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| FORM OF DOCUMENT | CORRESPONDENTS OR TITLE | DATE | RESTRICTION |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------------|
| #2 report | open 2-17-88 NLS 86-183 summary notes of 547th NSC Meeting top secret SANITIZED NSC letter 10-24-80 | 02/08/65 | A |
| #3 report | partial record of meeting with President before NSC meeting top secret open 2-10-88 NLS 86-182 | 02/08/65 | A |
| #5 cable | Deptel 2138 to Moscow top secret open 8-2-94 NLS 93-465 | 02/07/65 | A |
| #7 memo | to the President from McG. B. top secret | 8 p 02/07/65 | A |
| #9 report | SC No. 03238/65 top secret sanitized 3-11-94 NLS 93-488 ; same sanitization a/00 | 02/08/65 | A |

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NSC Meetings, Vol. 3 Tab 29, 2/8/65, Situation in Vietnam

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~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~
FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

SUMMARY NOTES OF 547th NSC MEETING
February 8, 1965; 10:30 A. M.
(with Congressional Leaders)

The President asked Secretary McNamara to begin the meeting by reporting on the results of the U. S. raid in North Vietnam which took place yesterday against the Dong Hoi barracks.

Secretary McNamara said that bomb damage photographs indicated ten buildings were hit, two damaged, others burning. He described the raid as being moderate to good. He also reported on the air strike carried out by the South Vietnamese Air Force, with U.S. assistance, against the Chap Le army barracks. He said there were very good results from this strike based on reports received so far.

Acting Secretary Ball spoke of the effect of the North Vietnamese attack on Soviet Premier Kosygin's visit to Hanoi. He said it may be that Soviet Union was not aware of plans for the North Vietnamese attack. If so, they may have been mouse-trapped by Hanoi. If they had known of the attack, the Russians might not have sent Kosygin to Hanoi. The North Vietnamese action has put the Russians on the spot. We have talked to the Russians in an effort to explain why we had to retaliate as we did. Our hope is that they will understand why we acted as we did, at least to the extent of being annoyed by the North Vietnamese action.

Mr. Ball informed the group that we had sent to the Secretary General of the United Nations a letter stating our case. The purpose of this letter was to preempt any effort of a UN member to call a UN Security Council Meeting to discuss the situation in Vietnam. We are quite ready to explain our case to the Security Council but we wish to control the circumstances of that discussion. He recalled when we had proceeded in a similar manner following the Desoto Patrol incident in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Ambassador Thompson summarized his conversation with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin. He said he had told the Ambassador that we had cancelled a proposed patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin to be certain that no embarrassing incident would take place during Mr. Kosygin's visit to Hanoi. However, we had been forced to react when the Viet Cong attacked our personnel, wounding a number of men and killing seven. (Summary of the Thompson-Dobrynin conversation is attached, Tab A.)

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NIJ 86-183

By , NARA, Date 2-11-88

The President asked all of those present to preserve the secrecy of the various ways we communicate with the Russians. He said he had authorized the discussion with Ambassador Dobrynin because of the importance of conveying our views to the Russians. He did not want such conversations to become known to the public.

The President then summarized our present position as follows:

1. Last December we had approved a program of further pressure against North Vietnam but did not initiate actions for the time being, in order to allow Ambassador Taylor a period of time in which we hoped he would be able to assist the Vietnamese in creating a stable government in Saigon. In addition, we delayed action pending the time when U. S. dependents could be evacuated from the area.

2. We are now ready to return to our program of pushing forward in an effort to defeat North Vietnamese aggression without escalating the war.

3. We were surprised by the attack on our personnel at Pleiku but we had to respond. If we had failed to respond we would have conveyed to Hanoi, Peking and Moscow our lack of interest in the fate of the South Vietnamese government. In addition, the South Vietnamese would have thought we had abandoned them.

4. There is a bad governmental situation in Saigon but it is our hope that current U. S. action may pull together the various forces in Saigon and thus make possible the establishment of a stable government. He concluded by saying that U. S. dependents would be out of Saigon in about two weeks.

Representative Ford asked if he had understood correctly that we had cancelled a patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin because of Kosygin's presence in Hanoi.

The President replied that we had cancelled the patrol because we wanted to avoid any appearance of provocation while Kosygin was in North Vietnam. Despite this action on our part, the Viet Cong had carried out an attack which was highly provocative to us.

McGeorge Bundy then summarized the findings and recommendations of his report to the President. (A copy of the report is attached. Tab B).

