Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976

Volume VI

Vietnam, January 1969–July 1970

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Preface

The *Foreign Relations of the United States* series presents the official documentary historical record of major foreign policy decisions and significant diplomatic activity of the United States Government. The Historian of the Department of State is charged with the responsibility for the preparation of the *Foreign Relations* series. The staff of the Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, under the direction of the General Editor of the *Foreign Relations* series, plans, researches, compiles, and edits the volumes in the series. Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg first promulgated official regulations codifying specific standards for the selection and editing of documents for the series on March 26, 1925. These regulations, with minor modifications, guided the series through 1991.

Public Law 102–138, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, established a new statutory charter for the preparation of the series which was signed by President George H.W. Bush on October 28, 1991. Section 198 of P.L. 102–138 added a new Title IV to the Department of State's Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 4351, et seq.).

The statute requires that the *Foreign Relations* series be a thorough, accurate, and reliable record of major United States foreign policy decisions and significant United States diplomatic activity. The volumes of the series should include all records needed to provide comprehensive documentation of major foreign policy decisions and actions of the United States Government. The statute also confirms the editing principles established by Secretary Kellogg: the *Foreign Relations* series is guided by the principles of historical objectivity and accuracy; records should not be altered or deletions made without indicating in the published text that a deletion has been made; the published record should omit no facts that were of major importance in reaching a decision; and nothing should be omitted for the purposes of concealing a defect in policy. The statute also requires that the *Foreign Relations* series be published not more than 30 years after the events recorded. The editors are convinced that this volume meets all regulatory, statutory, and scholarly standards of selection and editing.

Structure and Scope of the Foreign Relations Series

This volume is part of a subseries of volumes of the *Foreign Relations* series that documents the most important issues in the foreign policy of the administrations of Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford. This volume documents U.S. policy towards the war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from January 1969 to July 1970.

Focus of Research and Principles of Selection for Foreign Relations, 1969–1976, Volume VI

The scope of this volume is different from previous volumes on Vietnam in the *Foreign Relations* series. For the years 1955–1968 the series produced volumes exclusively on U.S. policy towards Vietnam and documented U.S. policy towards Laos and Cambodia in separate volumes. With the Nixon administration's decision to take the war to the enemy in Cambodia and integrate more fully the secret war in Laos into its strategy for Vietnam, this format was no longer valid. This volume covers Vietnam in the context of the larger war that included the conflicts in Laos and Cambodia, and in the case of the former, also the role of Thailand in Laos. Consequently, the editors had to make choices about what to cover. When Vietnam was the main concern of President Nixon and his principal advisers—primarily Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger and his NSC Staff; Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker in Saigon; Commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, General Creighton Abrams; and Chief Paris Peace Talks negotiator, Henry Cabot Lodge—the focus is on Vietnam strategy, planning and operations. The focus of the volume later shifts to the issue of the deterioration of the secret war in Laos in March 1970. In March and April 1970, after the overthrow of Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia and his replacement by pro-American General Lon Nol, the volume moves its focus to Cambodia, culminating with the U.S.-South Vietnamese invasion of that country in an effort to attack the North Vietnamese troops in their sanctuaries. The volume concludes with the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia.

In addition to this shifting emphasis on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, the volume has as one of its principal themes the search for a negotiated settlement to the Vietnam War. In early 1969, the Nixon administration attempted to use the private sessions of the Paris Peace Talks as a potential venue for serious negotiations. When the administration concluded that this format was not productive, peace talks shifted to secret meetings between Henry Kissinger and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam Chief of the Paris delegation, Xuan Thuy and the Special Adviser, Le Duc Tho. The volume covers these initial secret talks in detail. Also, as part of the Nixon strategy for a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, Nixon and Kissinger pressed the Soviet Union to moderate the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's demands in the peace negotiations by linking US–USSR détente with the supposed success of their efforts.

President Nixon was determined to use force to encourage the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to agree to a settlement in Vietnam. Coverage of war strategy to this end is also a theme of the volume but only in the broadest sense. Policy decisions to secretly bomb Cambo-

dia, to expand the bombing in Laos, to request and expedite the sending of Thai troops for fighting in Laos, to shore up the Lon Nol government, and to attack the North Vietnamese in Cambodia are documented as they reach the President and his principal advisers for decision. The implementation and the course of these campaigns are covered only as they are reported to the President or other senior officials. U.S. relations with the Republic of Vietnam, a major theme of many previous Vietnam volumes, is a secondary subject in this volume mainly because South Vietnam was in a period of relative political and social quiet at the time. Consultation with President Thieu and Vice President Ky is emphasized when it was significant. Nixon's desire to use covert operations more effectively in support of the war in Vietnam is documented, as is a program of clandestine support for the creation of a grass roots political organization to support President Thieu.

The question of the October 1969 nuclear alert and its relationship to the war in Vietnam is covered only briefly in this volume. Full coverage of the alert will be printed in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, Volume XXXIV, National Security Policy, 1969–1972.

Editorial Methodology

The documents are presented chronologically according to Washington time. Memoranda of conversation are placed according to the time and date of the conversation, rather than the date the memorandum was drafted.

Editorial treatment of the documents published in the *Foreign Relations* series follows Office style guidelines, supplemented by guidance from the General Editor. The documents are reproduced as exactly as possible, including marginalia or other notations, which are described in the footnotes. Texts are transcribed and printed according to accepted conventions for the publication of historical documents within the limitations of modern typography. A heading has been supplied by the editors for each document included in the volume. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are retained as found in the original text, except that obvious typographical errors are silently corrected. Other mistakes and omissions in the documents are corrected by bracketed insertions: a correction is set in italic type; an addition in roman type. Words or phrases underlined in the source text are printed in italics. Abbreviations and contractions are preserved as found in the original text, and a list of abbreviations is included in the front matter of each volume.

