE SOVIET FROG MISSILE, OR EXTENSIVE USE OF ARMOR IN SVN. SUCH INTENSIFICATIONS OF THE NVN MILITARY EFFORT WOULD INEVITABLY FURTHER AFFECT SOUTH VIETNAMESE MORALE BY EMPHASIZING THEIR RELATIVE INFERIORITY IN TERMS OF WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT.

F) AREAS OF CONTINUING SPECIAL CONCERN TO ME ARE LAOS AND CAMBODIA. AS I HAVE POINTED OUT EARLIER (SAIGON 28293 OF

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JUNE 17, 1967) AND REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES SINCE, I CONSIDER IT ESSENTIAL TO DEVELOP SOME EFFECTIVE WAY OF GREATLY REDUCING THE MAJOR INFILTRATION THROUGH LAOS, WHICH SHOULD MAKE THE SITUATION HERE MUCH MORE MANAGEABLE. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN INCREASING CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE OF ENEMY SUPPLIES, INCLUDING WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION, COMING THROUGH CAMBODIA. SINCE THE EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ICC THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE PROSPERING, I BELIEVE THAT EARLY CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO OTHER MEASURES WHICH WILL DETER THE GROWING NVA/VC USE OF CAMBODIA AND THE APPARENT RESUPPLY FROM THIS QUARTER. OUR MEASURES SHOULD BE APPLIED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO BRING PRESSURE ON SIHANOUK TO DEAL MORE FORTHRIGHTLY

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AND CONCRETELY WITH THE PROBLEM. THEY SHOULD COMBINE POLITICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ANY REQUIRED MILITARY ACTIONS. WITH THESE TWIN PROBLEMS OF LAOS AND CAMBODIA IN MIND, I HAVE CONVENED A SEACORD MEETING ON MARCH 7, AT WHICH AMBASSADORS UNGER AND SULLIVAN, ADMIRAL SHARP, GENERAL WESTMORELAND AND I WILL REVIEW THE SITUATION IN THOSE TWO COUNTRIES AND RECOMMEND COURSES OF ACTION TO DEAL WITH THEM.

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6. I RECOGNIZE THAT SOME OF THE STEPS SUGGESTED ABOVE WILL BE REGARDED IN CERTAIN CIRCLES AS DEGREES OF ESCALATION, AND TO BE FRANK ABOUT THEM, THEY ARE. WHAT I BELIEVE SHOULD BE WEIGHED AGAINST THIS FACTOR, HOWEVER, IS THE APPARENT ALL-OUT NATURE OF THE PRESENT ENEMY STRATEGY WHICH SUGGESTS THAT HE IS PLAYING ALL HIS M 94 MILITARY CARDS SHORT OF INVITING SOME KIND OF OPEN CHINESE OR SOVIET PARTICIPATION BEYOND THE REPORTEDLY GROWING USE OF CHINESE LABOR TO REPLACE NORTH VIETNAMESE MAN-POWER. IN DECIDING ON OUR ACTIONS, WE OF COURSE WISH TO AVOID STEPS WHICH MIGHT MAKE SUCH EXTERNAL MILITARY INVOLVEMENT MORE LIKELY FOR REASONS OF FACE OR DESPERATION. OUR OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE TO TAKE MEASURES WHICH WILL ENCOURAGE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE LEADERSHIP TO SEEK NEGOTIATIONS ON AN ACCEPTABLE BASIS, IN RECOGNITION OF OUR DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE ON OUR PRESENT COURSE UNTIL THEY DO.

7. I HOPE THAT THESE SUGGESTIONS WILL RECEIVE PROMPT HIGH-LEVEL CONSIDERATION SO THAT WE CAN CAPITALIZE ON THE ENEMY'S EXPOSED POSITION AT A TIME WHEN IT MAY COUNT THE MOST.

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2 MAR 1968

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FM GEN WESTMORELAND COMUSMACV

TO GEN WHEELER CJCS

INFO ADM SHARP CINCPAC

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OSD letter JUN 26 1979
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By ing, NARS, Date 10-19-79

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FOLLOWING ARE REPLIES TO QUESTIONS 5B AND 5D.

5B. WHAT ALTERNATIVE MILITARY STRATEGIES COULD YOU

ADOPT WITH PROGRAM 5 FORCES, PLUS THE 6 ADDITIONAL BATTALIONS
RECENTLY DEPLOYED, WHICH WOULD DEFEND ADEQUATELY THE
ESSENTIAL AREAS AND POPULATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM?

(1) IN VIEW OF THE CURRENT ENEMY THREAT IT IS NOT FEASIBLE
TO DECREASE FORCES IN I CORPS. THEREFORE THOSE ADDITIONAL
UNITS WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN INTRODUCED TO REINFORCE THE
MARINE DEPLOYMENTS THERE MUST REMAIN UNTIL THE THREAT IS
REDUCED. UNDER THIS OPTION THERE WOULD BE LITTLE CHANGE IN
THE IMMEDIATE STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN I CORPS SINCE IT IS
PLANNED TO FIGHT THE COUNTER- OFFENSIVE THERE WITH FORCES
NOW PRESENT. HOWEVER, FOLLOWING THAT PHASE IT WAS PLANNED
TO SHIFT THE OFFENSIVE SWEEP GRADUALLY TO THE SOUTH INTO
SOUTHERN I CORPS, NORTHERN AND COASTAL II CORPS AND EVENTUALLY
INTO III CORPS. THERE WILL BE INSUFFICIENT FORCES AVAILABLE TO
MOUNT SUCH A GENERAL OFFENSIVE WITHOUT THE ADD- ON FORCES.
UNDER THE ADDITIVE REQUIREMENT CONCEPT IT WAS ENVISAGED THAT
I CT2 WOULD BE REINFORCED WITH 1 2/3 DIVISIONS (THE 5TH MECH
DIV AND THE 5TH MARINE DIV MINUS ONE REGIMENT). EXPLOITATION

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FORCES (COUNTRYWIDE, BEGINNING IN I CORPS) WERE TO BE THE 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION AND THE 1ST AIR CAV DIVISION. THE ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY FOR I CORPS WOULD BE TO LEAVE THE 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (WITH 3D BDE, 82D ABN DIV ATTACHED TO REPLACE ONE BRIGADE OF THE 101ST REMAINING IN III CTZ) PLUS THE 27TH RLT, OR ONLY 1 1/3 DIVISIONS IN I CORPS. THIS THEN WOULD REDUCE THE COUNTRYWIDE EXPLOITATION FORCE BY ONE DIVISION. (2) IN II CTZ, ALREADY AN ECONOMY OF FORCE AREA, THERE WOULD BE NO CHANGE IN THE CURRENT FORCE DEPLOYMENT, SINCE THE DESIRED ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT WOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE TO PROVIDE NEEDED FLEXIBILITY. THE SCOPE AND TEMPO OF OUR OFFENSIVE ACTION UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD BE REDUCED, PARTICULARLY IF ENEMY INCURSIONS ACROSS THE LAOS- CAMBODIA BORDER WERE TO INCREASE IN FREQUENCY AND NUMBER. THUS, II CORPS WOULD CONTINUE AS AN ECONOMY OF FORCE AREA. (3) IN III CTZ, WITH PERMANENT REMOVAL OF THE 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (MINUS 1 BDE) TO I CORPS AND THE EVER-INCREASING COMMITMENT OF THE 9TH INF DIV TO OPERATIONS IN IV CTZ, THIS CORPS ALSO WOULD BECOME AN ECONOMY OF FORCE AREA. THE FREQUENCY AND INTENSITY OF OFFENSIVE THRUSTS INTO ENEMY REDOUBTS AND CONTESTED AREAS WOULD DIMINISH FOR LACK OF NECESSARY FORCES. (4) WE WOULD CONTINUE TO DEPLOY ELEMENTS OF THE 9TH INF DIV TO IV CORPS WHEN WEATHER AND THE TACTICAL SITUATION SO DICTATED, ALTHOUGH ADVANTAGE OF TACTICAL OPPORTUNITY UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD BE TAKEN LESS FREQUENTLY, THUS SLOWING PROGRESS. (5) OVERALL, REDUCTION OF THE EXPLOITATION FORCE TO ONE DIVISION (1ST AIR CAV) AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE III CORPS INTO AN ECONOMY OF FORCE AREA

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WOULD MEAN LESS TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC FLEXIBILITY, LESS PACIFICATION PROGRESS FOR SECURITY REASONS, MORE RISK OF THE ENEMY AGAIN SEIZING THE INITIATIVE BY COMMITTING NEW FORMATIONS IN THE DMZ AREA AND THUS PINNING DOWN OUR SMALL EXPLOITATION FORCE TO THAT AREA. WE WOULD BE ABLE TO STRIKE A LESSER NUMBER OF ENEMY CONCENTRATIONS AND BASE AREAS AT ONE TIME OR OVER A GIVEN PERIOD OF TIME. THE END RESULT WOULD BE THAT THE WAR WOULD BE LENGTHENED.

5D. IS IT FEASIBLE AND DESIRABLE TO LEAVE THE CLEARING AND DEFENSE OF THE DELTA ENTIRELY TO THE VIETNAMESE?

EMPLOYMENT OF THE US 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION IN MOBILE RIVERINE OPERATIONS IN THE MEKONG DELTA IS ESSENTIAL TO BREAK THE NEAR STALEMATE WHICH HAS EXISTED FOR SOME TIME IN THAT AREA. FURTHER THE APPARENT RETROGRESSION IN CERTAIN PACIFIED AREAS WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE RECENTLY AS A RESULT OF THE ENEMY TET OFFENSIVE MUST BE OVERCOME. SOME ARVN AND RF/PF UNITS HAVE WITHDRAWN TO THE CITIES AND TO CENTRAL BASE AREAS. THESE FORCES MUST BE REDEPLOYED TO RESTORE SECURITY AND TO RE-ESTABLISH GVN PRESENCE IN OUTLYING AREAS. THE FIRST TASK, HOWEVER, IS TO CLEAR ENEMY FORCES FROM AROUND CITIES; THEN A GENERAL OFFENSIVE TO CLEAR OUT VC BASE AREAS AND BLOCK INFILTRATION AND SUPPLY ROUTES FROM CAMBODIA AND TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SECURITY FOR DELTA LOC AND POPULATION CENTERS IS NEEDED. WITHOUT HELP IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT ARVN AND RF/PF UNITS IN THE DELTA CAN RESTORE SECURITY TO THE DEGREE IT EXISTED PRIOR TO THE TET OFFENSIVE WITHIN AN ACCEPTABLE TIME FRAME. IF ENEMY FORCES AND POLITICAL CADRE ARE PERMITTED

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TO REMAIN IN POPULATED AREAS FOR ANY APPRECIABLE PERIOD OF TIME, THEIR RECRUITING/IMPRESSMENT, INDOCTRINATION, PROPOGANDA AND COERCION ACTIVITIES WOULD DAMAGE PACIFICATION PROGRESS GREATLY, PERHAPS TO AN EXTENT MEASURED IN YEARS RATHER THAN MONTHS. THEREFORE, WHILE IT MAY NOT BE NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE TO RETAIN ALL COMBAT ELEMENTS OF THE 9TH US INFANTRY DIVISION IN THE DELTA AT ALL TIMES, ADDITIONAL US FORCES UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BE REQUIRED ON A MISSION BASIS TO ASSIST ^{RYNAF} ~~REEF~~ IN ESTABLISHING AND EINTAINING THE NECESSARY OFFENSIVE MOMENTUM TO EVICT THE VC FROM THE AREAS CONTIGUOUS TO CITIES: TO DISRUPT ENEMY SUPPLY AND INFILTRATION ROUTES: TO ELIMINATE PERSISTENT THREATS TO LOC AND CITY SECURITY; AND TO ELIMINATE LARGE VC BASE OR STAGING AREAS WHCIH ARE BEYOND THE MOBILITY, FIRPOWER AND TACTICAL DEPLOYMENT CAPABILITIES OF ARVN. THE VIETNAMESE SHOULD CLEARLY RETAIN PRIMACY IN DELTA COMBAT AND SECURITY OPERATIONS, BUT THEY ARE NOT NOW CAPABLE OF GOING IT ALONE WITHOUT SERIOUS DANGER OF OVERALL REGRESSION IN THE SECURITY OF THAT VITAL AREA. OUR FREQUENT PRESENCE IN THE DELTA IN DIVISION STRENGTH CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.