The President then read a battle damage report of the attack on the Chap Le barracks and on the Dong Hoi target. (The document from which he read is attached. Tab C)

In response to the President's question, General Wheeler spoke of the difficulty of insuring the security at the Pleiku base. He described the dropping of mortars and went into the details with respect to what he described as a skillful sneak attack. He said the only real security for an airfield is full combat control of the perimeter two miles out from the field. In guerrilla warfare such as exists in Vietnam, there are no rear areas. He called attention to the fact that we must rely on the Vietnamese to carry out the security task because our forces are there as advisers and are insufficient in number to insure security of such an area as the Pleiku airfield.

Further details of the Vietnamese attack were given by General Goodpaster who, as a member of the Bundy group, had just returned from the area and had discussed the attack with those who were engaged.

The President added that we were up against highly skilled guerrilla fighters. He said there is no way to insure against such attacks as that which occurred at Pleiku short of sending a very large number of U. S. troops to Vietnam.

Representative Ford asked whether McGeorge Bundy was now recommending the program proposed last December.

The President responded by saying that Mr. Bundy had brought back from Saigon the views of our country team there. These views had been discussed with the President's advisers and an agreed recommendation had been made to the President.

Representative Ford asked whether the program involved additional U. S. personnel and additional financial assistance.

The President replied that our present needs are met. If the response to our action is larger than we expect, we will then of course make a request for a larger amount of U. S. military assistance and will need additional personnel.

McGeorge Bundy said that events had forced us to act as we have--that action had not been based on his group's findings. A rolling consensus as to the proper course of action had developed after he returned to Washington from Saigon.

Representative Ford asked whether all we intended to do was to react to Viet Cong provocations.

The President replied that all Viet Cong actions did call for a response but we did not intend to limit our actions to retaliating against Viet Cong attacks.

Senator Dirksen asked what effect on the morale of our forces in Vietnam and on South Vietnamese government itself would result from our decision to move our dependents out of Saigon.

Secretary McNamara replied that our action would be explained on the basis of our intention to clear the decks for further action rather than as an indication of our intention to retreat.

Senator Dirksen asked what the effect would be if the United States pulled out of South Vietnam.

McGeorge Bundy replied that if we pulled out there would be a strong feeling in the nations of Southeast Asia that we had failed to carry out our policy of assisting the Vietnamese to continue as an independent state. The consequences in Southeast Asia of our pull-out would be very large. In other parts of the world, the effect would also be very serious, even to the extent of affecting the morale in Berlin.

Senator Dirksen asked Director McCone what the reaction of the Chinese Communists would be.

Mr. McCone said we did not know as yet, but he recalled that Peking's reaction to the Gulf of Tonkin incident had been minor.

The President said that the Congressional Resolution on Vietnam plus the legal power of the Presidency made it possible for him to carry out at a manageable level an effort to deter, destroy and diminish the strength of the North Vietnamese aggressors and to try to convince them to leave South Vietnam alone. He said that the views of a few Senators could not control his actions. He intended to use the Congressional Resolution carefully but effectively. He repeated his view that we now have in Saigon the best possible people. Ambassador Taylor had his pick of personnel throughout the world. It is true that we have real trouble in Vietnam but we are not going to pull out.

Senator Dirksen asked what use could be made of the information which he had heard during the meeting.

The President replied that he had instructed McGeorge Bundy to talk to the press, telling them as much as he possibly could without affecting the national interest. He referred to the outstanding TV presentation made yesterday by Secretary McNamara and Acting Secretary Ball. He said there was very little information which the government had which was not already in the public domain. We cannot say we are seeking to broaden the war, or say that we are going to withdraw. We can say that if the Vietnamese will cease their aggression, we will pull out. He asked those present not to discuss publicly our military actions but he said they could say that our actions would be kept at a manageable level.

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(Partial record of February 8, 1965, meeting with the President by a group which met before NSC meeting.)

Secretary McNamara said that if we had to destroy the MIG airplanes now in North Vietnam we would have to adopt Phase II of the December program plus additional actions.

General Wheeler commented that sooner or later the MIGs would come in. As U.S. air strikes are made on targets farther north, intervention of the MIGs is to be expected.

The President asked if it were true that very quickly we would be required to take out the MIGs. Secretary McNamara and General Wheeler said yes.

Secretary McNamara said it was not necessary for us to conduct a raid a day but one raid each week would be enough to keep morale up in Saigon. He said the situation might not come to a head for three to six weeks. We need not now say that we have approved Phase II but we should explain to Ambassador Taylor that our present decisions involve actions less than those contemplated in Phase II. As soon as we tell Khanh we are going to undertake future actions, we can urge him to move forward as quickly as possible to establish a stable government in Saigon.

The President said we face a choice of going forward or running. We have chosen the first alternative. All of us agree on this but there remains some difference as to how fast we should go forward.