Bracketed insertions are also used to indicate omitted text that deals with an unrelated subject (in roman type) or that remains classified after declassification review (in italic type). The amount and, where possible, the nature of the material not declassified has been noted by indicating the number of lines or pages of text that were omitted.

Entire documents withheld for declassification purposes have been accounted for and are listed with headings, source notes, and number of pages not declassified in their chronological place. All brackets that appear in the original text are so identified in footnotes.

The first footnote to each document indicates the source of the document, original classification, distribution, and drafting information. This note also provides the background of important documents and policies and indicates whether the President or his major policy advisers read the document.

Editorial notes and additional annotation summarize pertinent material not printed in the volume, indicate the location of additional documentary sources, provide references to important related documents printed in other volumes, describe key events, and provide summaries of and citations to public statements that supplement and elucidate the printed documents. Information derived from memoirs and other first-hand accounts has been used when appropriate to supplement or explicate the official record.

The numbers in the index refer to document numbers rather than to page numbers.

Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation

The Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation, established under the *Foreign Relations* statute, reviews records, advises, and makes recommendations concerning the *Foreign Relations* series. The Historical Advisory Committee monitors the overall compilation and editorial process of the series and advises on all aspects of the preparation and declassification of the series. The Historical Advisory Committee does not necessarily review the contents of individual volumes in the series, but it makes recommendations on issues that come to its attention and reviews volumes as it deems necessary to fulfill its advisory and statutory obligations.

Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act Review

Under the terms of the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act (PRMPA) of 1974 (44 U.S.C. 2111 note), the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has custody of the Nixon Presidential historical materials. The requirements of the PRMPA and implementing regulations govern access to the Nixon Presidential historical materials. The PRMPA and implementing public access regulations require NARA to review for additional restrictions in order to ensure the protection of the privacy rights of former Nixon White House officials, since these officials were not given the opportunity to separate their personal materials from public papers. Thus, the PRMPA and implementing public access regulations require NARA to formally notify the Nixon Estate and former Nixon White House

staff members that the agency is scheduling for public release Nixon White House historical materials. The Nixon Estate and former White House staff members have 30 days to contest the release of Nixon historical materials in which they were a participant or are mentioned. Further, the PRMPA and implementing regulations require NARA to segregate and return to the creator of files private and personal materials. All *Foreign Relations* volumes that include materials from NARA's Nixon Presidential Materials Project are processed and released in accordance with the PRMPA.

Declassification Review

The Office of Information Programs and Services, Bureau of Administration, conducted the declassification review for the Department of State of the documents published in this volume. The review was conducted in accordance with the standards set forth in Executive Order 12958 on Classified National Security Information and applicable laws.

The principle guiding declassification review is to release all information, subject only to the current requirements of national security as embodied in law and regulation. Declassification decisions entailed concurrence of the appropriate geographic and functional bureaus in the Department of State, other concerned agencies of the U.S. Government, and the appropriate foreign governments regarding specific documents of those governments. The declassification review of this volume, which began in 2000 and was completed in 2003, resulted in the decision to withhold 1 document in full, excise a paragraph or more in 6 documents, and make minor excisions of less than a paragraph in 28 documents.

The Office of the Historian is confident, on the basis of the research conducted in preparing this volume and as a result of the declassification review process described above, that the documentation and editorial notes presented here provide an accurate and comprehensive—given limitations of space—account of the Nixon administration's Vietnam war policy from January 1969 to July 1970.

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to acknowledge the assistance of officials at the Nixon Presidential Materials Project of the National Archives and Records Administration (Archives II), at College Park, Maryland. The editors wish to express gratitude to the Richard Nixon Estate and the Richard Nixon Library & Birthplace for facilitating access to Nixon administration historical materials for this documentary series. Special thanks are due to Scott Koch, formerly of the Historical Staff of the Central Intelligence Agency, who was extremely helpful in arranging full access to the files of the Central Intelligence Agency. John Haynes

of the Library of Congress was responsible for expediting access to the Kissinger Papers, including the transcripts of Henry Kissinger's telephone conversations. The editors were able to use the Kissinger Papers, including the transcripts of telephone conversations, with the kind permission of Henry Kissinger. The editors would like to also thank Sandy Meagher for her valuable assistance in expediting the use of files of the Department of Defense.

Carolyn Yee collected the documentation for this volume for 1969, made an initial selection, and edited the documents she selected based on the assumption that the volume would only cover 1969. Edward C. Keefer, then Chief of the Asia and Americas Division, selected the documents for 1970, and revised and reedited the entire volume with its current coverage of just over a year and a half. Susan C. Weetman, Chief of the Declassification and Publishing Division, coordinated the declassification review. Vicki E. Futscher and Florence M. Segura did the copy and technical editing. Max Franke prepared the index.

Marc J. Susser
The Historian
Bureau of Public Affairs

December 2005

Sources

Sources for the Foreign Relations Series

The *Foreign Relations* statute requires that the published record in the *Foreign Relations* series include all records needed to provide comprehensive documentation on major U.S. foreign policy decisions and significant U.S. diplomatic activity. It further requires that government agencies, departments, and other entities of the U.S. Government engaged in foreign policy formulation, execution, or support cooperate with the Department of State Historian by providing full and complete access to records pertinent to foreign policy decisions and actions and by providing copies of selected records. Most of the sources consulted in the preparation of this volume have been declassified and are available for review at the National Archives and Records Administration.