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FM GEN WESTMORELAND COMUSMACV SAIGON

TO GEN WHEELER CJCS

INFO ADM SHARP CINCPAC

ZEM

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By is, NARS, Date 10-19-79

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SACSA

IN ORDER TO QUICKLY FURNISH INFORMATION REQUIRED BY
YOUR JCS 02430, I AM REPLYING TO YOUR QUESTIONS PIECEMEAL.
THIS RELATES TO THE PURELY MILITARY AREA REFERRED TO IN
PARA TWO OF YOUR MESSAGE.

QUESTION A: WHAT MILITARY AND OTHER OBJECTIVES ARE
ADDITIONAL FORCES DESIGNED TO ADVANCE?

ANSWER: (1) DEFEAT AND EVICT FROM SVN THE
NEW NVA UNITS NOW PRESENT IN WESTERN QUANG TRI AND CENTRAL
THUA THIEN PROVINCES, TO INCLUDE THE ASHAU VALLEY AND BASE
AREAS 131 AND 114.

(2) MAINTAIN POSITIVE GOVERNMENTAL AND MILITARY CONTROL
OVR QUANG TRI AND THUA THIEN PROVINCES, PARTICULARLY THE
POPULOUS AREAS OF THE COASTAL LOWLANDS AND THE DMZ AREA.
BE PREPARED TO BLOCK OR INTERDICT THE INFILTRATION/INVASION
ROUTES FROM NVN THROUGH LAOS.

(3) DESTROY VC/NVA MAIN FORCE UNITS AND BASE AREAS IN
THE REMAINDER OF I CORPS AND IN THE NORTHEASTERN COASTAL
AND NORTHWESTERN LAOS BORDER AREAS OF II CORPS.

(4) REDUCE THE "CALCULATED RISK" CURRENTLY ENTAILED
IN OUR ECONOMY OF FORCE POSTURE IN II AND III CORPS BY PRO-
VIDING THE ADDED FLEXIBILITY AND "PUNCH" OF AN ARMORED
CAVALRY REGIMENT.

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(5) CONDUCT AGGRESSIVE AND CONTINUING OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGNS THROUGHOUT THE COASTAL AREAS OF II CORPS AND INTO TRADITIONAL ENEMY BASE AREAS AND SANCTUARIES IN III CORPS ALONG THE CAMBODIAN BORDER; ESPECIALLY IN WAR ZONES "C" AND "D". RESTORE THE OFFENSIVE COMBAT AND PACIFICATION MOMENTUM LOST IN III CORPS AS A RESULT OF THE ENEMY'S TET OFFENSIVE AND THE REQUIREMENT TO TRANSFER THE 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (-) TO I CORPS TO STEM THE NVA INCURSION INTO QUANG TRI.

(6) BE PREPARED FOR CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS IF REQUIRED.

QUESTION B: WHAT SPECIFIC DANGERS ARE THEIR DISPATCH TO SVN DESIGNED TO AVOID, AND WHAT SPECIFIC GOALS WOULD THE INCREMENT OF FORCE, IF RECOMMENDED BY YOU (THE COMMITTEE), AIM TO ACHIEVE -

IN THE NEXT 6 MONTHS?

OVER THE NEXT YEAR?

ANSWER: (1) (PREDICATED ON THE SCHEDULED DELIVERY OF FORCES INDICATED DURING YOUR FEB 68 VISIT.) ADDITIVE FORCES WOULD SERVE TO FORESTALL THE DANGER OF LOCAL DEFEATS DUE TO THE TACTICAL DEGENERATION OR TEMPORARY DISORGANIZATION OF SOMZ ARVN UNITS IN THE EVENT OF ANOTHER GENERAL ENEMY OFFENSIVE COUPLED WITH A MASSIVE INVASION ACROSS THE DMZ. THE NEED TO BE PREPARED TO SUPPORT OR REINFORCE ARVN UNITS THAT ARE SURPRISED BY THE NATURE AND INTENSITY OF VC/NVA ATTACKS BECAME MANIFEST DURING THE ENEMY'S TET DRIVE AND MUST BE RECOGNIZED IN US TROOP

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REQUIREMENT AND DEPLOYMENT PLANS FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. BY PROVIDING A TWO DIVISION MOBILE "SWING FORCE" WHICH COULD BE POSITIONED AND EMPLOYED AS REQUIRED, THE NEED TO DRAW DOWN ON FORCES DIRECTLY ENGAGED IN TERRITORIAL SECURITY TASKS PROBABLY WOULD BE REDUCED. THUS THE DANGER OF LOSING POPULAR CONFIDENCE IN AND SUPPORT FOR GVN/US CAPABILITIES, POLICIES AND ASPIRATIONS AS A RESULT OF TEMPORARY MILITARY OR PSYCHOLOGICAL SETBACKS WOULD ALSO BE DIMINISHED.

(2) PROVISION OF THE IMMEDIATELY REQUIRED ADDITIONAL FORCES ALSO WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO APPLY CONTINUOUS PRESSURE TO SOME DEGREE IN ALL CORPS AREAS AND THUS REDUCE THE DANGER OF ALLOWING THE ENEMY THE OPPORTUNITY TO SOLICIT SUPPORT FROM THE POPULATION AND TO REORGANIZE, REFIT AND RECOUP SO THAT HE COULD SOON FIELD REJUVENATED UNITS, DESPITE HEAVY LOSSES SUFFERED DURING THE TET OFFENSIVE. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IN VIEW OF THE ENEMY CAPABILITY TO MOVE ADDITIONAL DIVISIONS SOUTH THROUGH THE PANHANDLE OR DMZ WITHOUT ANY CLEAR INTELLIGENCE INDICATORS OF SUCH ACTION. (THIS MATTER IS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO ME) THESE FORCES WILL ALSO MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO RETAIN THAT DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY AND RAPID RESPONSIVENESS NECESSARY TO COPE WITH AN APPARENT NEW ENEMY TACTIC OF SEARCHING FOR THIN SPOTS IN OUR FORCE STRUCTURE OR DEPLOYMENT IN ORDER TO LAUNCH HIS CONCENTRATED MASS ATTACKS.

(3) IN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS THE PRESENCE OF THE ARMORED

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CAVALRY REGIMENT IN II OR III CORPS WOULD REDUCE THE DEGREE OF CALCULATED RISK INHERENT IN THE ECONOMY OF FORCE POSTURE IN THOSE AREAS, PROVIDE ADDED TERRITORIAL SECURITY AND FURTHER THE GOAL OF PROVIDING ADDED COMBAT FLEXIBILITY. ADDITION OF ANOTHER MARINE REGIMENT AND ITS DIVISION HEAD-QUARTERS IN I CORPS WOULD THICKEN TROOP DENSITY IN CRITICAL I CTZ, ADD TO COMBAT FLEXIBILITY AND IMPROVE COMMAND AND CONTROL CAPABILITIES IN THAT CRITICAL AREA.

(4) OVER THE NEXT YEAR THE INCREMENT OF FORCE WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO:

A. MOVE PROGRESSIVELY FROM NORTH TO SOUTH WITH A CONTINUING SERIES OF HARD HITTING OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGNS TO INVADE BASE AREAS, INTERDICT AND DISRUPT INFILTRATION ROUTES, AND ELIMINATE OR EVICT VC/NVA FORCES FROM SVN.

B. AT THE SAME TIME, THE HIGHLY MOBILE EXPLOITATION FORCE (TWO DIVISIONS) WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO SPRUNTER ENEMY AGGRESSION OR TO EXPLOIT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TACTICAL SUCCESS ANYWHERE IN SVN WITHOUT REDUCING THE MINIMAL ESSENTIAL FORCE NECESSARY TO GUARANTEE MAINTENANCE OF SECURITY IN THOSE AREAS WHERE SUCCESSFUL MILITARY CAMPAIGNS HAVE ALREADY BEEN WAGED.

C. ADDITION OF THE NEW DIVISION IN III CORPS DURING THIS TIME FRAME WOULD RE-ESTABLISH THE CAPABILITY FOR CONDUCTING CONSTANT OPERATIONS IN AND AROUND WAR ZONES "C" AND "D" AND MAKE POSSIBLE THE CONSTANT USE OF A DIVISION SIZE FORCE IN THE IV CTZ WHICH CAPABILITY

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WAS REMOVED WITH TRANSFER OF THE 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION
(-) TO I CORPS. IN ADDITION, COMBAT OPERATIONS CONDUCTED
BY THIS DIVISION WOULD PROVIDE ADDED SECURITY FOR LOC AND
THE VITAL SEAT OF GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC CENTER OF SAIGON.

D. WITH THE TOTAL ADDITIVE COMBAT FORCES
REQUESTED IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO DEAL WITH THE INVADER
FROM THE NORTH, AND TO FACE WITH A GREATER DEGREE OF CON-
FIDENCE THE POTENTIAL TANK, ROCKET AND TACTICAL AIR
THREAT AS WELL AS THE EVER PRESENT POSSIBILITY THAT HE
MAY REINFORCE WITH ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF HIS HOME ARMY.

OTHER DATA AND ANSWERS WILL FOLLOW.

WARM REGARDS.

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~~EYES ONLY LIMITED DISTRIBUTION~~

2 MAR 1968

O 020956Z ZYH ZFF-3

FM GEN WESTMORELAND COMUSMACV

TO GEN WHEELER CJCS

INFO ADM SHARP CINCPAC

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REF: JCS 02430

DECLASSIFIED
OSD letter JUN 26 1979
Authority

1. IN REPLY TO PARA 5E, ABOVE REFERENCE: By isg, NARS, Date 10-19-79

QUESTION: HABIB STATED THAT THIEU BELIEVES THAT THE

ARVN CAN BE EXPANDED THIS YEAR BY AN ADDITIONAL 30,000
OVER THE 65,000 NOW IN YOUR PROGRAM. IS THIS POSSIBLE?

ANSWER: SINCE THE QUESTION DID NOT INDICATE

WHETHER PRESIDENT THIEU WAS SPEAKING OF FISCAL YEAR

68 OR CALENDAR YEAR 68, BOTH CASES ARE ADDRESSED.

FURTHER, SINCE THE PLANNED RVNAF INCREASE FROM THE
FISCAL YEAR 67 PROGRAM TO THE FISCAL YEAR 68 LEVEL IS
ROUGHLY 65,000, IT IS ASSUMED THAT THE QUESTION ADDRESSES
RVNAF INSTEAD OF ARVN.

A. ACCORDING TO OUR ESTIMATES, THE RVNAF WILL
REQUIRE APPROXIMATELY 115,000 INDIVIDUALS DURING THE
PERIOD 1 FEBRUARY - 30 JUNE 68 TO REPLACE LOSSES AND
FILL THE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS TO REACH PROGRAMMED
FORCE LEVEL OF 685,739 BY 30 JUNE 68. IF THE 30,000 WHICH
PRESIDENT THIEU MENTIONED IS ADDED TO THE FISCAL YEAR
68 PROGRAM, THIS WOULD REPRESENT A FORCE LEVEL OF
715,739 FOR 30 JUNE 1968; A FORCE LEVEL GREATER THAN THAT
PRESENTLY APPROVED OF THE 115,000 REQUIREMENT

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MENTIONED ABOVE, APPROXIMATELY 40,000 INDIVIDUALS WHO
HAVE ALREADY HAD SOME TRAINING WILL BE RECOUPED FOR
RVNAF. THE INDIVIDUALS CONSIST OF RECALLED RESERVISTS,
REINSTATED MILITARY PRISONERS, REINSTATED BATTLEFIELD
LABORERS AND DESERTERS AND WOUNDED RETURNED TO DUTY.
IF THE 30,000 ARE ADDED IN FISCAL 68, A REQUIREMENT FOR
105,000 TO RECEIVE AT LEAST THE NINE WEEK RECRUIT TRAINING
WOULD EXIST. OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THE MAXIMUM NUMBER
WHICH CAN BE TRAINED DURING THE PERIOD 1 FEBRUARY - 30
JUNE IS APPROXIMATELY 75,000 AND THIS IS BASED ON THE MOST
FAVORABLE TRAINING CONDITIONS PREVAILING DURING THE
PERIOD. THEREFORE, THE ADDITIONAL 30,000 COULD NOT BE
ASSIMILATED INTO RVNAF AND TRAINED BY THE END OF FY 68.