In response to a question as to what the Congressional leaders should be told when they joined the group for the formal NSC Meeting at 10:30, the President said he would ask Secretary McNamara to report on the South Vietnamese raid and to give any new information about the U.S. raid of the day before. The President then said he would explain that in December we had decided that the time was coming for intensified U.S. efforts which required a stable government in Saigon. Before we could undertake these efforts we had to make a new attempt to create stability in Saigon and to withdraw our dependents. We haven't won on the stable government but unless we do something now, even the government which now exists will collapse. The dependents are coming home.

(At this point the Congressional leaders appeared at the door of the Cabinet Room and the President ended his summary.)

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R.O. 13366. Sec. 1.1

REF 56-782

11. 1981. Date 2-5-88

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OUTGOING TELEGRAM Department of State

INDICATE: COLLECT
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TAB A
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Info

ACTION: Amembassy MOSCOW ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ PRIORITY

2138 FEB 7 6 43 PM '65

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EXDIS

Following account Ambassador Thompson conversation with
Dobrynin, 11:30 a.m., February 7.

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BEGIN QUOTE:

I told the Ambassador that I had asked him to come by my house in order that I might discuss with him the events that had taken place in Viet-Nam over the week-end. As he knew, a sneak attack had been made on/~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ^{American} personnel in an American compound and at an airfield as well as other attacks in South Viet-Nam. I told him that a destroyer patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin had been scheduled but that we had cancelled it when we had learned of Mr. Kosygin's visit to Hanoi in order not to embarrass him or cause any ~~mis~~ misunderstanding. I said we had also ~~asked~~ the South Vietnamese to suspend some actions which might have been misinterpreted. As he knew, the President had sent McGeorge Bundy to Saigon and the other side had made this attack on our personnel which had killed seven and wounded a very large number.

These

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| Drafted by: G: LThompson: sb 2/7/65 | Telegraphic transmission and classification approved by: S/S - Mr. Read |
|---|--|

Clearances:
DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
NEJ 93-465
By [Signature], NARA, Date 5-10-94

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These were not the first attacks of this kind, but in the circumstances in which these took place, and by their nature, we believe that our failure to act would have been misunderstood. We believed in fact that this was a deliberate attempt on the part of Hanoi to, as we would put it, "mouse trap" Mr. Kosygin. We believed they thought their action would enable Hanoi and Peiping to say that they had demonstrated that the United States was a paper tiger.

I said that as he knew, the President had suggested an exchange of visits with the Soviet leaders in order to try to resolve our problems. The President was very sincere in this and our policy with ~~xxx~~ respect to Southeast Asia remained as it had been, namely, that if the ~~xxxxx~~ North Vietnamese aggression in this area was ended and if North Viet-Nam would respect the integrity of its neighbors, we would be delighted to withdraw our forces from that area.

Ambassador Dobrynin asked ~~xxx~~ if I had been authorized by the President to make these remarks and I replied that I was acting under his instructions.

Dobrynin asked whether the President would be making a statement to the nation or holding a press conference about the matter and I said that a report on what had happened would be made by the Pentagon, but I did not think

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not think that the President intended to hold a special press conference.

Dobrynin said that he would, of course, inform his government of my remarks. He said that our action in hitting another state was different from a guerrilla action and he thought that his government would consider our action as a deliberate provocation during Kosygin's visit. I pointed out that it was not we that had taken the first action and on the contrary we had taken steps to avoid this development. All we are asking is for the carrying out of the Geneva Accords.

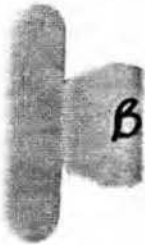
END QUOTE.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TAB B

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February 7, 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Re: The Situation in Vietnam

This memorandum attempts to describe the situation, the stakes and the measures which I think should now be taken.

I. Summary Conclusions

The situation in Vietnam is deteriorating, and without new U. S. action defeat appears inevitable -- probably not in a matter of weeks or perhaps even months, but within the next year or so. There is still time to turn it around, but not much.

The stakes in Vietnam are extremely high. The American investment is very large, and American responsibility is a fact of life which is palpable in the atmosphere of Asia, and even elsewhere. The international prestige of the United States, and a substantial part of our influence, are directly at risk in Vietnam. There is no way of unloading the burden on the Vietnamese themselves, and there is no way of negotiating ourselves out of Vietnam which offers any serious promise at present. It is possible that at some future time a neutral non-Communist force may emerge, perhaps under Buddhist leadership, but no such force currently exists, and any negotiated U. S. withdrawal today would mean surrender on the installment plan.

The policy of graduated and continuing reprisal outlined in Annex A is the most promising course available, in my judgment. That judgment is shared by all who accompanied me from Washington, and I think by all members of the country team.

The events of the last twenty-four hours have produced a practicable point of departure for this policy of reprisal, and for the removal of U. S. dependents. They may also have catalyzed the formation of a new Vietnamese government. If so, the situation may be at a turning point.