The editors of the *Foreign Relations* series have complete access to all the retired records and papers of the Department of State: the central files of the Department; the special decentralized files ("lot files") of the Department at the bureau, office, and division levels; the files of the Department's Executive Secretariat, which contain the records of international conferences and high-level official visits, correspondence with foreign leaders by the President and Secretary of State, and memoranda of conversations between the President and Secretary of State and foreign officials; and the files of overseas diplomatic posts. All the Department's indexed central files through July 1973 have been permanently transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland (Archives II). Many of the Department's decentralized office (or lot) files covering the 1969–1976 period, which the National Archives deems worthy of permanent retention, have been transferred or are in the process of being transferred from the Department's custody to Archives II.

The editors of the *Foreign Relations* series also have full access to the papers of President Nixon and other White House foreign policy records. Presidential papers maintained and preserved at the Presidential libraries and the Nixon Presidential Materials Project at Archives II include some of the most significant foreign affairs-related documentation from the Department of State and other Federal agencies including the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Dr. Henry Kissinger has approved access to his papers at the Library of Congress. The papers are a key source for the Nixon-Ford subseries of *Foreign Relations.*

Research for this volume was completed through special access to restricted documents at the Nixon Presidential Materials Project, the Library of Congress, and other agencies. While all the material printed in this volume has been declassified, some of it is extracted from still-classified documents. The Nixon Presidential Materials staff is processing and declassifying many of the documents used in this volume, but they may not be available in their entirety at the time of publication.

Sources for Foreign Relations, 1969–1976, Volume VI

In preparing this volume, the editors made extensive use of Presidential papers and other White House records at the Nixon Presidential Materials Project, which proved to be the single most useful collection bearing on the Nixon administration's management of the Vietnam war and its search for a negotiated peace in Southeast Asia. The collection of most value within the Nixon materials is the National Security Council (NSC) Files. Two files within the NSC Files provided the richest source of documentation: the Vietnam Subject Files and the Country Files for Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Only slightly less important are the Country Files for Thailand, and the special File on Cambodian Operations. Also of importance in the NSC Files are the Paris/Talks Meeting Files, which relate to the formal Paris Peace Negotiations both public and private. The records of the Kissinger–Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho secret negotiations are in the NSC Files, For the President, China/Vietnam Negotiations, C.D. [Camp David]. A final negotiations file of note are the private channel talks between Henry Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin, which are in the NSC Files, President's Trip File, Dobrynin/Kissinger. Their private discussions often related to Vietnam.

Of next importance are a group of files in the NSC Files. The first are the Backchannel Files. President Nixon and Kissinger communicated secretly with the Ambassador to Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, through backchannel messages that did not involve the rest of the bureaucracy. For 1969, however, backchannel communications to and from Bunker are filed in the Vietnam Subject File. Also in the NSC Files are the Kissinger Office Files, the Subject Files, the Agency Files, the Haig Special and Chronological Files, Presidential/HAK Mem Cons, the President's Daily Briefing Files, and the Unfiled Materials.

Of equal importance in the NSC Files of the Nixon Presidential Materials are the National Security Council Institutional Files (H-Files), which are part of the NSC Files but are not to be confused with the NSC Institutional Matters File. The NSC Institutional Files (H-Files) contain the minutes of NSC Council Meetings, and such NSC subgroups as the Review Group/Senior Review Group and Washington Special Actions Group. For each set of meeting minutes there are corresponding folders that contain the papers that Kissinger, who chaired

all of these groups, used in preparation for the meetings. Also of value in the NSC Institutional Files (H-Files) are the National Security Study Memorandum and National Security Decision Memorandum files, containing the request for studies, the studies themselves, and the decision memoranda resulting from the process.

The most useful collections in the White House Special Files are the President's Personal Files, especially Memoranda for the President and the Haldeman Files. The Nixon Presidential Diary in the White House Central Files is an essential tool for researchers and is in the White House Central Files, Staff Member and Office Files.

After the records in the Nixon Presidential Materials Project, the Papers of Henry Kissinger at the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress are second in importance. While the Kissinger Papers often replicate documentation found in other collections, especially the NSC File of the Nixon Presidential Materials, they proved valuable and important documents unique to that collection, especially in the Geopolitical File, the file on Memoranda to the President, and the Presidential File. The Papers also contain the records of Kissinger's telephone conversations, copies of which have been given by Dr. Kissinger to the National Archives. These telephone transcripts are a key source that are open at the National Archives and are part of the Nixon Presidential Materials.

The Department of State, Department of Defense, and to a lesser extent the Central Intelligence Agency, strong bureaucratic players in past Vietnam volumes, play a much reduced role under President Nixon and Henry Kissinger, who concentrated policy in their own hands. The files of the Department of State, especially the Central Files and some Lot Files, are most valuable for describing what was happening in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, or at the Paris talks. There are far fewer Department of State files that trace policy decisions, since the Secretary of State and his department were essentially excluded from key policy decision-making on Vietnam. Still, some of the Central Files most useful for developments in the field are POL 27 CAMB/KHMER, POL 27 LAOS, and POL 27 VIET S. Only in the early days of the Nixon administration, when it seemed as if the private sessions at the Paris Peace Talks might be a venue for real negotiation, are Lot Files of any value.