B. IF IT IS ASSUMED THAT THE 30,000 MENTIONED BY
PRESIDENT THIEU, WAS TO BE ADDED TO RVNAF DURING CALENDAR
YEAR 68, IT IS AGREED THAT THE 30,000 ADDITION IS POSSIBLE.
AS YOU RECALL FROM THE RVNAF FORCE STRUCTURE BRIEFING
THE PROPOSED RVNAF INCREASE FOR FISCAL YEAR 69 IS 93,415.
IF THE RVNAF IS ABLE TO INCREASE AT A FAIRLY UNIFORM
RATE DURING FISCAL YEAR 69, THE INCREASE BY 31 DECEMBER
1968 SHOULD BE APPROXIMATELY 46,000 OVER THE FISCAL
YEAR 68 PROGRAM. IF THE 30,000 PROPOSED INCREASE IS
INCLUDED IN THE 46,000, THERE SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM
IN MEETING THE 30,000 INCREASE.

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~~EYES ONLY~~

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2. WHILE IT IS RECOGNIZED FROM THE ABOVE ESTIMATES THAT THE 30,000 ADDITIONAL SPACES CANNOT BE FILLED BY 30 JUNE 1968, SUBSTANTIAL ADVANTAGES COULD BE GAINED BY RELEASING THE 30,000 SPACES NOW. THE RVNAF COULD BEGIN PLANNING FOR THE PROCUREMENT TO FILL THOSE SPACES NOW AND USE THEM TO MAINTAIN THE IMPETUS INTO FY 69 IN THE TRAINING BASE. THIS BECOMES PARTICULARLY CRITICAL IF THE FY 69 FORCE LEVEL IS NOT APPROVED WITHIN THE NEXT SIXTY DAYS. IF THE 30,000 SPACES WERE RELEASED NOW, THE PROPOSED ADD-ON FOR FISCAL YEAR 69 WOULD HAVE TO BE REDUCED BY THAT AMOUNT, IF OUR ESTIMATE OF RVN MANPOWER RESOURCES ARE VERIFIED BY EXPERIENCE.

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2 MAR 1968

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CO YSNKQH

DE YSNKQD 29 2621103

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FM GEN WESTMOPELAND COMUSMACV

TO GEN WHEELER CJS

INFO ADM SHARP CINCPAC

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REF: JCS 02430

FOLLOWING IS REPLY TO QUESTION 5C. WOULD THE EVACUATION OF KHE SANH AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEFENSE LINE LOCATED FURTHER TO THE EAST IMPROVE OR DEGRADE YOUR MILITARY SITUATION IN I CTZ NORTH (EXCLUSIVE OF POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS)?

ANSWER: THERE ARE NO ADVANTAGES OF MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE ACCURRING FROM ABANDONING KHE SANH IF IT IS INDEED OUR PURPOSE TO EJECT OR DESTROY THE INVADING NVA FORCES FROM THE RVN. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE DISADVANTAGES OF VOLUNTARILY WITHDRAWING FROM KHE SANH ARE TACTICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY

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Authority
By is, NARS, Date 10-19-79

OF THE GREATEST SIGNIFICANCE.

IN THE IMMEDIATE TIME FRAME, ABANDONING THE KHE SANH LAUNCH BASE AND WITHDRAWING FORCES TO THE EAST HAS ONE OVER- RIDING DISADVANTAGE - TO DO SO UNDER SEIGE WOULD INVOLVE ABANDONING OR DESTROYING TANKS, ARTILLERY, MOTOS, OTHER VEHICLES, AND GREAT QUANTITIES OF EQUIPMENT. TO DO THIS, EXCEPT UNDER THE MOST EXTREME EMERGENCIES, IS MILITARILY UNACCEPTABLE. THE BETTER SOLUTION WOULD BE TO RELIEVE THE GARRISON BY ATTACK (IF SUCH WERE DETERMINED TO BE THE APPROPRIATE COURSE OF ACTION) WHICH OBTVIATES THE REQUIRE- MENT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE BASE IN THE FIRST PLACE, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE MILITARY ADVANTAGES OF HOLDING THIS POSITION ON OUR WESTERN FLANK.

THE MILITARY ADVANTAGES OF HOLDING KHE SANH ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. IT IS AT THE CONFLUENCE OF NUMEROUS VALLEY INFILTRATION ROUTES LEADING INTO THE POPULATION CENTERS OF QUANG TRI AND THUA THIEN. THIS BASE INHIBITS AND AT BEST INTERDICTS THE UNPESPECTED USE OF THESE ROUTES BY THE ENEMY TO SUPPLY AND REINFORCE HIS ATTACKS ON QUANG TRI CITY AND HUE.

RETENTION OF KHE SANH DENIES THE ENEMY FREE AND UNHINDERED ACCESS TO OUR WESTERN FLANK AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENVELOP OUR FORCES NORTH OF QUANG TRI CITY.

C. KHE SANH PROVIDES A FORWARD LAUNCH AND RECOVERY BASE FOR DEEP RECONNAISSANCE PATROLS AND OBSERVATION GROUPS IN THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS OF RVN AND THE LAOTIAN PANHANDLE.

D. IT PROVIDES AN INVALUABLE BASE FOR PATROLS AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING MEANS OF MAJOR ENEMY MOVEMENT SOUTHWARD FROM THE WESTERN REACHES OF THE DMZ AND LAOTIAN INFILTRATION ROUTES. AS A COROLLARY, ITS RETENTION FORCES THE NVA INTO USING THE LONGER ROUTES OF THE LAOTIAN PANHANDLE.

E. OUR PRESENCE AT KHE SANH HAS FORCED THE ENEMY TO DIRECT SIZEABLE FORCES THAT HAVE BECOME VULNERABLE TO OUR MASSIVE FIRE POWER. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT KNOW THE EXTENT OF HIS LOSSES FROM OUR FIRE, IT IS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THEY ARE SUBSTANTIAL.

F. ASIDE FROM THE POLITICAL ASPECTS, THE RETREAT OF US/ARVN UNITS IN THE FACE OF NVA FORCES WOULD SEND A PSYCHOLOGICAL SHOCK WAVE OF INESTIMATABLE MAGNITUDE THROUGHOUT THE ARMED FORCES OF RVN. ITS TRAUMATIC IMPACT

ON THE MORALE AND FIGHTING SPIRIT OF ARVN TROOPS WOULD BE OF MAJOR CONSEQUENCE IN THE FURTHER DEFENSE OF RVN.

THE DISADVANTAGES OF HOLDING KHE SANH ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. WE MUST CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN AN AIR LOC UNTIL SUFFICIENT FORCE CAN BE COMMITTED TO OPENING AND SECURING A LAND LOC.

B. IT IMPOSES A DIFFICULT PROBLEM AT PRESENT FOR REINFORCEMENT, AND THERE IS LITTLE MUTUAL SUPPORT, EXCEPT ARTILLERY, BETWEEN KHE SANH AND THE FORCES IN THE CAMP CAMPOLL/POCK PILE AREA.

C. THE TERM "DEFENSE LINE" IS INAPPROPRIATE IN DESCRIBING OUR STRONG POINT SYSTEM IN NORTHEASTERN QUANG TRI. THE EXISTANT GAPS IN OUR ISLANDS OF DEFENSE ACROSS THE EASTERN DMZ DO NOT PRECLUDE ENEMY PASSAGE OF TROOPS TO AREAS IN OUR REAR, PARTICULARLY DURING PERIODS OF LOW VISIBILITY WHICH HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN DOING IN PREPARATION FOR THE DURING HIS TET OFFENSIVE. ON THE OTHER HAND IF WE DID NOT OCCUPY THESE POSITIONS THE ENEMY WOULD DO SO TO OUR DISADVANTAGE.

IN CONCLUSION, I BELIEVE THE RETENTION AND DEFENSE OF KHE SANH FOR A FORWARD LAUNCH AND RECOVERY BASE FOR RECONNAISSANCE ELEMENTS; AND AS A STRONG POINT FOR THE

LONG TERM CONTINUED DEFENSE OF QUANG TRI AND THUA THIEN IS ADVISABLE. IF IT IS OUR POLICY TO HOLD QUANG TRI PROVINCE, WE CAN NOT AFFORD TO ABANDON OUR OUTPOSTS.

WITH RESPECT TO THE QUESTION OF HOLDING TERRAIN VERSUS POPULATION CENTERS OR ENCLAVES REFER TO MY MAC 11956 DATED 12 DEC 67, PARAS 6, 7, 8 AND 9. MAC 02013 DATED 12 FEB 68.

WVZ 005
00 WTE 15
DE WTE 932

FROM WALT ROSTOV
TO THE PRESIDENT
CITE CAPR 527

~~SECRET~~

MARCH 2, 1968

YOU SHOULD KNOW: THERE IS CONSIDERABLE INTELLIGENCE THAT
MAJOR ENEMY ATTACKS MAY BEGIN ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 3
(THIS AFTERNOON OUR TIME), THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF
THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PARTY.

THE WESTERN HIGHLANDS IS THE MOST LIKELY (DAK TO, KONTUM,
PLEIKU); BUT KHE SANH AND OTHER AREAS COULD BE INVOLVED.

DTG: 021350Z MAR 68

1968 MAR 2 14 12

DECLASSIFIED

Authority OSD 10-6-78, NSC 8-14-80

By JK (ing), NARS, Date 8-29-80

~~SECRET~~

60 MAR 2 AM 9:16

SATURDAY

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF
INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

March 2, 1968

Mr. Walt Rostow
The White House

I think you may find
this timely and of special
interest.

TH
Thomas L. Hughes

G

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

~~SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~

Intelligence ^{3E}

Note - 171

6a

March 2, 1968

To : The Secretary

Through: S/S

From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes *TH*

DECLASSIFIED

Authority State 4-25-79, OSD 7-31-79

By if, NARS, Date 2-1-80

Subject: VIETNAM: Communist Strategy in Retrospect and Prospect

The massive introduction of US combat forces into South Vietnam in 1965 eliminated the possibility of an immediate Communist military victory and forced Hanoi and the Viet Cong to adopt a military strategy of attrition. Until recently, this strategy aimed at tying down US combat forces in protracted campaigns in remote, unpopulated regions while enabling Communist guerrilla forces more effectively to harass and impede government efforts to reassert itself in the rural populated areas. With the massive attacks against Vietnamese urban centers last month, the Communists have introduced a new and additional factor into their military strategy.

Initial Phase: Engage and Defeat the US Everywhere. The Communists reacted rather quickly to the introduction of US combat units in 1965. In the main, the strategy was one of engaging and attempting to defeat or oust entirely US forces, regardless of the casualties incurred, wherever they were committed or presented a threat--in the remote highlands, as in the Ia Drang Valley in November 1965, or in the populated lowlands, as in Binh Dinh province beginning in early 1966. North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and to some extent main force Viet Cong units were committed against US combat forces while Viet Cong guerrillas and local forces continued to harass GVN forces in the countryside. In the remote areas, the Communists engaged major US units in pitched battles in regimental strength, relying on the advantages of rough terrain, poor weather, and short logistical lines. In the populated areas, Communist forces sought to draw an "anti-American belt" around US facilities and encampments, initially utilizing small harassing units and later employing NVA and Viet Cong regular forces.

This report was produced by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Aside from normal substantive exchange with other agencies at the working level, it has not been coordinated elsewhere.

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However, the battles which followed in late 1965 and during the first half of 1966 rather conclusively demonstrated the vulnerability of NVA and Viet Cong mainforce concentrations, particularly in the lowlands. While the mainforce Communist units remained intact, heavy casualties seriously weakened their ability to engage Allied forces effectively or to provide the necessary protection to guerrilla forces engaged in harassing the populated areas.

Second Phase: War of Attrition. By mid-1966 at the latest, it was clear that the Communists were modifying their military strategy to support a war of attrition against the combined GVN/Allied forces. The Communists continued to wage two wars simultaneously, i.e., a "conventional" war by NVA units against US forces, and an "unconventional" or harassing-guerrilla war against GVN forces in the countryside. However, in contrast to their earlier "stand-and-fight" approach, the Communists now sought to draw US forces into the hinterlands and border areas, in an effort to strain their logistic and reaction capabilities, expose them to heavier casualties, and ultimately tie them down in protracted and indecisive campaigns. In the effort to extend US forces, the Communists also sought an improved capability to undertake quick sallies into populated areas or against major installations and to relieve the pressure on local guerrillas who continued to harass the pacification program and other government efforts in the countryside.

In order to extend US forces, the Communists proceeded to redeploy and strengthen their force structure in strategic border areas. Perhaps the major initial step in this movement was the introduction of the 324B NVA Division across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in June 1966 and the subsequent Communist military build-up in the central and eastern sectors of the DMZ area. The process of redeployment and expansion was gradually extended southward and has since resulted in the creation of four major NVA concentration areas, in addition to the DMZ: eastern

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- 3 -

Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces; the Khe Sanh area in western Quang Tri province and the western sector of the DMZ; Kontum and Pleiku provinces; and the border provinces of Tay Ninh, Binh Long, and Phuoc Long. These concentrations have been achieved largely by the infiltration of new NVA regiments, although in some instances forces already in-country were repositioned or used to form new units.