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| DECLASSIFIED | |
| NSC letter 11-10-76 | |
| By DC4 | NARS, Date 11-22-82 |

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There is much that can and should be done to support and to supplement our present effort, while adding sustained reprisals. But I want to stress one important general conclusion which again is shared by all members of my party: the U. S. mission is composed of outstanding men, and U. S. policy within Vietnam is mainly right and well directed. None of the special solutions or criticisms put forward with zeal by individual reformers in government or in the press is of major importance, and many of them are flatly wrong. No man is perfect, and not every tactical step of recent months has been perfectly chosen, but when you described the Americans in Vietnam as your first team, you were right.

II. The General Situation

For the last year -- and perhaps for longer -- the overall situation in Vietnam has been deteriorating. The Communists have been gaining and the anti-Communist forces have been losing. As a result there is now great uncertainty among Vietnamese as well as Americans as to whether Communist victory can be prevented. There is nervousness about the determination of the U. S. Government. There is recrimination and fear among Vietnamese political leaders. There is an appearance of wariness among some military leaders. There is a worrisome lassitude among the Vietnamese generally. There is a distressing absence of positive commitment to any serious social or political purpose. Outside observers are ready to write the patient off. All of this tends to bring latent anti-Americanism dangerously near to the surface.

To be an American in Saigon today is to have a gnawing feeling that time is against us. Junior officers in all services are able, zealous and effective within the limits of their means. Their morale is sustained by the fact that they know that they are doing their jobs well and that they will not have to accept the responsibility for defeat. But near the top, where responsibility is heavy and accountability real, one can sense the inner doubts of men whose outward behavior remains determined.

The situation is not all black. The overall military effectiveness of the Vietnamese armed forces in open combat continues to grow. The month of January was one of outstanding and genuine success in offensive military action, showing the highest gross count of Viet Cong dead of any month of the war, and a very high ratio also of enemy to friendly losses. We

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believe that General Westmoreland is right (and General Alsop wrong) when he says that the Viet Cong do not now plan to expose themselves to large-scale military engagements in which their losses on the average would be high and their gains low. (The operation at Binh Gia is analyzed as a special case, representing the taking of a friendly Catholic village as bait rather than a decision to force pitched battle -- more such cases are expected and the particular military problem posed is difficult.)

Moreover, the Vietnamese people, although war weary, are also remarkably tough and resilient, and they do not find the prospect of Communist domination attractive. Their readiness to quit is much lower than the discouraging events of recent months might lead one to expect. It is probable that most Vietnamese think American withdrawal is more likely than an early switch to neutralism or surrender by major elements within Vietnam.

Nevertheless the social and political fabric is stretched thin, and extremely unpleasant surprises are increasingly possible -- both political and military.

And it remains a stubborn fact that the percentage of the countryside which is dominated or threatened by the Viet Cong continues to grow. Even in areas which are "cleared," the follow-on pacification is stalled because of widespread belief that the Viet Cong are going to win in the long run. The areas which can be regarded as truly cleared and pacified and safe are few and shrinking. (An important exception to this is the area of Saigon and its immediate surroundings. The Hop Tac program of pacification in this area has not been an unqualified success, but it has not been a failure, and it has certainly prevented any strangling siege of Saigon. We did not have a chance to form an independent judgment on Hop Tac, but we did conclude that whatever its precise measure of success, it is of great importance that this operation be pursued with full vigor. That is the current policy of the mission.)

III. The Political Situation

Next only to the overall state of the struggle against the Viet Cong, the shape and structure of the government is the most important element of the Saigon situation. We made it our particular business to examine the question whether and to what degree a stable government is a necessity for the successful prosecution of our policy in Vietnam. We reached a mixed conclusion.

For immediate purposes -- and especially for the initiation of reprisal policy, we believe that the government need be no stronger than it is today with General Khanh as the focus of raw power while a weak caretaker government goes through the motions. Such a government can execute military decisions and it can give formal political support to joint US/GVN policy. That is about all it can do.

In the longer run, it is necessary that a government be established which will in one way or another be able to maintain its political authority against all challenges over a longer time than the governments of the last year and a half.

The composition and direction of such a government is a most difficult problem, and we do not wholly agree with the Mission in our estimate of its nature.

The mood of the Mission with respect to the prospect of obtaining such a government is one of pessimism and frustration. This is only natural in terms of the events of the past many weeks. Two dominant themes predominate: a government headed by Khanh will be difficult if not impossible to deal with and, in any case, would be short lived; the Buddhists (or, more specifically, the few politically activist Bonzes) must be confronted and faced down (by military means if necessary) lest they maintain their power to unseat any government that does not bow to their every demand. We tend to differ with the mission on both counts.

Specifically, we believe that General Khanh, with all his faults, is by long odds the outstanding military man currently in sight -- and the most impressive personality generally. We do not share the conclusion of Ambassador Taylor that he must somehow be removed from the military and political scene.