The Central Intelligence Agency records are valuable for intelligence on Vietnam and the war in Southeast Asia, however, the most important intelligence records can be found in the Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files. Collections under CIA custody of note are the National Intelligence Council (NIC) Files, the Records of George Carver, and the DCI Helms and DCI Executive Registry Files. The National Intelligence Council's publication on intelligence in Vietnam, *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948–1975,* contains a good selection of

intelligence estimates on Vietnam for this period. Usually only the summaries of the National Intelligence and Special Intelligence estimates are published in this volume. The full text is in the NIC publication. Intelligence Files for the Nixon administration, containing the records of the 303 Committee, cited as under the custody of the National Security Council but destined for the Nixon Presidential Materials, were particularly valuable for covert operations and unconventional warfare.

The Department of Defense and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird were key players on policy towards Vietnam, but official Defense records did not prove particularly valuable. Laird's key memoranda are almost always found in the Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files. At the Ford Library, there is a collection of documents that cover Laird's tenure as Secretary of Defense. His staff chose these Laird Papers at the end of his term as Secretary of Defense with a view to documenting his major decisions. A major portion of this collection concerns Vietnam, Cambodia, and POWs/MIAs. The Laird Papers provided a useful mechanism to check against the documentation included in the volume. Defense related records that were not available at the time that this volume was researched, but that deserve mention as potential sources, are the Official Records of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Earle G. Wheeler, RG 218, at the National Archives.

This *Foreign Relations* volume covers a period for which there were no White House Presidential tape recordings. Their absence places a premium on the Kissinger telephone transcripts and the Haldeman diaries to provide the contemporary and unrevised records behind the official documentation.

The following list identifies the particular files and collections used in the preparation of this volume. The declassification and transfer to the National Archives of the Department of State records is in process, and most of these records are already available for public review at the National Archives.

Unpublished Sources

Department of State

Central Files. *See* National Archives and Records Administration below.

Lot Files. For other lot files already transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland, Record Group 59, see National Archives and Records Administration below.

INR/IL Historical Files

Files of the Office of Intelligence Coordination, containing records from the 1940s through the 1980s, maintained by the Office of Intelligence Liaison, Bureau of Intelligence and Research

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland

Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State

Central Files

AID (US) VIET S: U.S. economic aid to South Vietnam, general
DEF 19 THAI–LAOS: Thai military assistance to Laos
DEF 19 US–CAMB: US military assistance to Cambodia
DEF US–VIET S: US military assistance to South Vietnam, general
E VIET S: general economic affairs of South Vietnam
FN 10 VIET S: foreign exchange, South Vietnam
ORG 7 S: administration and organization, visits by Secretary of State
POL 27 ASIA SE: military operations in Southeast Asia
POL 27–14 ASIA SE: ceasefire in Southeast Asia
POL CAMB: general policy, Cambodia
POL 15 CAMB: Cambodian Government
POL 15–1 CAMB: head of state, Cambodia
POL 27 CAMB: military operations in Cambodia
POL 32 CAMB: Cambodia's territories and boundaries
POL 1 CAMB–US: US-Cambodian relations, general
POL 17 CAMB–US: diplomatic relations between Cambodia and US
POL CAMB/KHMER: general policy, Cambodia/Khmer Republic
POL 27 CAMB/KHMER: military operations, Cambodia/Khmer Republic
POL CAMB–VIET S: Cambodia-South Vietnamese relations
POL 32–1 CAMB–VIET: Cambodia-South Vietnam territory and boundaries
POL 1 LAOS: general policy, Laos
POL 7 LAOS: meetings with Lao leaders
POL 12 LAOS: political parties in Laos
POL 15 LAOS: Government of Laos
POL 15–1 LAOS: Lao head of state, executive branch
POL 27 LAOS: military operations in Laos
POL 27–14 LAOS: ceasefire in Laos
POL 27–7 VIET: prisoners of war in Vietnam
POL 27–14 VIET: ceasefire in Vietnam
POL 1 VIET S: general policy, South Vietnam
POL 7 VIET S: meetings with South Vietnamese leaders
POL 12 VIET S: political parties in South Vietnam
POL 15 VIET S: Government of South Vietnam
POL 15–1 VIET S: South Vietnamese head of state, executive branch
POL 18 VIET S: provincial governments in South Vietnam
POL 23–9 VIET S: civil disturbances and revolts in South Vietnam
POL 27–7 VIET S: prisoners of war in South Vietnam
POL 27–14 VIET S: ceasefire in South Vietnam
POL 27–7 VIET S: military operations in South Vietnam;
POL 1 US–VIET S: general relations between South Vietnam and the US

Lot Files

A/IM Files: Lot 93 D 82

Correspondence, telegrams, and records of the HARVAN (Harriman and Vance) mission to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam, 1968–1969

Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240

Files of William P. Bundy as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 1964–1968

Bunker Files: Lot 74 D 417

Files of Ellsworth Bunker, including telegrams, personal and official correspondence

Conference Files, 1966–1972 (Entry No. 3051B)

Files of the meetings and conferences of the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, and Under Secretary of State, 1966–1972. Formerly S/S Lot Files 67 D 586, 68 D 453, 69 D 182, 70 D 387, 71 D 227, and 73 D 323

EA/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 28

Files relating to Vietnam peace negotiations, 1964–March 1969, maintained by the Office of Asian Communist Affairs, Bureau of East Asian Affairs

EA/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 47

Files relating to Vietnam peace negotiations, October 1968–July 1969, including Nodis cables to and from Paris, maintained by the Office of Asian Communist Affairs, Bureau of East Asian Affairs

EA/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 380

Files relating to Vietnam peace negotiations, 1964–February 1969, maintained by the Office of Asian Communist Affairs, Bureau of East Asian Affairs

IS/OIS Files: Lot 90 D 345

Chronological records of the cables to and from the Paris Peace Delegation, 1968–1969