While redeploying and expanding the main force, the Communists also restructured their tactical combat zones or "military regions" as well as their command and control relationships with Hanoi. Before this rearrangement, the entire northern area from the DMZ to the foothills of the central highlands constituted Military Region 5, while the southern area, excluding the Saigon-Cholon-Gia Dinh Special Zone, down to the Camau peninsula formed Region Nambo; both regions and the special zone operated under the direct authority of the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), the highest command echelon within the South. By mid-1966, it became increasingly apparent that Military Region 5, where both NVA and US forces were concentrated and where the "conventional" war was apparently to be waged, was being reorganized into several separate entities, each responsible directly to Hanoi. Since then, four command-tactical zones have been established in the northern half of the country, as shown in attached map: the DMZ "Front" Region in the northern area of Quang Tri province, the Tri-Thien-Hue Military Region in eastern Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces and around the Hue area, the B-3 Front Region in the Kontum-Pleiku-Darlac province area, and Military Region 5 for the several central coastal provinces.

In the southern half, where the military contest was primarily between the GVN and the Viet Cong, Region Nambo was divided into five military regions, the most recently established being Region 10 in the Binh Long-Phuoc Long-Quang Duc province area. Direct authority over each of these regions remained with COSVN.

Strategy Costly but Effective. Despite adjustments in strategy, Communist forces during 1966 and 1967 continued to take heavy casualties. US forces penetrated deep into remote Communist base and concentration areas, launched "spoiling" operations to disrupt Communist military initiatives, and, in cooperation with GVN and other Allied forces involved in pacification, weakened the Communist position in the populated lowlands. As a result, Communist morale, manpower, and logistic problems progressively increased, the combat effectiveness of many Communist main-force units declined, and Communist capability to mount concerted regimental-size attacks was substantially reduced. Moreover, the direct control previously exercised by Communist mainforce military units over most of the rural populace along the coast was broken in a number of strategically important areas.

These setbacks notwithstanding, Communist forces apparently were able to absorb losses without any major impairment of their capabilities. The Communists continued to demonstrate considerable aggressiveness and initiative in battle; during 1967, for example, they carried out more than twice as many small-scale armed attacks in all corps areas and appreciably more battalion-size attacks than they did during 1966. Shortages were primarily of non-military supplies; the infiltration of heavy weapons and other military supplies substantially increased Communist fire-power in virtually all corps areas. Casualties and local recruitment problems were more than offset numerically by infiltration of replacements.

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Even in the central lowlands, where Communist concentrations were more vulnerable to attack, the three NVA divisions in the area had been able, as of the end of 1967, to maintain their overall personnel strength at about 70% of their strength at the time of infiltration into South Vietnam. Moreover, although their casualties were very heavy, the Communists may have felt that they had been able to stabilize them at a tolerable level despite the progressive increase in US combat forces. As shown below, casualties per quarter were less than twice as heavy in 1967 than in the last quarter of 1965 although meanwhile US force strength had tripled:

	<u>Average US Forces Strength</u>	<u>Total VC/NVA KIA*</u>	<u>Rate of Enemy KIA per 1,000 US Troops</u>
<u>1965</u>			
3rd QTR.	96,100	10,039	105
4th QTR.	158,300	13,466	85
<u>1966</u>			
1st QTR.	207,750	13,060	63
2nd QTR.	249,350	11,872	48
3rd QTR.	290,300	15,616	54
4th QTR.	349,200	14,976	43
<u>1967</u>			
1st QTR.	403,100	22,756	56
2nd QTR.	434,850	23,389	54
3rd QTR.	454,950	20,087	44
4th QTR.	474,000	21,872	46

* These are derived from body count and do not include deaths or persons permanently disabled from wounds or disease. In a recent study of captured Communist documents, Systems Analysis (SA) of the Department of Defense suggested that the body count of enemy KIA may be inflated by about 30% and that the estimated number of persons dead or permanently disabled from wounds may be inflated by about 300%. However, the SA study also suggested that disease may have resulted in the death or disablement of almost 100,000 Communists; MACV does not estimate such losses.

Perhaps more important to Communist strategy, however, the Communists were able by the end of 1967 to tie down most GVN/Allied combat units in protracted and indecisive campaigns. By conducting persistent and threatening maneuver operations and occasional attacks, NVA forces kept the bulk of the US combat forces deployed against them in sparsely populated areas such as the Demilitarized Zone, the Khe Sanh sector, the western highlands, and northern Corps III. Moreover, the repeated redeployments of US forces from populated areas during 1967 to engage in offensive campaigns or to reinforce defenses in border areas--as occurred, for example, during the fighting last year at Dak To, Song Be, and Loc Ninh--weakened the GVN/Allied effort in pacification and in search-and-destroy operations particularly in the central lowland provinces. With the pressure eased in the populated areas, the Communist forces were able to intensify guerrilla and small-unit harassing activities particularly against efforts by the government to extend its control and root out the Communist infrastructure. By the middle part of 1967, it was clear that security in a number of populated areas, for example, in Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Quang Nam, and Quang Ngai--five contiguous coastal provinces which witnessed considerable progress in pacification during the previous year--had noticeably declined. Moreover, there seemed to be little prospect that security could be improved or that the remaining Communist forces could be further contained in the central lowlands without the introduction of additional Allied forces.

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Urban Assault: A New Factor in the Equation. The unprecedented, massive assault against South Vietnamese urban centers since January 30 has introduced a new element in Communist strategy. Traditionally, the Vietnamese Communist doctrine of "people's war" has focussed on the rural sector to be "liberated" by the "armed patriotic struggle," leaving the urban centers as islands of enemy strength which would eventually fall of their own weight or through the "general uprising" would join the "liberated" areas to overthrow the "puppet" government and expel the "foreign imperialists." It is in the urban areas, however, that the Communist political efforts to date had been least effective, and their long-standing concern over their urban failures may well have been deepened as urban populations have grown and rural populations declined. The Communists have now apparently decided to supplement their military and guerrilla-harassing campaigns in the countryside by applying more systematically in the cities the same tactics that have served them so well in the rural areas.

That the Communists have undertaken such an effort at this time suggests confidence on their part that they have achieved the overall tactical flexibility and logistical capability to mount and sustain an urban-oriented offensive. Having tied up the bulk of the GVN/Allied combat forces, the Communists may feel that they are in an excellent offensive posture and, that despite heavy casualties and strains on their resources, they can make quick political and military gains in both urban and rural areas. Moreover, they may have calculated that they would be able to transform these gains into lasting successes before the GVN and the US could react effectively.

The domestic political impact of the Communist urban offensive has already been considerable. The Communists have dramatically demonstrated to many urban Vietnamese that the Saigon government and its allies are no more capable of protecting them than they have been capable of bringing lasting security to the countryside. Many Vietnamese apparently are questioning US intentions in Vietnam, given the persistence of rumors that the US cooperated with the Communists in launching the attacks in order to force the GVN to accept a Communist-dominated coalition government. In attacking and fighting in the cities, the Communists may have been motivated in part by the expectation that countermeasures would result in heavy civilian casualties and urban damage that could be blamed on GVN and US forces. While it is not yet clear whether this has redounded against the Saigon government and its allies, the extent of the physical damage and the large number of refugees have created serious problems which could further strain Saigon's image as an effective and responsive government. Finally, while the Communists thus far have failed to achieve a groundswell of spontaneous support for their "general uprising", some few civilian and military officials at least have apparently defected to the Communists. One prominent Buddhist monk in the northern provinces has reportedly appealed to all Buddhists to join the Alliance, the new Communist front organization formed last month.

Perhaps the most serious immediate impact of the Communist assault against the urban centers has been in the countryside. Although information is still incomplete, it appears that GVN forces withdrew to defend provincial and district

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capitals where they have since remained. Moreover, with GVN and US attention and resources concentrated on immediate urban problems, governmental operations outside provincial and district capitals appear to have come to a complete halt in many areas. The result has been a political and security vacuum in much of the countryside. The pacification program, which does not seem to have been a major Communist target, has nonetheless been rendered virtually inoperative, and the peasant's confidence in the government's rural programs has undoubtedly been shaken.

In the meantime, there are increasing reports from the provinces that Communist forces are moving freely in the countryside, interdicting the transportation and communications systems, propagandizing, recruiting, and generally filling the vacuum created by the government's withdrawal. This problem exists in all Corps areas but appears particularly serious in Corps IV. Reports from this region indicate that the countryside may be going to the Communists by default. ARVN is largely ignoring offensive possibilities and concentrating on defending the cities and in effect has been immobilized. Communist logistical resources are being rapidly strengthened and Communist recruitment has considerably increased. New recruits are reportedly gaining experience by attacking security outposts which in turn are unable to count on relief or reinforcement. In short, the military situation in the countryside of Corps IV, heretofore regarded as a stalemate, is reportedly critical, with the balance of power for the moment at least having shifted over to the Communists.

It is apparent from the intensity of the fighting that occurred in and around certain cities, particularly Hue, and from some prisoner testimony and captured documents that the Communists actually hoped to take control of a number of urban

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centers at some point in their offensive to demonstrate further that the "general uprising" was virtually achieved. It does not appear, however strong their expectations of a "general uprising" were, that its failure to occur significantly reduced the Communist hopes for ultimate success or, as developments in the countryside indicate, left them without alternative plans. Instead, recent testimony from prisoners suggests that they were prepared to continue harassing urban centers and US military installations, fall back to the countryside, consolidate their gains there and regroup and expand their forces, and then proceed to increase their pressure on and encircle the urban centers.—all this, while the Communists continue to tie down massive Allied forces in border defense.

The Short-term Outlook. The events of the past several weeks clearly indicate that the Vietnamese Communists are well-embarked upon carefully planned mutually-supporting military-political efforts directed toward a massive deterioration in the GVN position and an erosion of the political basis for a US presence in South Vietnam. Despite heavy casualties since the introduction of US forces more than two years ago and particularly since the current military offensive, the Communists probably believe that they are operating in the South from a position of considerable strength and that they have extended and tied down Allied forces to the point where they can either force a political settlement largely on their terms or continue to wage a war of attrition.

The Communists have demonstrated the three-fold capability to concentrate large forces at various points in the hinterlands and border areas, to conduct simultaneously an intensified campaign of harassment in the countryside, and, more recently, to augment their political effort in the urban areas with unprecedented and recurrent waves of coordinated ground and artillery and mortar attacks utilizing main forces.

and leaving many guerrilla and other irregular forces intact in the countryside. Although NVA forces in I and II Corps were heavily involved, sufficient NVA force remains in position to strike in strength not only in the Khe Sanh-DMZ sector but in several other areas simultaneously, and there are indications that some NVA forces are being redeployed from base areas for offensive actions in Corps I and II. Meanwhile, developments in Laos, the Cambodian border areas, and along the coast suggest intense concentration on facilitating and expanding the movement of men and supplies, and further improvements in command and control.

In addition, Viet Cong forces apparently are gearing up for sustained harassment and guerrilla warfare against provincial and district towns as well as against the outlying villages and hamlets. They will probably attempt to fill the heavily depleted ranks of the Viet Cong mainforce units with replacements from the guerrilla forces and rely on accelerated recruitment in turn to make up for depletions of the guerrilla forces. They probably recognize that these efforts, apart from running the risk of high casualties, will create serious strains on their military and political structure and on their logistic resources. However, they probably expect to make tactical adjustments to compensate for difficulties encountered, a capability they have especially demonstrated during the past two years. Moreover, they may feel confident that through an accelerated drive in the countryside they will be able to forestall the restoration of the government's presence outside urban areas and solidify and extend their own control for some time to come.

The immediate outlook is one of a flexible and coordinated intensive Communist effort on all fronts. Greater commitment of NVA units can be expected. NVA assaults will probably continue, in order to achieve the following objectives as these

opportunities present themselves: (1) to inflict heavy casualties, (2) as tactical diversions, to relieve pressures on Viet Cong forces elsewhere, (3) to overrun major Allied installations and urban centers, and (4) to endanger further the defenses of strategically or politically important areas such as Khe Sanh, the western highlands, Saigon, and the Hue/Quang Tri/Danang area.