There are strong reasons for the Ambassador's total lack of confidence in Khanh. At least twice Khanh has acted in ways that directly spoiled Ambassador Taylor's high hopes for December. When he abolished the High National Council he undercut the prospect of the stable government needed for Phase II action against the North. In January he overthrew Huong just when the latter, in the Embassy's view, was about to succeed in putting the bonzes in their place.

Khanh is not an easy man to deal with. It is clear that he takes a highly tactical view of truth, although General Westmoreland asserts that Khanh has never deceived him. He is intensely ambitious and intent above all else on maintaining and advancing his own power. He gravely lacks the

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confidence of many of his colleagues -- military and civilian -- and he seems not to be personally popular with the public. He is correctly assessed as tricky. He remains able, energetic, perceptive and resilient, and in our judgment he will pursue the fight against the Communists as long as he can count on U. S. help. (If he should conclude that the U. S. was violently against him personally, he might well seek a way to power by some anti-American path, a path which would lead to disaster for both Vietnam and the United States.)

But our principal reason for opposing any sharp break with Khanh is that we see no one else in sight with anything like his ability to combine military authority with some sense of politics.

We also differ from the Embassy in our estimate of the Buddhist leaders. The dominant Embassy view is that "the Buddhists" are really just a handful of irresponsible and designing clerics and that they must be curbed by firmness. We agree that they may well have to be limited at some point, especially in their use of mobs, but we also think they must be offered some accommodation.

We feel that the operative concept should be incorporation into the affairs of government rather than confrontation. This is easier said than done, because the Buddhists have many of the bad habits of men who have prospered by irresponsible opposition. Still there are signs that both Buddhist laymen and bonzes are now taking a more positive stance. We feel that the mission might do more in attempting to direct or channel the Buddhists into a more useful and positive role -- an active rather than a passive approach. The Buddhists now play a key role in the balance of political forces, so that something more than "confrontation" must be achieved if there is to be any active government at all.

Having registered these two immediate and important differences of emphasis, we should add that in our judgment the mission has acted at about the right level of general involvement in the problem of Vietnamese government-making. American advice is sought by all elements, and all try to bend it to their own ends. The mission attempts to keep before all elements the importance of stable government, and it quietly presses the value of those who are known to be good, solid, able ministerial timber.

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In a situation in which confidence is low and uncertainty great, strongly ambitious forces like Khanh and the Buddhists might react very vigorously against an overt American attempt to form or actively support a government against their liking. Anti-Americanism is a theme that is potentially explosive, and therefore tempting to those who feel that we are blocking their ambitions. This is one lesson, to us, of the outburst in Hue last month.

On the other hand, no power whose stake is as great and whose presence as clear as those of the United States in Vietnam can afford to stand aside entirely, and such a passive posture would not be understood or approved by the Vietnamese themselves.

It is important, therefore, that the mission maintain a constant and active concern with the politics of government-making. This it is doing. While it is very difficult to second-guess this effort, we do recommend a telegram of guidance which might take into account the marginal differences from mission thinking which are suggested above. In the light of further discussion, a message of this sort will be drafted for consideration.

IV. Strengthening the Pacification Program

If we suppose that new hopes are raised -- at least temporarily -- by a reprisal program, and if we suppose further that a government somewhat better than the bare minimum is established, the most urgent order of business will then be the improvement and broadening of the pacification program, especially in its non-military elements.

The mission fully concurs in the importance of this effort. We believe, however, that consideration should be given to important modifications in its organization for this purpose. In particular we believe that there should be intensive effort to strengthen our program at the margin between military advice and economic development -- in the area which implies civil government for the soldiers and police action for the aid mission. These efforts, important as they are understood to be, are somehow at the edge of vision for both parties. General Westmoreland and his people inevitably think first of military programs, though they have been imaginative and understanding about the importance of other aspects. Mr. Killen and the USOM people are centrally concerned with problems of aid and of economic improvement, although they talk with conviction and energy about their increasing police effort. It remains a fact that its own

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organization for helping to provide real security for an area which has been "cleared" in crude military terms is unfinished business for the U. S. mission. What is true of our side is doubly true of the Vietnamese.

We do not offer a definite solution to this problem. We are inclined to suggest, however, that one important and unemployed asset is the Special Forces of the Defense Department. Because of the predominant role of the U. S. military, and because of the generous spirit and broad mind of General Westmoreland himself, we are inclined to believe that the easiest growing edge for this work may be through the use of some of these versatile and flexible units.

We would think it important, however, that an effort of this kind be coordinated at a high level between the Defense Department and AID, and we believe that a joint mission which would include either Director Bell or Mr. Gaud from AID is urgently needed for the purpose of building this missing link into our program.