Johnson Files: Lot 90 D 410

Files of U. Alexis Johnson, 1958–1973, including both personal and official records

Lord Files: Lot 77 D 112

Records of Winston Lord, 1969–1977, as member of the National Security Council Staff and then as Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the Department of State

Pedersen Files: Lot 75 D 229

Files of Richard Pedersen, Counselor of the Department of State, January 1969–July 1973

Rogers Files: Lot 73 D 443 (Entry No. 5439)

Office files of Secretary of State William Rogers, 1969–1973, including official correspondence, statements and speeches, memoranda of conversations, and personal papers

S/S National Security Decision Memoranda Files: Lot 83 D 305

Department of State copies of National Security Decision Memoranda and related documents, NSDM 1 through NSDM 348, 1969–1977

S/S National Security Council Files: Lot 82 D 212

Department of State copies of National Security Study Memoranda and related documents, NSSM 1 through NSSM 248, 1969–1977

Nixon Presidential Materials Project

National Security Council Files

Agency Files

Backchannel Files

Country Files, Far East: Cambodia, Cambodian Operations, Indochina, Laos, Thailand, Thais in Laos, Vietnam

Files for the President, Vietnam Negotiations

Haig Chronological Files

Haig Special File

Howe Chronological Files

Lake Chronological Files

Kissinger Office Files: Administrative and Staff Files; Country Files, Far East: General, Cambodia, Vietnam-Negotiations General, Vietnam-South Vietnam, Vietnam-Negotiations, Camp David Documents

Paris Peace Talks

President's Daily Briefings

President's Trip Files

Presidential Correspondence

Presidential/HAK Memorandum of Conversations

Subject Files: Items to Discuss with the President; NSSMs and NSDMs

Vietnam Subject Files

Unfiled Material

National Security Council Institutional Files (H-Files)

National Security Council Minutes

National Security Council Meetings

National Security Council Draft Minutes

Policy Papers, National Security Decision Memoranda

Review Group/Senior Review Group Minutes

Review Group/Senior Review Group Meetings

Study Memoranda

Under Secretaries Committee Files

Vietnam Ad Hoc Group Minutes

Vietnam Special Study Group Meetings

Washington Special Actions Group Minutes

Washington Special Actions Group Meetings

White House Special Files

Staff Members and Office Files

H. R. Haldeman Files

President's Office Files

President's Personal Files

White House Central Files

Staff Members and Office Files: President's Daily Diary

Ford Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Melvin Laird Papers: Cambodia; POW–MIA; Vietnam

National Security Council

Nixon Administration Intelligence Files

Central Intelligence Agency

DCI (Helms) Files: Job 80–B1285A, files of Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms

DCI's Executive Registry Files: Jobs 80–R01284A and 80–B01086A, executive files of the Director of Central Intelligence

DDO/ISG/IARP Files: Job 74–425

DDO/ISS/IP Files: Job 75–251

George A. Carver (GAC) Files: Jobs 80–R01440R, 80–R01720R, and 80–R01721R, files of the Director of Central Intelligence's Special Assistant on Vietnam Affairs

National Intelligence Council (NIC) Files: Job 74–R1012A, intelligence memoranda, estimates and special estimates

Library of Congress

Papers of W. Averell Harriman

Special Files of Public Service, Kennedy and Johnson Administrations

Papers of Henry A. Kissinger

Chronological File

Geopolitical File: Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam

Memoranda of Conversations

Memoranda to the President

National Security Council: 303 Committee, 1969–1970, National Security Council Meetings, Senior Review Group Meetings, Washington Special Actions Group Meetings

Telephone Records: Telephone Conversations

Papers of Eliot Richardson

Memoranda of Conversations

Telephone Conversations

Massachusetts Historical Society

Papers of Henry Cabot Lodge II: Correspondence File; Vietnam Papers

Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland

OASD/ISA Files: FRC 330 2 6308 and FRC 330 72 6309

Top secret and secret subject decimal files of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, 1969

OSD Files: FRC 330 75 0089 and FRC 330 75 0103

Secret and top subject decimal files of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Under Secretary of Defense, and their assistants, 1969

OSD Files: FRC 330 76 0067 and FRC 330 76 0076

Secret and top secret subject decimal files of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Under Secretary of Defense, and their assistants, 1970

ISA/Vietnam Task Force: FRC 330 75 0013

Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Task Force Files, 1964–1971

Secretary Laird File: FRC 330 74 0142

Immediate files of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird's vault, 1969–1972

Secretary Laird's Staff Meetings: FRC 330 76 0028

Minutes of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird's morning staff meetings, 1969–1973

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Abbreviations and Terms

A–1, U.S.-made single engine, propeller driven, attack aircraft
AAA, anti-aircraft artillery
ABF, attacks by fire
ABM, anti-ballistic missile
ACA, Office of Asian Communist Affairs, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State
AF, Air Force
AID, Agency for International Development
AK–47, Soviet-designed Kalashnikov assault weapon
Amb, Ambassador
AMH, Alexander Meigs Haig, Jr.
ANZUS, Australia, New Zealand, United States
APC, Accelerated Pacification Campaign
Arc Light, code name for U.S. B–52 bombing strikes in Southeast Asia
ARDF, Aerial Radio Direction Finding
ARVN, Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam
ASAP, as soon as possible
ASD, Assistant Secretary of Defense
ASPAC, Asian and Pacific Council

B–52, all weather, intercontinental, strategic heavy bomber
Backchannel, a method of communication outside normal bureaucratic procedure; the White House, for instance, used "backchannel" messages to bypass the Department of State.
Barrel Roll, code name for U.S. Air Force-Navy interdiction of North Vietnamese infiltration routed in northern Laos
BOB, Bureau of the Budget
BPP, Border Patrol Police (Thailand)
Breakfast, code name for initial secret U.S. bombing campaign in Cambodia