Whatever their intentions and hopes of achieving major gains in the short-run, the Communists can be expected to move carefully in consolidating their military successes and reinforcing their longer term prospects. They have considerable capability to dispatch additional NVA units to bolster their position along the borders and to relieve units deployed against populated areas or other specific targets. Any expansion of the Communist position in the countryside will certainly be accompanied by efforts to build up the enemy's political infrastructure and local military forces. While overrunning and holding a major urban center would constitute a major political achievement, even under less favorable circumstances, the Communists will concentrate on enlarging their covert apparatus in the urban centers and weakening the GVN administrative system from within. In short, the Communists will hope to achieve and exploit major political and military gains in the immediate situation, but will continue to bolster their assets and prepare for a protracted effort, regardless of developments during the next few months.

~~SECRET~~

March 2, 1968

TO: The Secretary

DECLASSIFIED

THROUGH: S/S

Authority State 4-5-79, NSC 11-19-80

FROM: S/P - Henry Owen

By sig, NARS, Date 6-8-81

SUBJECT: Vietnam - INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

Herewith some reflections on Vietnam and a specific proposal, - submitted with some hesitation, and based more on interest than knowledge of the subject.

1. The Tet offensive has, insofar as an outsider can judge, changed the situation in three major respects:

(a) It has shaken public confidence in the likelihood of our present strategy achieving its objective.

(b) It has significantly weakened the enemy and thus presumably enhanced his vulnerability to stepped up military pressure.

(c) It has caused some South Vietnamese forces to pull back to the cities - thus creating a partial vacuum in the countryside.

2. These changes raise a question as to whether our present strategy remains an optimum course.

That strategy, to judge from public statements by Generals Wheeler and Westmoreland, would need to be prosecuted for several years before the level of US military effort in Vietnam could be reduced. Press and TV reports of the post-Tet public mood raise at least a question as to whether a viable political base any longer exists in the US for such a multi-year continuation - without an earlier prospect of either success or reduced casualties.

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3. This suggests the need for a review not merely of General Westmoreland's reported troop request but also of possible alternative strategies, geared to present changed circumstances. Experts can best define these alternatives, but here are two, drawn from the public domain, to illustrate the point:

(a) A quantum jump in the US military effort, designed to create an evident prospect of earlier success. This could mean more US ground troops (i) to hold, as well as clear, territory in South Vietnam; (ii) to protect and man anti-infiltration defenses south of the DMZ; and possibly (iii) to operate against infiltration via Laos.

(b) Limiting the US effort to a level judged politically tolerable in the US for the long pull. This would mean cutting back on search and destroy operations, particularly in uninhabited areas and in regions of greatest enemy logistic potential - notably near the Cambodian border in an effort to reduce casualty rates and avert further troop increases.

Still a third option would be to adopt these strategies in sequence: We might now go to a stepped up effort, for a specific period, and then shift to a strategy of reduced involvement, which might be more feasible as a result of the prior stepped up effort. If this could be announced to the public as a specific and time-phased intent, it might be welcomed, even though it involved increased troop call-ups in the first instance.

4. All of these alternatives involve evident and serious disadvantages. The purpose of this memo is not to argue the case for any of them, but rather to suggest the need for a hard look at such alternatives, given the questions which post-Tet changes have raised about feasibility of present strategy. If we will eventually be compelled by these changes, for reasons indicated in para 2, to move to a new strategy, there may be merit in making this shift soon, consciously and with long term goals in mind.

I realize, of course, that people working on Vietnam are constantly appraising alternatives, in the course of their daily work. But I am arguing for something else:

a systematic, intensive, and full-time review - by these people and others who know the subject intimately. The Tet offensive, General Westmoreland's reported troop request, and the appointment of a new Secretary of Defense all combine to offer the occasion for such a review.

-- It might be conducted by an inter-agency group made up of officials, at the Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary level, with current responsibilities in this area - the participants being relieved of their regular duties for its duration (a fortnight?).

-- People who have been, but are not now, involved in the Vietnam problem - e.g., Andy Goodpaster and Len Unger - might be drawn in.

-- Outsiders such as Mac Bundy and Cyrus Vance, who have worked on the problem in the past, might be involved.

A far-out thought: Perhaps the new Secretary of Defense could chair the group, before he gets drawn into the details of current operations - leaving Paul Nitze to run DOD for a while.

Whatever its composition, the group should be locked up in the Executive Office Building and told (like Cardinals electing a Pope) to come out only when they have reached a conclusion - not just about General Westmoreland's reported troop request but about broad alternative strategies.

Sub-groups might prepare the best possible case for each of several widely differing strategies, to ensure that the more radical options don't get squeezed out in a general rush for the middle ground.

5. It may be objected that we don't have the time for such a study - that any delay in acting on General Westmoreland's request would be interpreted as vacillation. This seems to me to be confusing two issues:

(a) Are we firm? The President could answer this now by stating unequivocally our intention to do whatever is necessary - including sending more forces, if further study indicates that this is warranted.

(b) What should be our strategy? The President could indicate that he wanted to decide not only what troops were necessary but also what was the best way of using them in post-Tet military circumstances, and that he was going to take the time needed for a thorough study of this question. Public opinion would, I suspect, strongly welcome this - without seeing in it any evidence of weakness.

The actual study could be conducted quietly, and without publicity - as was the Eisenhower administration's somewhat similar study of alternative courses of action re Korea in 1953. Alternatively, the existence of the study group could be made known. Public, press, and Congress might have more confidence in whatever course the President ultimately selected, if they knew that it had been preceded by a full-time review of alternative strategies which involved the wide range of people mentioned above.

6. It is hard to believe that such a study will not be conducted after January, regardless of the election results. Why not do it now, and get its benefits a year earlier?

(a) The benefit of gearing our actions in Vietnam to the long-term strategy that makes most sense in present changed circumstances.

(b) The benefit of being able to announce to the public not only whatever decision is taken about troop levels but also conclusions reached about the military strategy that the US intends to follow from here on out, in order to enhance prospects of success - thus, hopefully, averting a public reaction to the troop decision of: "Oh, this is just more of the same; pouring men down a rathole."

7. I started this memo before reading yesterday's New York Times editorial, proposing a broad study of Vietnam alternatives by a McCloy-Bruce-Norstad commission. This seems unwise, on two grounds:

(a) Involving people without intimate knowledge of the subject would be a waste of time, in the most literal sense of that term.

(b) Nor does it seem useful, as the New York Times implies, to ask such a group to study the basic question

of whether we should be in Vietnam at all: That is what Presidents and national elections are for - to resolve issues of war and peace; and they are better suited to this purpose than any outside "Wise Men".

The Times editorial does, however, bring to mind an additional advantage of the study proposed in this memo: This study, if publicized, would help to prevent the question of an outside commission to review Vietnam alternatives from becoming a divisive issue in the election campaign. Otherwise, someone might soon pick up the New York Times proposal and try to make it the 1968 equivalent of Ike's 1952 "I will go to Korea". Given widespread post-Tet public uneasiness about the present course, this tactic might have a measure of success.

cc: U - The Under Secretary
EA - Mr. Bundy

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Authority JCS 9-21-78 letter

By if, NARS, Date 3-19-79

Relay

Sent to Ranch

6 p.m. Bics

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O 032004Z ZYH ZFF-5
FM GEN WHEELER CJCS WASH DC
INFO MR ROSTOW WHITE HOUSE WASH DC
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FM GEN WESTMORELAND COMUSMACV SAIGON
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REF: JCS 02430

FOLLOWING IS IN REPLY TO PAR 7, SUBJ: REPORTING OF
OFFENSIVE OPERATION.

ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN NO HIGHLY PUBLICIZED MAJOR
OPERATIONS LAUNCHED AGAINST THE NVA, THERE HAS BEEN A GENERAL
RESUMPTION OF AGGRESSIVE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS THROUGHOUT THE
COUNTRY.

YESTERDAY, GEN VIEN AND I VISITED GEN THANG, THE NEW IV
CTZ COMMANDER, AT CAN THO. GENS ECKHARDT, WEYAND AND EWELL
WERE PRESENT. THIS WAS THE INITIAL MEETING ON OUR FORTH-
COMING OFFENSIVE. MY PHILOSOPHY WAS EXPRESSED AS FOLLOWS:

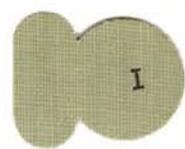
DURING THE PAST THIRTY DAYS THE ENEMY TRIED TO EFFECT
A COUP. HIS PLANS WERE BASED ON THE TWIN ASSUMPTIONS THAT
THE PEOPLE WOULD RISE UP AND JOIN HIS FORCES AND THAT THE
FIGHTING SPIRIT OF THE RVNAF WAS LOW. THE RECORD OF THE PAST
THIRTY DAYS HAS PROVED THAT THE PEOPLE ARE SOUND, THEY WILL
FIGHT FOR THEIR FREEDOM. THE ARMED FORCES HAVE PROVD THAT
THEY DO HAVE FIGHTING SPIRIT. THERE WERE NO TRAITORS; NEARLY
ALL UNITS FOUGHT WELL. THE ENEMY WAS MISLED BY HIS OWN PRO-
PAGANDA.

THE QUESTION IS OFTEN HEARD, "WHEN ARE THE VC GOING TO
ATTACK AGAIN?" THIS TYPE OF THINKING IS UNACCEPTABLE. THE
VC ARE TIRED, THEY HAVE SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES, THEY ARE
STAYING IN THEIR POSITIONS ATTEMPTING TO POSE A THREAT, BUT,
AT THE SAME TIME, HOPING THAT WE WILL REMAIN DEFENSIVELY
ORIENTED AROUND THE CITIES AND NOT ATTACK THEM.

WE MUST STOP THINKING ABOUT THE NEXT VC ATTACK AND
START THINKING, ALL OF US, OF CONTINUING TO CARRY THE ATTACK
TO THE ENEMY. WE ARE FULLY CAPABLE OF DOING IT. IT IS TRUE
THAT OUR FORCES HAVE BEEN OPERATING AT A FAST PACE FOR THIRTY
DAYS AND WE HAVE SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES. SOME MAY BE TIRED.
HOWEVER, THE MAIN THING NOW IS OUR STATE OF MIND. IT WILL BE
THE SIDE THAT PERSEVERES AND CARRYS THE FIGHT TO THE ENEMY
THAT WINS. AND WE ARE GOING TO DO IT.

THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WE ARE MOVING TO A GENERAL
OFFENSIVE.

IN IV CTZ GEN THANG HAS JUST TAKEN COMMAND AND HE IS
WORKING ON PLANS TO LAUNCH A MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN DINH TUONG
PROVINCE, COMMENCING ON 5 OR 7 MARCH. IT WILL INVOLVE A
MAJOR PORTION OF THE 7TH ARVN DIVISION AND ABOUT TWO THIRDS
OF THE 9TH U.S. DIVISION UNDER GEN EWELL. GEN WEYAND WILL
PROVIDE HELO SUPPORT, AN AIR CAVALRY TROOP AND ADDITIONAL
ARTILLERY. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE OPERATION WILL BE TO DEFEAT



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Yes

THE FOUR MAIN FORCE BATTALIONS IN DINH TUONG, RESTORE THE SECURITY AROUND MY THO, SECURE AND REPAVE HIGHWAY 4, REESTABLISH - AND RELOCATE AS NECESSARY - THE RF/PF OUTPOSTS, AND FURTHER THE RD PROGRAM. THIS OPERATION WILL BE THE FIRST EVENT OF A MAJOR CORPS WIDE OFFENSIVE WHICH GEN THANG WILL INITIATE. IT WILL HAVE ONE NAME (VIETNAMESE) AND WILL BE PROPERLY PUBLICIZED SO AS TO MAKE THE BROADEST POSSIBLE IMPACT.

IN III CTZ, A SIMILAR PLAN IS BEING WORKED OUT BY GENS WEYAND AND KHANG. IT WILL EMBRACE THE FIVE PROVINCES AROUND SAIGON - AND WILL BE A ONE NAMED JOINT U.S./VN OPERATION. IT WILL ALSO BE ONE OF THE LARGEST EVER CONDUCTED IN III CTZ AND WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE ENEMY IS DEFEATED OR DRIVEN OUT OF THE AREA. IT WILL COMMENCE NEARLY SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE IV CTZ OFFENSIVE AND WILL BE PROPERLY REPORTED SO AS TO HAVE MAXIMUM IMPACT.

AT THE SAME TIME, IN NORTHERN I CTZ, WE WILL MOVE INTO HIGH GEAR IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. WITH OVER 20 PERCENT OF ALL U.S./ARVN MANEUVER BATTALIONS IN THIS AREA, AND WITH THE LOGISTIC SITUATION IMPROVING DAILY, WE ARE IN AN EXCELLENT POSTURE TO COMMENCE A BROAD OFFENSIVE.