V. A Sense of Positive Hope

Vietnamese talk is full of the need for "revolution." Vietnamese practice is empty of action to match the talk -- so much so that the word "revolution" sometimes seems to have no real meaning. Yet in fact there is plainly a deep and strong yearning among the young and the unprivileged for a new and better social order. This is what the Buddhist leaders are groping toward; this is what the students and young Turk generals are seeking. This yearning does not find an adequate response in American policy as Vietnamese see it. This is one cause of latent anti-American feeling. We only perceived this problem toward the end of our visit. We think it needs urgent further attention. We make no present recommendations. We do believe that over the long pull our military and political firmness must be matched by our political and economic support for the hopes that are embodied to Vietnamese in the word "revolution."

VI. The Basic U. S. Commitment

The prospect in Vietnam is grim. The energy and persistence of the Viet Cong are astonishing. They can appear anywhere -- and at almost any time. They have accepted extraordinary losses and they come back

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for more. They show skill in their sneak attacks and ferocity when cornered. Yet the weary country does not want them to win.

There are a host of things the Vietnamese need to do better and areas in which we need to help them. The place where we can help most is in the clarity and firmness of our own commitment to what is in fact as well as in rhetoric a common cause. There is one grave weakness in our posture in Vietnam which is within our own power to fix -- and that is a widespread belief that we do not have the will and force and patience and determination to take the necessary action and stay the course.

This is the overriding reason for our present recommendation of a policy of sustained reprisal. Once such a policy is put in force, we shall be able to speak in Vietnam on many topics and in many ways, with growing force and effectiveness.

One final word. At its very best the struggle in Vietnam will be long. It seems to us important that this fundamental fact be made clear and our understanding of it be made clear to our own people and to the people of Vietnam. Too often in the past we have conveyed the impression that we expect an early solution when those who live with this war know that no early solution is possible. It is our own belief that the people of the United States have the necessary will to accept and to execute a policy that rests upon the reality that there is no short cut to success in South Vietnam.

McG. B.

McG. B.

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8 February 1965
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM
(AS OF 0600 EST)

SANITIZED
E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4
NLJ 93-488
By JW, NARA. Date 3-9-94

The 8 February VNAF Air Strike

1. South Vietnamese air force planes launched a strike from Danang against targets just north of the Demilitarized Zone at approximately 0300 EST on 8 February. US aircraft provided tactical support. The primary target was the Chap Le army barracks (see appended map), the home of the North Vietnamese 270th Independent Regiment. All aircraft have completed the strike and returned to their base, except one which was lost. The pilot was recovered. According to pilot reports, many fires were set and the results were "excellent."

The 7 February US Air Strike

2. Air strikes were launched against army barracks and supply areas at Dong Hoi, Vit Thu Lu, and Chap Le in the southern DRV (see accompanying map) about 1400 local Vietnam time (about 0100 EST, 7 February). Because of cloud cover in the target areas, only the strike against the Dong Hoi target was completed. The other missions aborted before reaching their targets.

3. Initial post-strike photography of Dong Hoi has been completed. It revealed a total of ten buildings destroyed, two heavily damaged, and an unknown number left burning in the barracks area. Task group commanders now estimate the results of the Dong Hoi strike as moderately good. They have requested further photo reconnaissance for a complete evaluation.

4. The only enemy report of damage yet received was [REDACTED] acknowledging that land communications in the target area had been disrupted by the bombings.

1.3(a)(4)

5. US strike pilots reported light to heavy ground fire against their planes, including fire from North Vietnamese gunboats located in a river near the target.

DRV gunboats fired 2,000 rounds of 14.5 and 37-mm ammunition. There was no Communist air reaction to the strikes. Chinese Communist and DRV radar, however, tracked the strike aircraft from shortly after their launch until they had left North Vietnamese territory.

1.3(a)(4)

6. All of the US aircraft in the strike have been recovered except for one A4E which, according to pilot reports, was hit by ground fire and went down in the sea one to two miles off Dong Hoi. The pilot ejected and has not been recovered. Several other US aircraft were damaged by ground fire during the strike.

North Vietnamese and Chinese Communist Military Reaction

7. Military reaction to the strikes has thus far been minimal. During the strike against Dong Hoi,

[REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

8. No DRV air or ground military activity which can be directly related to the strike has been noted.

[REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

9.

[REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

1.3(a)(4)

[REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

10.

[REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

11.

[REDACTED]

1.3(a)(4)

. 12. Since mid-January three Soviet W-class submarines and a sub tender have been operating east of Taiwan. They were headed south in the East China Sea on 6 February. Two other W-class submarines and a Krupny-class guided-missile destroyer left Vladivostok on 4 February and may join or relieve the other Russian vessels. The unprecedented deployment of Soviet submarine patrols into these waters is probably a prelude to a general increase in Soviet out-of-area naval activity in the Far East, but may also be part of an effort to extend a Soviet naval presence into this part of the world coincident with Premier Kosygin's visit to North Vietnam.