C–47, propeller-driven, twin engine, low-wing aircraft used for cargo or troop transportation
C–123, high-wing, 2 prop engine transport aircraft
C–130, high-wing, 4 turbo prop engine aircraft used for rapid transportation of troops and/or equipment.
C–141, high-wing, 4 turbo prop engine, long-range transport aircraft
CAP, Combined Action Platoon
CAS, Controlled American Source
Cherokee, special telegraphic distribution channel for the Secretary of State
CH–47, heavy transport helicopter ("Chinook")
ChiCom, Chinese Communist(s)
CIA, Central Intelligence Agency
CINCPAC, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific
CIP, Commodities Import Program
CJCS, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
CL, classified
CM, Chairman's (of JCS) memorandum
CMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps
CNO, Chief of Naval Operations

Cobras, U.S. helicopter gunship
CODEL, Congressional delegation
COMINT, communications intelligence
COMUSMACTHAI, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Thailand
COMUSMACV, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
CONUS, Continental United States
CORDS, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
COSVN, Central Office for South Vietnam
CPDC, Central Pacification and Development Council
CSA, Chief of Staff of the Army
CSAF, Chief of Staff of the Air Force
CTZ, corps tactical zone
CVA, attack aircraft carrier
CVT, Confederation of Vietnamese Labor (*Travail*)
CY, calendar year

Daniel Boone (DB), MACV reconnaissance operations in Cambodia
DAO, Defense Attaché Office
DCI, Director of Central Intelligence
DCM, Deputy Chief of Mission
DDI, Deputy Directorate for Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency
DIA, Defense Intelligence Agency
del, delegate; delegation
Delto, Delegation to (telegram series indicator from the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam)
DMZ, demilitarized zone
DOD, Department of Defense
DOD/ISA, Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
DOS, Department of State
DPRG, Defense Program Review Group
DRV (also DRVN), Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)

EAP, (also EA), Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State
EAP/ACA, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Office of Asian Communist Affairs
EC–121, unarmed, four engine propeller-driven reconnaissance aircraft
ECM, electronic counter measures
Embtel, Embassy telegram
EOB, Executive Office Building
EST, eastern standard time
Exdis, exclusive distribution (extremely limited distribution)

FAL, forward air liaison
FANK, Forces Armées Nationales Khmeres (Khmer National Armed Forces)
FARK, Forces Armées Royales Khmeres (Royal Khmer Armed Forces)
FDF, Free Democratic Forces (of South Vietnam)
FE, Division for Far East, Directorate of Operations, Central Intelligence Agency
FEOP, Foreign Exchange Operations Fund
Flash, indicates message of highest priority requiring the attention of the Secretary of State
FMS, foreign military sales
FUNK, National United Front of Kampuchea
FWF, Free World forces

FY, fiscal year
FYI, for your information

GMT, Greenwich Mean Time
GOC, Government of Cambodia
GRC, Government of China
GVN, Government of Vietnam
GVR, Government of the Republic of Vietnam

HAK, Henry A. Kissinger
HES, Hamlet Evaluation System
HEW, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
hq, headquarters

ICC, International Supervision and Control Commission
ICRC, International Committee of the Red Cross
IG, Interdepartmental Group
IMF, International Monetary Fund
INR, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State
INR/IL, Office of Information Liaison, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
ISA, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

JCS, Joint Chiefs of Staff
JCSM, Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum
JGS, General Joint Staff, Vietnamese Armed Forces
JHH, John Herbert Holdridge
JUSMAG, Joint United States Military Assistance Group
JUSPAO, Joint United States Public Affairs Office

K, Kissinger
KK, Khmer Krom
KIA, killed in action
KW, kilowatt

LCM, landing craft, mechanized
LCT, landing craft, tracked
LCU, landing craft, utility
Lien Minh, Vietnamese acronym for National Social Democratic Front
Limdis, limited distribution
LOC, lines of communication

M–1, World War II-era U.S. military rifle
M–14, semi-automatic U.S. military rifle
MAAG, Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAC, Military Assistance Command
MACTHAI, Military Assistance Command, Thailand
MACV, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MASF, Military Assistance Sales Funded
MAP, Military Assistance Program
Market Time, code name for coastal interdiction of South Vietnam
MAT(s), Mobile Advisory Team(s)
MENU, code name for U.S. bombings in Cambodia
MIG, Soviet fighter aircraft
MR, Military Region

MSTS, Military Sea Transport Ship

NASA, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO, non-commissioned officer
NIE, National Intelligence Estimate
NLF, National Liberation Front
NLHX, Neo Lao Hat Xat, political organization of the Pathet Lao
Nodis, no distribution (other than to persons indicated)
Noforn, no foreign dissemination
Notal, not to all
NSA, National Security Agency
NSAM, National Security Action Memorandum
NSC, National Security Council
NSDF, National Social Democratic Front (of South Vietnam)
NSDM, National Security Decision Memorandum
NSF, National Salvation Front (of South Vietnam)
NSSM, National Security Study Memorandum
NVA (also NVNA), North Vietnamese Army
NVN, North Vietnam

OASD/ISA, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
OEP, Office of Emergency Preparedness
ONE, Office of National Estimates, Central Intelligence Agency
OSD, Office of the Secretary of Defense