THE OPERATIONS IN I & III CTZ WILL BE SUPPORTED BY THE MAXIMUM USE OF TACTICAL AIR AND B-52 STRIKES. FOR THE TIME BEING, I MUST KEEP PRIORITY OF AIR AT KHE SANH BUT I AM PREPARED TO MAKE MASSIVE SHIFTS, PARTICULARLY OF B-52S, TO ASHAU VALLEY OR TO III CTZ, WHEN THE WEATHER PERMITS TACTICAL AIR TO PROVIDE VISUAL ATTACK SUPPORT FOR KHE SANH.

IN II CTZ, WE ARE NOT PLANNING ON ONE MAJOR OFFENSIVE. HOWEVER, THE ROKS ARE ON THE MOVE ALONG THE COAST IN A MULTI-BATTALION OPERATION. GEN PEERS IS PREPARED TO WAGE A MAJOR BATTLE AGAINST THE ENEMY FORCES IN KONTUM OR DARLAC PROVINCES. HIS SPIRIT IS AGGRESSIVE AND HE HAS THE EXACT FRAME OF MIND REQUIRED TO CONDUCT THE ECONOMY OF FORCE OPERATIONS WHICH HIS SITUATION REQUIRES. PEERS HAS A NEW COUNTER PART, MAJ GEN LU LAN, WHO AT THE OUTSET HAS DISPLAYED AN AGGRESSIVE SPIRIT.

ON MONDAY GEN VIEN AND I ARE MEETING WITH GENS WEYAND AND KHANG AND THEIR DIVISION COMMANDERS TO DISCUSS THEIR PLANS FOR THE IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS OFFENSIVE STRATEGY.

TOMORROW AFTERNOON VIEN HAS INVITED AT MY SUGGESTION THE FREE WORLD COMMANDERS TO HIS HEADQUARTERS TO GIVE THEM THE BENEFIT OF HIS OFFENSIVE ATTITUDE. SINCE IT IS NOT WITHIN VIEN'S CHARACTER TO USE FORCEFUL LANGUAGE I WILL PROVIDE THE NECESSARY EMPHASIS IN A FOLLOW-UP.

TODAY I WILL VISIT GENS ABRAMS, CUSHMAN AND ROSSON TO REVIEW THEIR PLANS.

I HOPE THAT THE IMPACT OF THESE SIMULTANEOUS MAJOR OPERATIONS WILL CONVINCE THE PEOPLE IN SVN AND WASHINGTON THAT WE ARE NOT WAITING FOR EITHER THE VC TO RESUME THE INITIATIVE, OR FOR SOMEONE TO HELP US. THE TIME IS RIPE TO MOVE OUT AND WE WILL DO SO.

WE WILL EMPHASIZE THE OFFENSIVE NATURE OF CURRENT OPERATIONS IN FUTURE REPORTS, WITHOUT DISTORTING THE PERSPECTIVE.

SSO NOTE: DELIVER DURING DUTY HOURS.

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RECEIVED:

8:10 P.M. 8a

SUNDAY

MARCH 3, 1968

WWZ014
OO WTE 16
DE WTE 961

FROM WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM
TO THE PRESIDENT
CITE CAP80644

DECLASSIFIED

OSD letter JUN 26 1979

Authority

By isp, NARS, Date 10-19-79

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FOLLOWING IS GENERAL WESTMORELAND'S REPORT ON OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN VIETNAM:

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File Date: c. 4 Mar 68
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- E. Thompson's March 1 Cable on Soviet Reactions to Possible US Government Courses of Action (Moscow 2983)
- F. European and Other Non-Asian Reactions to Major US Force Increase
- G. Asian Reaction to a Major US Force Increase
- H. Options in our Negotiating Posture

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DECLASSIFIED

Authority OSD 6-26-79; State 3-11-80

By MB, NARS, Date 7-22-80

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OUTLINE FOR SUBJECTS AND DIVISION OF LABOR ON
VIET NAM STAFF STUDY

Subjects to be Considered

1. What alternative courses of action are available to the US?

Assignment: Defense - General Taylor - State - ~~Secretary~~

2. What alternative courses are open to the enemy?

Assignment - Defense and CIA

3. Analysis of implications of Westmoreland's request for additional troops.

Series of papers on the following.

Military implications - JCS

✓ Political implications - State

(Political implications in their broadest domestic and international sense to include internal Vietnamese problem).

Budgetary results - Defense

Economic implications - Treasury

Congressional implications - Defense

✓ Implications for public opinion - domestic and international - State.

4. Negotiation Alternatives

✓ Assignment - State

5. Papers will be prepared for discussion among Clifford group to meet Saturday 10:00 A.M. at DOD. Group will then come up with recommended course of action and possible alternatives for Presidential consideration Monday. Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State will meanwhile consider the draft directive received from the White House. Directive will be redrafted before Saturday meeting to fit the approach being followed by the Task Force.

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Authority STATE letter

[2-79]

MEMORANDUM

By ing, NARS, Date 7-25-79

SUBJECT: ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES IN VIETNAM

I. Our Objectives in Vietnam.

We have repeatedly stated, in one form or another, that our objectives in Vietnam are to establish a situation in which the people of South Vietnam are free to determine their own political future, free of fear of terror or intimidation from North Vietnam. In essence, our purpose has been to avoid a forceable takeover of the South Vietnamese by Hanoi. We have also repeatedly stated the series of non-objectives; for example, we have stated it was not our purpose to destroy the political system in North Vietnam or to widen the war.

We are militarily involved in Vietnam essentially because we have felt the security of the U.S. depended importantly upon a Southeast Asia not forceably dominated

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by China or North Vietnam. This importance was reflected in the SEATO Pact under which we took various commitments with respect to Southeast Asia, including South Vietnam. The fact that a formal commitment under the SEATO Pact was involved made the issue, a forceable takeover of South Vietnam, a matter of importance in terms of our world posture as well as our posture towards the countries of Southeast Asia. It brought into question the value of a U.S. commitment and our will to oppose aggression.

Of fundamental importance, is appreciation of the fact that forms of success in Vietnam could actually result in failure of our security system. No matter what the result in South Vietnam itself, we will have failed in our purposes if:

- a. The war in Vietnam spreads to the point where it is a major conflict leading to direct military confrontation with the USSR and/or China;
- b. The war in Vietnam spreads to the point where we are so committed in resources that our other world-wide commitments -- especially NATO -- are

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no longer credible;

c. The attitudes of the American people towards "more Vietnams" are such that our other commitments are brought into question as a matter of US will;

d. Other countries no longer wish the U.S. commitment for fear of the consequences to themselves as a battlefield between the East and the West;

e. Those countries to which we have no formal commitments see the United States as interested only in its own security and not in the security and welfare of others. Russian noninvolvement directly in Vietnam can be a major asset to the USSR as it seeks to expand its worldwide influence. To the extent that Communist propaganda succeeds in casting the United States in the role of heavy -- civilian casualties, destruction of cities, napalm, imperialistic objectives, bases for world-wide domination, etc. -- we lose influence around the world and even at home with those who have not experienced war and to whom the Communist threat

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does not seem immediate or dangerous.

Whatever the outcome in Vietnam, we will have succeeded in our fundamental objectives if:

a. It continues to be clear that a US commitment of support is valid and may be relied upon;

b. The countries of Southeast Asia believe that the United States will remain involved in Southeast Asia and continue to be prepared to help those nations willing and able to help themselves.

c. Obviously the ideal solution is to achieve our objectives of a free, independent South Vietnam, as long as we can do so without running afoul the problems suggested above. But it is vitally important to realize that over-commitment in South Vietnam in an effort to achieve that objective could result in failure, and that a failure to achieve that objective is not necessarily a failure of US policy.

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The greatest danger of a failure of U.S. policy could result from either of two possibilities:

1. The United States decided to abandon South Vietnam under conditions where other countries of Southeast Asia would regard our failure as the result of actions we took or failed to take in a situation which was by no means hopeless. Thus a precipitant pullout from Vietnam would shake confidence in the United States in Southeast Asia and probably in other parts of the world as well.

2. Over-commitment of the United States to South Vietnam could also lead to failure. The war in Vietnam has already become an Americanized one in its major aspects. The more we continue to cast ourselves in a principal military role rather than in a supporting one, the more the dangers of a bigger war, a direct confrontation with the Russians or Chinese, and the growth of disenchantment and isolationist sentiment in the United States becomes

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real. Furthermore, it is not clear that a response which continues to be an American response rather than a GVN response actually strengthens the GVN. In addition, every increment of U.S. power which is used and which fails argues for an additional increment to the point where our prestige, and not that of the GVN, is at stake.

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II

Key Elements in the Present Situation

1. Hanoi has made a basic change in its strategy and scale of operations. Perhaps because they thought they were losing as the war and pacification were going, Hanoi is pressing hard for decisive results over the next few months. They are committing a high proportion of their assets, although it is by no means clear that they would not retain both the capability and will to keep up the pressure next year if this effort does not succeed. But there is at least the hope that, if this effort could be thwarted, Hanoi and Viet Cong morale would be sufficiently affected to open up possibilities of peace.

2. The Hanoi offensive has, to this point, inflicted a serious setback on the GVN and the South Vietnamese armed forces. Whatever may be the hopeful elements for the future, this is the strongly dominant impression among the American public, in South Viet-Nam, and undoubtedly in Hanoi. The impression of a serious setback is even stronger in other parts of the world.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority STATE letter [2-79]
By isp, NARS, Date 7-25-79

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3. Within South Viet-Nam, there are key variables that could move the situation sharply, one way or the other, in the coming months. Specifically:

a. The degree to which Hanoi and the VC are able to keep pressing, and how effectively they are countered in the military sphere.

b. The degree to which the VC are able to extend their control in the countryside and recoup their losses--or whether conversely the South Vietnamese can take the initiative and either neutralize such recoupment or set in motion a new favorable trend.

c. The degree to which the GVN improves its performance and galvanizes potentially greater popular support than it can now have.

Any option must be judged realistically in terms of its effect on these elements.

4. Hanoi's attitude, confidence, and strategy all indicate that there is no early prospect of a serious move toward peace with any compromise whatever on their part.

This is our own clear assessment, and apparently that of the Soviets and others who are reasonably objective. We cannot anticipate any change in this attitude unless and

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until Hanoi's offensive has run its course and been judged by them either to have failed or at least not to have achieved a degree of success balancing its costs.

5. Although there remain elements in the US and elsewhere who believe that an early move toward peace would be hopeful, this sentiment is not so strong that we need to give it over-riding significance in our choice of options. We must take account of the possibility that Hanoi could "drop the other shoe" at some point and even accept San Antonio; however, this seems unlikely in view of their almost theological position on not undertaking any restraints in return for stopping the bombing. Assuming that Hanoi does not demonstrably "accept" San Antonio, we believe that peace pressures will not rise to truly serious levels either in the US or in key countries abroad.

6. The US public and the Congress have been shaken most seriously in their confidence that any course of action can now produce a useful result in Viet-Nam, worthy of its sacrifices. The key element in this area is whether any course of action we present appears to offer increased hope that it can produce an honorable and secure peace in some finite period of time. This element of time is crucial, and it must be judged

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that continued setbacks or failure to show progress steadily erode US popular and Congressional support. There are other elements of popular feeling--notable the growing concern at our levels of destruction--but a realistic hope of some form of decent outcome is the crucial present factor.

7. A South Vietnamese collapse--or failure to improve leading to rapid erosion--is a strong present possibility over the next few months. On all past showings and present readings, we must reckon that it would not take much of an additional shock to collapse the GVN, or at least to weaken it progressively to the point that it would never recover. There is thus a strong chance that the ground would be cut out from under us--and this possibility is only indirectly affected by whatever we decide to do in the military sphere.

8. Given this irreducible chance of failure from South Vietnamese collapse--plus the chance that whatever we do may not meet the North Vietnamese threat in its present form--we must weigh carefully the effect of our actions on Southeast Asia and Asia as a whole. Here we can at least note that the situation in Southeast Asia has improved a great deal over what it was three years ago when we made our bombing

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and force decisions. We then judged, and we believe rightly, that failure to act on our part would produce such a shock in the area, and such encouragement to the Chinese and North Vietnamese, that there was really no fallback position that could be held with any confidence at all. Today, with the change in Indonesia, China's internal convulsions, the growing Japanese economic role, and at least a potential Soviet interest in keeping the Chinese out of Southeast Asia, there is a somewhat better hope of a fallback position.