Present US Deployments

13. There has as yet been no augmentation of US Air Force elements in South Vietnam. US naval units off the South Vietnamese coast include four

CVAs, 15 DDs, and one marine amphibious battalion. Another marine landing battalion (Task Group 76.5) has been embarked from the Philippines and is expected to arrive at Cap St. Jacques in the early morning hours of 10 February. The deployment of a US Hawk ground-to-air missile battalion to the Danang airfield has also begun.

The Viet Cong Attack on Pleiku

14. Latest reports indicate that the two attacks against US facilities in Pleiku, in the central highlands, were initiated simultaneously. An estimated Viet Cong company was involved in the attack on the US compound. A VC mortar position with some 60 empty 81-mm mortar containers was found about three kilometers east of Pleiku. Satchel demolition charges were apparently used in the attack against the US aircraft at Camp Hollaway airfield.

15. Aircraft losses at Camp Hollaway are now listed as 5 UH-1Bs destroyed and 9-11 UH-1Bs damaged. Several other planes were also damaged, including a CV2B reconnaissance aircraft. A total of 52 billets were damaged, some severely. Latest unconfirmed US casualties from the Pleiku attacks are eight killed and 109 wounded. No South Vietnamese military or civilian casualties have been reported.

16. Almost simultaneous attacks near the coastal towns of Tuy Hoa and Nha Trang apparently are part of a general step-up of Viet Cong military activity anticipated following the Tet cease-fire. No US casualties were reported.

17. Following the US air retaliation, the combined US-GVN airfield at Soc Trang in the delta about 80-90 miles south of Saigon came under mortar fire and small arms attack at approximately 2200 7 February (0900 EST). Reports indicate no damage or casualties. Soc Trang has been shelled three times in the past year and a half, and this attack may have been part of Viet Cong plans for an overall step-up of attacks in the post-Tet period.

18.



This apparently was part of the Viet Cong planning prior to the Pleiku attack.

1.3(a)(4)

Communist Political Reaction

19. The Communists have so far responded mainly with propaganda designed to discredit the US air strike as unwarranted aggression. Hanoi, in a Defense Ministry statement of 7 February following the strike termed it extremely serious and warned that the US must bear responsibility for all consequences. No indication of specific plans for retaliation was contained in the statement. On 8 February, a North Vietnamese foreign ministry spokesman vaguely warned the US that armed attacks against the DRV would meet with "strong opposition" from the "people of the socialist countries." Peiping has rebroadcast several of the Hanoi announcements and has quoted extensively from the Western press reporting on the US strike, including the White House statement of 7 February. No authoritative statement by the Chinese Communists has yet been noted, however.

20. Moscow TASS has also reported the White House statement and the North Vietnamese Defense Ministry statement, but there has as yet been no authoritative Soviet reaction to the US air strikes. Subsequent to the strikes, Hanoi broadcast a report that talks between Kosygin and Vietnamese leaders had taken place some time on 7 February. There has been no other reporting on Kosygin's activities since the US action. Moscow announced on 8 February that a meeting of the military members of the Kosygin delegation with the DRV Defense Minister, Vo Nguyen Giap, took place on the 7th. No details of the discussion were given.