P, President Nixon
PARU, police aerial resupply unit (Thailand, paramilitary arm of BBP)
PAVN, People's Army of Vietnam
PBR, river boat patrol
p.c., press conference
PDJ, Plaine des Jarres
PF, Popular Forces
PFIAB, President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board
Phoenix, American name for the Phuong Hoang program to destroy the Viet Cong infrastructure
PL, Pathet Lao
PL–480, Public Law 480 (Food for Peace)
POL, petroleum, oil, and lubricants
POL, political issues in the Department of State Central Files
POW, prisoner of war
PR, public relations
Prairie Fire (PF), code name for U.S.-led South Vietnamese reconnaissance teams sent into Laos to seek targets for U.S bombing operations of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and to assess bombing damage
PRG, Provisional Revolutionary Government
PRU, Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (South Vietnam unit of the Phoung Hoang program to destroy the Viet Cong infrastructure)
PSDF, (also PS/DF), People's Self Defense Force
PSYOPS(s), psychological operation(s)

RCT, regimental combat team
RD, rural development

Recce, reconnaissance
Reftel, reference telegram
RF/PF, Regional Forces/Popular Forces
RG, Record Group
RKG, Royal Khmer (Cambodian) Government
RLA, Royal Lao Army
RLAF, Royal Lao Air Force; Royal Lao Armed Forces
RLG, Royal Lao Government
RLGAF, Royal Lao Government Armed Forces
RN, Richard Nixon
ROK, Republic of Korea
RTAF, Royal Thai Air Force
RVN, Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces

SAC, Strategic Air Command
Salem House, code name for U.S.-led intelligence missions into Cambodia (formerly known as Daniel Boone)
SALT, Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SAM, surface-to-air missile
SEACOORDS, Southeast Asia Coordinating Group
SEATO, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
Secto, series indicator for telegrams from the Secretary of State or his party to the Department of State
Septel, separate telegram
SGU(s), Special Group Unit(s)
Sierra Romeo, code name for Thai artillery units in Laos
SNIE, Special National Intelligence Estimate
SR, strategic reserve
SR–71, U.S. high altitude reconnaissance aircraft
S/S, Executive Secretariat of the Department of State
Steel Tiger, U.S. Air Force-Navy interdiction of North Vietnamese infiltration routes in southern Laos
SVN, South Vietnam

T–28, single engine 1950s-era propeller-driven trainer aircraft converted for tactical combat
Tacair, tactical air strikes
TAC, Tactical Air Command
TCC, Troop Contributing (to South Vietnam) Countries
TDY, temporary duty
TOT, time of target
TS, Top Secret

U, Office of the Under Secretary of State
UAR, United Arab Republic
UN, United Nations
US, United States
USA, United States Army
USAF, United States Air Force
USG, United States Government
USIA, United States Information Agency
USMC, United States Marine Corps
USN, United States Navy

VC, Viet Cong
VCI, Viet Cong Infrastructure
VC/VN, Viet Cong/North Vietnamese
VN, Vietnam
VNAF, Vietnam Air Force
VSSG, Vietnam Special Studies Group

WH, White House
WHO, White House Office (series indicator for White House messages)
WIA, wounded in action
WSAG, Washington Special Actions Group

Z, Zulu (Greenwich Mean) Time

Persons

Abrams, General Creighton W., USA, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
Agnew, Spiro T., Vice President of the United States from January 20, 1969

Behr, Colonel Robert M., USAF, member, Operations Staff for Scientific Affairs, National Security Council
Berger, Samuel R., Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam after March 1969
Binh, Madame, *see* Ngyuen Thi Binh
Bruce, David K. E., U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom; head of the U.S. delegation to the Paris Peace Talks after July 1, 1970
Bundy, William P., Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs until May 4, 1969
Bunker, Ellsworth, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam
Bui Diem, Republic of Vietnam Ambassador to the United States
Butterfield, Alexander, Deputy Assistant to the President

Carver, George A., Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs to the Director of Central Intelligence
Cau Van Vien, General, Chairman, Joint General Staff, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
Chapman, General Leonard, Marine Corps Commandant
Colby, William E., Director, Civil Operations and Rural Development Support, Vietnam
Corcoran, Thomas J., Country Director for Laos, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State
Cushman, Lieutenant General Robert E., Jr., USMC, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence after May 1969

Dobrynin, Anatoliy F., Soviet Ambassador to the United States
Doolin, Dennis J., Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs responsible for East Asia and Pacific affairs

Eagleburger, Lawrence, Staff Member, Office of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Eliot, Theodore L., Jr., Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and Executive Secretary of the Department of State from August 1969

Fulbright, J. William, Senator (D–Arkansas), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Godley, G. McMurtrie, Ambassador to Laos after July 24, 1969
Goodpaster, Lieutenant General Andrew J., USA, Deputy Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam until April 1969
Grant, Lindsey, member, Operations Staff, East Asia Division, National Security Council
Green, Marshall, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs from May 5, 1969; also Chairman, Special Group on Southeast Asia from May 1970
Groton, John G., Prime Minister of Australia

Ha Van Lau, Deputy Head of Democratic Republic of Vietnam Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam

Habib, Philip C., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs until May 1969; thereafter Deputy Head of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam.