In relation to Southeast Asia, confidence is the key factor. They need to feel that the US will remain involved even if Viet-Nam should go sour. Three clear implications would seem to follow:

a. That, while Southeast Asians would in any event regard failure as largely due to something the US did or failed to do, any US action that seemed to them to "pull the plug", before the situation had become hopeless for other reasons, would maximize the shock to confidence.

b. A shock wave of isolationist sentiment in the US--brought on by the circumstances of failure--would

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-6-

likewise maximize the loss of confidence in South-east Asia. This relates to the question whether an all-out effort that still failed would tend more to create such a shock wave than a more limited course of action with more limited hopes and objectives.

c. In any event, it is vital that we continue to demonstrate our support for other Southeast Asian countries--Thailand, Indonesian aid, the ADB special fund proposal being particular touchstones.

9. The prospects for additional third country forces are minimal. With the situation that has developed in Korea, it is just not realistic to expect--at least for the next few months--a Korean light division. Similarly, Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand would be extremely difficult to enlist for more forces. In the case of Thailand, a worsening of the situation could even create doubt whether their 10,000 men would arrive--or whether we should press them for this if North Vietnam, by then, has created a more serious threat through Laos.

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Probable Chinese Responses to Certain US Courses
of Action in Indochina, Viet-Nam,
Laos and Cambodia

Probable Chinese responses to a number of possible US courses of action in Indochina are described below, chiefly in terms of short-term physical reactions. Underlying all Chinese responses to such US initiatives would be three main principles of Chinese policy: support of the Hanoi regime's attempt to conquer the South, avoidance of direct military confrontation with the US, and maintenance of a solid buffer between China and any possible US-occupied area. To avoid military confrontation with the US in Vietnam and yet support Hanoi's effort, Peking may well respond to US initiatives in Vietnam by stepping up pressures through local assets wherever it finds a favorable situation for doing so. This could happen easily, for example, on the border with India, with Burma, or in Thailand. On the other hand, if Peking perceives that a US initiative seems likely to bring US forces to its own borders it may well react massively as if its own territory was threatened.

1. Introduction of an Additional 200,000 US Troops into South Vietnam

China probably would not regard this as a development to which it would have to react directly and militarily but would let the North Vietnamese cope with it. Insofar as Hanoi expended additional men and material to deal with the additional challenge in the South, China would be ready to fill any gaps created in the North, not only with economic aid and military materiel but also with additional laborers, technicians and anti-aircraft units and conceivably, if requested, security forces and infantry to help garrison the North.

2. Introduction of US Troops into Laos/Cambodia

Intermittent "hot pursuit" operations would probably not draw any significant Chinese response. Loss of territory in the Laotian

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Panhandle, if it seriously hampered North Vietnam's war effort, however, would concern Peking, and China would probably increase its material aid to Communist forces in Laos. Under these circumstances, it also might introduce some "advisers" into the area. If significant numbers of US troops moved into the Panhandle, large Chinese forces might come into the northern part of the country. It would be more difficult for the Chinese to support operations against any US troops occupying positions in Cambodia, but China probably would provide some token volunteers to Sihanouk should he call for them plus some material support. China's response to any US activities in Laos and/or Cambodia would probably in any event encompass what has been mentioned above--stepping up its pressures in other areas such as Burma and Thailand in order to divert US strength.

3. Mining and/or Blockading of Haiphong

China would probably not regard the loss of Haiphong port facilities as critically dangerous to the war effort since it could continue to supply North Vietnam by rail and road and by small ships and lighters. In addition, Peking might seek to replace Haiphong as a deep sea port, by expanding operations (Chanchiang (Ft. Bayard), which is already serving as an unloading point for goods destined for shipment by rail to North Vietnam. China would by all means make sure that the flow of both Soviet and Chinese material for North Vietnam--by land and by sea--continued uninterrupted and might welcome the additional influence it would gain as the remaining main link in North Vietnam's life line. It also would probably put at North Vietnam's disposal as many shallow draft vessels as it could possibly spare, and assist Hanoi in developing alternate maritime off-loading facilities and inland waterway routes. At the same time, the Chinese would probably be ready to assist in improving North Vietnamese coastal defenses, and might provide additional patrol boats, possibly including guided missile vessels.

4. All-Out Conventional Bombing of North Vietnam, Including Hanoi and Haiphong

China would probably be prepared to provide as much logistical support and labor as the North Vietnamese might need to keep society functioning in North Vietnam and to help Hanoi maintain the war effort in the South. Peking would probably be ready to increase its anti-aircraft artillery contingent in the South, (possibly sending SAM batteries), and would probably supply the North Vietnamese airforce with MIG-19's from its own inventory.

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-3-

Chinese airspace and airfields would be made available, as and when necessary, as a refuge for North Vietnamese aircraft. There is a strong possibility that Chinese pilots in MIG's with North Vietnamese markings would engage US bombers over North Vietnam. However, we would anticipate overt Chinese intervention only if the scope of the bombing seemed intended to destroy North Vietnam as a viable Communist state.

5. US Invasion of North Vietnam.

Chinese reaction would depend on the scale of US moves, on North Vietnamese intentions and on Peking's view of US objectives. If it became evident that we were not aiming for a rapid takeover of North Vietnam but intended chiefly to hold some territory in southern areas to inhibit Hanoi's actions in South Vietnam and to force it to quit fighting, we would expect China to attempt to deter us from further northward movement and to play on our fears of a Sino-US conflict, but not to intervene massively in the war. Thus, if requested by Hanoi, Peking would probably be willing to station infantry north of Hanoi to attach some ground forces to North Vietnamese units further south, and to contribute to any "volunterr" contingent that North Vietnam might organize. At home, China would probably complement these deterrents by various moves ostensibly putting the country on a war footing.

If the North Vietnamese, under threat of a full-scale invasion, decided to agree to a negotiated settlement, the Chinese would probably go along. On the other hand, if the Chinese believed that the US was intent on destroying the North Vietnamese regime (either because Hanoi insisted on holding out to the end, or because Peking chronically expects the worst from the US), they would probably fear for their own security and intervene on a massive scale.

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13b

Probable Western European Reaction to Various

US Courses of Action in Indochina --

Viet-Nam, Laos and Cambodia

The following are the probable reactions of Western Europe in the event of the escalation of the war in Vietnam:

1. Increase of troop strength by some 200,000 additional men:

No Western reaction, although probable French Government would voice publicly its disapproval. The general effect psychologically however would be adverse to the US and might possibly reflect a growing European concern at the danger of a larger conflict emerging.

2. Invasion of Laos and Cambodia by US Forces:

With the exception of France, there would in all probability be no Western European action. In the event that the invasion of Cambodia by US forces was taken without the consent of Prince Sihanouk there is a good chance that France might become somewhat more actively involved in this issue through diplomatic or UN channels. We have had information that in the past Sihanouk had received assurances of French support (although, of course, not military) in the event of invasion from any quarter. In view of the current fighting in Laos, increased US assistance to the Government of Laos would probably not provoke any serious action on the part of the French.

3. Mining of Haiphong:

This action would undoubtedly be severely criticized in Western Europe, particularly in France if escalation of war replete with serious danger. Western Europe however would do nothing until it was clear what the Soviets or Chinese response might be. Therefore, reaction of Western Europe would at best be a secondary factor in this situation.

4. All-out bombing of North Vietnam, including Haiphong and Hanoi:

Western Europe would react adversely to this step up in the

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-2-

war and there would be a considerable wave of anti-US sentiment in the press and particularly in France by government statement. This action would be depicted as an act of inhumanity with little military significance and serve to blacken the good name of the US throughout Western Europe. France would undoubtedly make a strong public statement condemning the US, but it is doubtful if she would proceed to further action unless there was some generalized European sentiment which could be used to bring the issue of US general bombing to the Security Council.

5. Invasion of North Vietnam:

Western Europe would undoubtedly wait and see Chinese and Soviet action before taking a position. It is however predictable that Western European reaction, especially French, would be strongly anti-US and they might easily be disposed under French leadership to take the case into the Security Council. The effect on the NATO Alliance would be very great and might easily begin its disruption.

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W.P. Bundy:bmm
March 1, 1968
D R A F T
15

European and Other Non-Asian Reactions to a
Major US Force Increase

General Present Picture

European nations generally are subjected to a flow of information on Vietnam that is weighted toward a black picture of any prospective success for us, and a great emphasis on destruction within South Vietnam. The bombing continues to be highly sensitive in key parts of Europe.

A second element in European reactions concerns the possibility of peace. The French and the Scandinavians have long been urging almost any possible move by us, and the Italians are under heavy domestic pressure. Yet the British and Italian Governments, among those most heard from, have not succumbed to wishful thinking over the recent months.

Third, and most specifically, there is strong sentiment in Europe that the stakes in Vietnam or even in Southeast Asia are not worth a tremendous expenditure of US effort -- and that such an effort may operate over time to dilute US support for its commitments in Europe. A lesser fear exists that we would be prevented from acting in the Middle East. In general, these concerns have come over time to counter-balance the argument that

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we are fulfilling a commitment in Asia to show that we would meet our commitments in Europe.

European Reactions

Against this background, the announcement of a US decision for a major force increase would be unlikely to change the pessimistic picture now widely held in Europe, and would tend markedly to increase the concern that we are simply destroying a country in order to save it -- and even acting immorally in so doing. Some reports from such highly respected and pro-American observers as Jean Monnet stress ^{the} ~~in~~ recent ^{GRAND} ~~reports~~ of this concern for sheer military destruction, whatever its responsibility and justification. (Monnet was not speaking of his own feelings, but of those he was encountering almost universally, as reported by Ambassador Cleveland.)

In short, the major reaction in Europe could well be grave doubt that we could accomplish anything by the increases, and a substantial rise in concern about the whole destructive effect of our whole military power in the area. This type of reaction would be compounded if -- as appears inevitable -- these same points were forcibly made by critics and dissenters in the US when the proposals were put forward; Europe listens closely to such spokesmen as the Kennedys and Walter Lippmann, and their reactions would receive

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disproportionate play, particularly if similar reactions lead to substantial adverse votes on the key issues.

As to peace pressures, the above reactions would tend in themselves to increase popular pressures for peace. Key European governments have regarded the San Antonio formula as reasonable, and of would probably be able to stick to their position ~~of~~ endorsing this, without any further new initiative on our part. However, there would certainly be an increase in popular pressures on the Italian Government and to a lesser extent the German Government, as Fanfani has vividly described to us recently.

Finally, European opinion could be sharply agitated if our force increases involved a reduction in our forces in Europe. This would be disturbing not so much in itself, or because they would feel a Soviet response directed at Europe; rather, it would be taken as an indication that the US was withdrawing its support in Europe to a far greater extent than the percentage of our forces involved would warrant.

Even if ~~th~~ we did not pull forces out of Europe to make the increases possible, the Mansfield line might find additional takers in the Congress, and this in itself would have disturbing effects in Europe.

All of this is an exceedingly irritating and indeed illogical reaction in view of the failure of the key NATO nations to raise their own forces in recent years. It leads to the question whether

we could get anywhere by putting the heat on the Germans in particular to beef up European contributions to NATO. We believe such an effort should be attempted in any event, but we are far from hopeful that it would produce any concrete result in view of the basic German situation, obvious French opposition, Italian weakness, and the British financial position reflected in recent Defense ~~Hubx~~ budget decisions. In other words, it may be a straight political fact that Europe will not pick up the slack, but will preversely blame us at the same time!

Longer Term Reactions

Apart from the reactions to the decision and resulting debate in the US, n longer term reactions in Europe will continue to depend, as they always have, on whether we continue to appear "bogged down" in a useless and now enlarged venture, whether at worst the Vietnamese simply fold and make our military power appear irrelevant, or whether x at best we make progress toward security in Vietnam and an ultimate decent peace.

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NOTE

This paper does not assess the economic and financial reactions in Europe to the associated budgetary and balance of payments actions that would have to accompany our force increases. These could be a major element in themselves, ^{are} but ~~are~~ best assessed by Treasury.

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State Dept. Ltr. 4/25/79	
By JK	NARS Date 6/26/79

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March 1, 1968

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FIRST DRAFT

Asian Reaction to a Major US Force Increase

The GVN reactions are assessed as part of the total appraisal of the impact of this course of action in South Viet-Nam. This paper covers the reactions of Asian nations, taking first the nations contributing forces in Viet-Nam, and then other significant reactions. ~~It then examines certain factors relative to our broad objective of holding the rest of Southeast Asia whatever happens in South Viet-Nam.~~

General

Asian nations generally are highly sensitive to whether we succeed in Viet-Nam, and whether we demonstrate our firmness behind the commitment in such a way as to show our continued will and ability to support other nations in Southeast Asia.