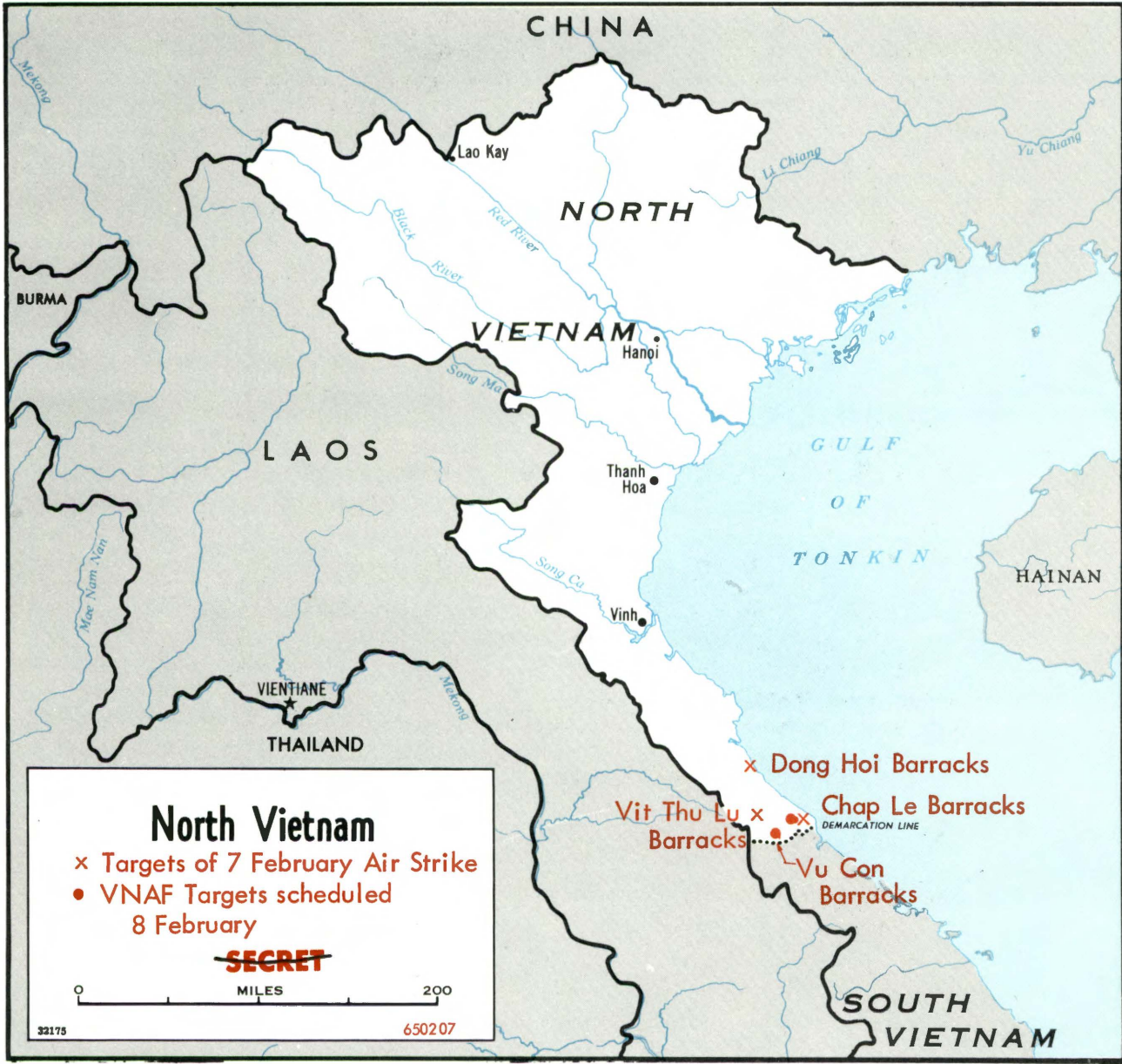
Free World Reaction

21. There has been little official Free World reaction to the actions in Vietnam thus far. Japan's Prime Minister Sato stated publicly that he regarded the U.S. bombing as a "limited reprisal" rather than an indication of U.S. plans to escalate the war. The leftist Japan Socialist Party issued a statement expressing the view that "the U.S. policy of expanding the war" will only aggravate the situation. The South Korean Defense Ministry announced that it still planned to send 2,000 non-Combat troops to South Vietnam. Members of South Korean opposition parties who in the past criticized the U.S. for being "too soft" in Vietnam, praised the raid. Support for the U.S. action also came from a senior member of Nationalist China's parliament.

22. Thailand's Prime Minister expressed satisfaction over the results of the U.S. air strikes. India's Prime Minister Shastri has suggested an early meeting between President Johnson and Soviet Premier Kosygin.

23. Thus far the reaction in Europe has been limited to press and semi-official sources. AFP has reported from Paris that political sources there expressed the hope that the US reprisal action in Vietnam would again be limited and not lead to spreading the war. Authoritative French sources were quoted by AFP as declining to comment on the US action and the general feeling in Paris was termed one of caution, anxiety and reserve.

24. In London, the Viet Cong attack and the US reprisal caused some uneasiness in official circles, according to AFP. The London Times said that the flareup could help to clarify the war in Vietnam, while the Guardian said the US action "is no more likely than the raids after the Gulf of Tonkin to improve the US position in the South."



10

ATTENDEES AT 547th NSC MEETING

February 8, 1965

The President

Acting Secretary of State Ball
Assistant Secretary William Bundy
Deputy Assistant Secretary Unger
Ambassador-at-Large Thompson

Secretary of Defense McNamara
Deputy Secretary Vance
Assistant Secretary McNaughton

Treasury Secretary Dillon
USIA Director Rowan

AID Administrator Bell
Deputy Administrator Gaud

CIA Director McCone

JCS Chairman Wheeler
Assistant Chairman Goodpaster

McGeorge Bundy
George Reedy
Bill Moyers
Jack Valenti
Douglass Cater
Bromley Smith
Larry O'Brien
Chester Cooper

Congressional Leaders:
Senator Dirksen
Senator Mansfield
Speaker McCormack
Representative Gerald Ford