These are the key factors. Asian nations are decidedly less sensitive than European nations, or parts of US public, to a picture of large-scale destruction; their threshold of tolerance in this respect is decidedly higher than that in Europe or in substantial segments of US opinion. In particular, Asian nations would generally not be upset if we increased the level of violence against North Viet-Nam; they ~~LYNDON BAINES~~ ^{COPY} ~~JOHNSON LIBI~~ ^{never been}

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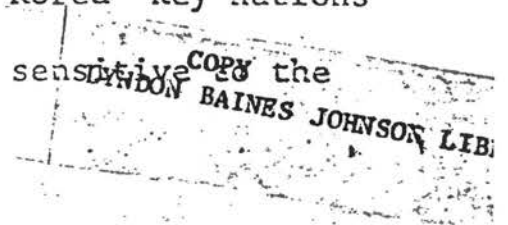
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particularly upset over the bombing (with the notable exception of Japan--and even there this factor has not grown over the past year), and they have not been upset at any implication that a great white nation was "beating up" a little Asian nation. Nonetheless, a picture of steadily rising destruction in Viet-Nam would hit several nations in Asia fairly hard--not for humanitarian reasons nearly so much as because it would appear to indicate to them that the full US military power could devastate their own societies if they ever got into the same position. While this may tend in part to stimulate them to greater efforts to avert such a situation, it could more substantially weaken their will to face up to any kind of threat in the future or to count on US assistance to meet it.

Troop-Contributing Nations.

These nations have in large degree committed themselves to the cause, and would certainly be appalled if we appeared to be dropping it. In this sense, and in view of their general knowledge of the needs of the situation, they would welcome and be stiffened by major US force increases.

On the other hand, both Thailand and Korea--key nations in their respective ways--would be highly sensitive to the



nature of the debate and controversy that accompanied any new US decision. They would read substantial disagreement and dissent within the US on this action issue far more seriously than they have yet interpreted the dissent we have had to date. If the American debate over these actions resulted in only grudging approval and many expressions of great doubt, they would read this as an indication that the US could not be counted on to the same degree as in the past. Our over-all force increase would certainly have to be adequate to assure the Koreans that we remained in a position to meet any threat there.

A more specific question is whether a major US force increase could be used to obtain additional force contributions from the troop-contributing countries. This takes specific examination country by country, and the results are not promising. Specifically:

- a. Korea has put to one side the idea of an additional light division. It would take only a modest spring and summer increase in North Korean pressures--which we would regard as almost certain--to make it politically impossible

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for Park to resurrect the proposal. The likelihood is that they would be asking more from us in every respect, and we cannot always exclude their moving to withdraw some of their forces in Viet-Nam if the pressures really built up in Korea.

b. Thailand has done a reasonably good job on the Northeast insurgency, but now confronts a spread to the tribes in the north. Above all, North Vietnamese offensive actions in Laos have already brought the Thai to a very worried state, and what now appears to be the impending capture of major southern Laos towns, and of areas nearer the Mekong further north, will almost certainly mean a level of Thai concern such that we would have to hold their feet to the fire to get the presently planned 10,000 additional men--with no presently foreseeable hope of getting more.

c. Australia has already made a sharply negative public noise--since the offensive--about sending more forces. Gorton's position is not strong, although he might change his mind and produce a modest increase (1,000-2,000) if pressed.

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d. New Zealand]

e. The Philippines were already regarded as nearly hopeless for purposes of additional forces. We see no reason to change this assessment.

As to possibilities of peace, we think the line-up would remain roughly as it is now--Thailand and Korea hawkish and very skeptical; Australia and New Zealand in the middle and ready to follow our lead, and the Philippines inclined to ~~walky~~ woolly initiatives not carrying much weight.

In any event, whatever we think the reactions would be, it will be of great importance to inform all these nations in advance of any decision we announce, and to share our strategic assessment with them as fully as possible.

Other Asian Nations.

In Japan, the Government is very worried whether we can succeed, and the public is fully and generally bearishly informed. But our degree of progress is the crucial factor affecting these attitudes. In the short run, Japan would probably stay about as it is, but this includes the already existent possibility of serious and growing controversy over their use of Okinawa for B-52 operations in Viet-Nam.

Malaysia and Singapore would generally believe we were

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doing the right thing to do whatever we depicted as necessary. Both would be worried at this evidence that the situation had in fact significantly worsened, but they would not basically be affected in the short term.

Indonesia would be about the same and certainly hopes we will stand firm. Their specific concern would focus on whether our added effort cut across our meeting our economic aid commitments in Indonesia. And this includes the already visible and extremely difficult issue of whether we would act to meet any shortfall in raising the required ^{\$325} \$35 million for this year. If Japan and the others fall short, as they well may, Indonesia might in any event be sharply disturbed if we fail to make up the difference. Our general costs in Viet-Nam would be heavily blamed, but the new force commitment would be an additional element in this disturbance.

In relation to all these countries, there is the specific question whether we could get them to do more on the civilian side in Viet-Nam. One specific possibility would be to enlist Indonesia in this effort. This is certainly worth the attempt, but the results cannot be expected to be substantial. Japan could do significantly more, but in our priorities there we believe Indonesian aid should come first, and this is not yet in hand.

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US Public Opinion

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Apart from a relatively small but articulate minority the bulk of American public opinion would, in the short run, support expanded military effort in Viet-Nam in order to end the war fast. Most of the polls indicate that sentiment continues to be hawkish, but this has more relation to expanding the war into North Viet-Nam than expanded troops. There would be misgivings about more troops without more war and a certain feeling of despair. There is very little sentiment for giving up or withdrawing in Viet-Nam.

At the same time, the predominant sentiment is one of frustration and a desire to finish up in Viet-Nam. There is relatively little sentiment which understands the problem and which is prepared for the long haul which may be required. There continues to be the feeling that we ought to be making more progress than we are and a considerable feeling that the reason we have not lies in denying for political reasons military solutions to the problem. Therefore, a proposal to greatly increase US troop contributions without at the same time extending the bombing program in North Viet-Nam and mining the port of Haiphong would be met by considerable grumbling on the part of those who support an increased Viet-Nam effort.

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By ing, NARS, Date 7-25-79

There is a danger that this frustration will grow and that increased troops, which means increased casualties, will tend to increase the feeling of frustration unless the kind of concrete progress which now seems unlikely can be shown in the near future. There is a real danger that more of the same, unaccompanied by visible progress towards an end to the war, will result in disenchantment with the policy. There are almost sure to be increased questions as time goes along as to whether or not we are properly conducting the war and whether or not the burdens which would accompany increased troops are worth it.

Beyond doubt there is an increasing criticism of the GVN and the ARVN and an increased questioning as to whether or not they are bearing their fair share. Unless an increased troop contribution is accompanied by tangible progress with respect to the South Vietnamese themselves, it is likely to bring increasing criticism upon the Administration and increasing questions as to whether or not the war is being properly conducted.

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NK-3

Thus sentiment which now favors increased military action could quite easily turn into sentiment extremely critical of the way in which the Administration is conducting the war.

Most of this criticism is likely to appear some months from now rather than immediately. But there will be questions asked in the Congress and in the press which will set the basis for that criticism. Undoubtedly we will be asked what it is we expect to accomplish with increased troops and what it is the GVN is doing to solve its own problems. We will also be asked whether or not more troops will be needed later and why troop increases are not being accomplished by other actions.

A majority of public opinion will continue to reject the idea of United States withdrawal or defeat in Viet-Nam but will more and more question the capacity of an Administration which is unable to achieve a victory. It is likely to move in the direction of "win or get out" with increasing willingness to wash our hands of the whole matter. What is important above all, is to give a sense that leadership knows where it is going and how to get there.

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Relator

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ EYES ONLY JCS 02445 MAR 68.

BOTH JOHNNY JOHNSON AND I HAVE NOTICED THAT OUR DAILY
TELECONS WITH YOU ARE INCREASINGLY REDUNDANT BECAUSE OF THE
EXCELLENCE OF THE REPORTING BY YOUR HEADQUARTERS TO THE NMCC.
ALSO, I KNOW THAT YOU ARE EXTREMELY BUSY AND, TO A DEGREE, THE
TELECON ABSORBS TIME WHICH YOU CAN ILL AFFORD. THEREFORE,
EFFECTIVE AS OF NOW, I SHALL NOT TELEPHONE YOU ON A DAILY BASIS.
OF COURSE, IF THINGS HEAT UP AGAIN I SHALL RESUME THESE TELECONS.
MOREOVER, I ASSUME THAT YOU WILL TELEPHONE ME AT ANY TIME WHEN
YOU BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL. WARM REGARDS.

SSO NOTE: DELIVER DURING DUTY HOURS
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By if, NARS, Date 3-19-79

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INFORMATION

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Wednesday, March 6, 1968
11:50 a.m.

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*Rec'd
12 March*

MR. PRESIDENT:

You may recall that Bob Ginsburgh and I reviewed with you some extremely tentative evidence that enemy units might be pulling away from Khe Sanh to do battle elsewhere.

On the basis of extremely fragile evidence the CIA concluded this morning:



I would not yet draw the conclusion that they have given up on an attempt to take Khe Sanh.

It does seem likely that they intend to make a major second try at Hue soon.

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Authority NLJ-CBS 27

By W, NARS, Date 9-29-84

W. W. Rostow

MR

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THE NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

6 March 1968
0700 EST

THE JOINT STAFF

MEMORANDUM FOR THE WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM

Subject: Weather Report - Khe Sanh, Hue, Da Nang,
and Hanoi/Haiphong Areas

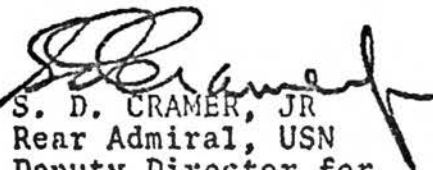
1. Attached are weather reports for the Khe Sanh, Hue, Da Nang, and Hanoi/Haiphong areas for the period 7:00 AM EST today (8:00 PM today South Vietnam time), to 7:00 AM EST 7 March (8:00 PM 7 March, South Vietnam time).

2. Khe Sanh - The weather forecast indicates that flying conditions will be satisfactory for helicopter operations during the entire forecast period. Fixed-wing operations may be curtailed between 1:00 PM EST 6 March (2:00 AM 7 March South Vietnam time) and 8:00 PM EST 6 March (9:00 AM 7 March South Vietnam time). During the remainder of the period, the forecast indicates fixed-wing operations can be conducted.

3. Hue - The weather forecast indicates that both helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft operations can be conducted during the entire period.

4. Da Nang - The weather forecast indicates that both helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft operations can be conducted from Da Nang Airfield during this period.

5. Hanoi/Haiphong - The weather forecast for these areas indicates that conditions will be unsatisfactory for visual air strikes during the entire period.


S. D. CRAMER, JR.
Rear Admiral, USN
Deputy Director for
Operations (NMCC)

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a/s

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By ing, NARS, Date 10-19-79

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Authority State 4-5-79, NSC 11-19-80

By ing, NARS, Date 6-8-81

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

~~SECRET~~ Chairman
Policy Planning Council
Washington

~~SECRET~~

March 6, 1968

Walt:

I suspect that it will be only a matter of time - and very short time, at that - before some prominent Presidential aspirant picks up the New York Times Friday lead editorial proposal for a US Commission of Wise Men (Bruce, McCloy, etc.) to review Vietnam policy.

In the present state of US public opinion, the proposal might have considerable appeal - sort of a 1968 version of "I will go to Korea". Only this time the "new look" would be dramatized by a new group, rather than a trip.

Would it not be well, therefore, if the Administration now made known that it was mounting its own review of Vietnam strategy and objectives; that a full time group had been set up for this purpose; and that outside knowledgeable people, as well as senior governmental officials, were intensively involved?

I realize such a review may well be going on now, but the press and public don't know it. And it makes all the difference in their attitude whether they think that the President's eventual decision on more troops is a result of "the same old bureaucratic machinery" grinding away or of a wider group taking an intensive, full time "new look" at the question.

There are good substantive grounds, post-Tet, for such a review of strategy in Vietnam.

And, as we both know, this kind of basic review is only likely to be accomplished if the participants go at it full time. Telling people to examine radical alternatives while they also deal with current business is not likely to yield much.

All this is developed further in the attached, which I hope you will find time to read. The Secretary's office had no objection to my sending it to you on a personal basis.

HO
Henry Owen