Haig, Alexander M., Jr., Colonel and Brigadier General, USA, Senior Military Adviser to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, January 1969–June 1970; then Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Haldeman, H.R., Assistant to the President

Halperin, Morton, Assistant for Programs, National Security Council Staff until September 1969

Harlow, Bryce N., Assistant to the President, January 1969–January 1970; thereafter Counselor to the President

Harriman, W. Averell, Ambassador at Large; head of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam until January 17, 1969

Helms, Richard M., Director of Central Intelligence

Henkin, Daniel Z., Spokesman of the Department of Defense

Ho Chi Minh, leader of the Lao Dong Party and President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam until his death on September 3, 1969

Holyoake, Sir Keith, Prime Minister of New Zealand

Houdek, Robert, Staff Member, Office of the Assistant for National Security Affairs, National Security Council

Howe, Jonathan, Lieutenant Commander, USN, member of the Office of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 1970

Huong, *see* Tran Van Huong

Holdridge, John H., Director, East Asian Division, Operations Staff, National Security Council Staff

Hughes, Thomas L., Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, until August 1969

Johnson, Vice Admiral Nels C., USN, Director of the Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Johnson, U. Alexis, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from February 7, 1969

Karamessines, Thomas H., Deputy Director for Plans, Central Intelligence Agency

Khiem, *see* Tran Thien Khiem

Kennedy, Colonel Richard T., USA, member, Planning Group, National Security Council Staff

Kissinger, Henry A., Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs from January 20, 1969

Kosygin, Aleksei N., Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union

Ky, Nguyen Cao, Vice President of the Republic of Vietnam

Ladd, Colonel Jonathan "Fred", USA, ret., Political/Military Affairs Officer, Political Section, Embassy in Cambodia, in charge of coordinating U.S. military assistance to Cambodia

Laird, Melvin R., Secretary of Defense after January 22, 1969

Lake, W. Anthony, member, Planning Group, National Security Council Staff

Lau, *see* Ha Van Lau

Le Duan, Secretary General of the Lao Dong Party and Senior Member of the Politburo of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam after the death of Ho Chi Minh on September 3, 1969

Le Duc Tho, Member of the Politburo of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and Special Adviser to the DRV Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam

Lincoln, George A., Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness

Lodge, Henry Cabot, II, Head of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam, January 20–November 20, 1969

Lon Nol, Gen., FARK, First Vice President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Defense of Cambodia; Acting Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, June 1969; Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense after March 18, 1970
Lon Non, Head of the Phnom Penh Police and younger brother of Lon Nol
Lord, Winston, member, Planning Group, National Security Council Staff; staff member for United Nations Affairs of the Operations Staff of the NSC until April 1970
Lynn, Laurence E., Director, Program Analysis Staff, National Security Council Staff

Mai Van Bo, Democratic Republic of Vietnam's Delegate General in France
Malik, Adam, Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mansfield, Mike, Senator (D-Montana), Senate Majority Leader
Marcos, Ferdinand, President of the Philippines
McCain, Admiral John S., Jr., USN, Commander in Chief, Pacific
McCloskey, Robert J., Spokesman of the Department of State
McConnell, General John P., USAF, Chief of Staff of the Air Force until August 1, 1969
McPherson, Lieutenant General John B., USAF, Assistant to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Mitchell, John, Attorney General, after January 1969
Moor, E. Dean, member, Operations Staff, East Asia Division, National Security Council Staff
Moore, Jonathan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, September 1969–June 1970
Moorer, Admiral Thomas H., USN, Chief of Naval Operations until July 1, 1970; thereafter, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Morris, Roger, member, Planning Group, National Security Council Staff until April 1970

Nelson, William, Director, Office of Asian Affairs, Directorate of Operations, Central Intelligence Agency
Nguyen Cao Ky, Vice President of the Republic of Vietnam
Nguyen Minh Vy, Adviser to the Head of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam
Nguyen Thi Binh, Head of the Provisional Revolutionary Government's Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam
Nguyen Van Thieu, President of the Republic of Vietnam
Nguyen Xuan Phong, member, Republic of Vietnam Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam
Nixon, Richard M., President of the United States from January 20, 1969
Nutter, G. Warren, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs from March 1969

Oberemko, Valentin, Minister-Counselor of the Soviet Embassy in France

Packard, David, Deputy Secretary of Defense from January 24, 1969
Pam Dang Lam, Head of the Republic of Vietnam Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam
Pedersen, Richard F., Counselor of the Department of State after January 24, 1969
Perot, Ross, President and Chief Executive Officer of EDS Corporation
Pham Van Dong, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Pursley, Brigadier General Robert E., USAF, Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense

Read, Benjamin H., Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and Executive Secretary of the Department of State until February 14, 1969

Richardson, Elliot L., Under Secretary of State, January 23, 1969–June 23, 1970; thereafter, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare
Rives, Lloyd M., Chargé d'Affaires ad interim at the Embassy in Phnom Penh after August 16, 1969
Rogers, William P., Secretary of State from January 21, 1969

Sambaur, *see* Yem Sambaur
Sanson, Robert L., member, Program Analysis Staff, National Security Council Staff
Sainteny, Jean, former French official with contacts to the leadership of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Savang Vatthana, King of Laos
Sihanouk, Prince Norodom, head of state of Cambodia until March 18, 1970
Sirik Matak, Sisowath, First Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia in Charge of Interior, Order, Security, Education and Religious Affairs August 1969–July 1970; thereafter, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the Office of the Prime Minister
Smith, R. Jack, Deputy Director for Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency
Smyser, W. Richard, adviser to the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam, 1969; member of the Operations Staff, East Asia Division, National Security Council Staff, after 1970
Sneider, Richard L., member, Operations Staff, East Asia Division, National Security Council Staff, May 1969–September 1969
Souvanna Phouma, Prince, Prime Minister of Laos
Suharto, President of Indonesia
Sullivan, William H., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs from April 1969; also Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam
Symington, Stuart, Senator (D-Missouri), Chairman, Subcommittee of U.S. Security Arrangements and Commitments Abroad, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Taylor, Vice Admiral Rufus L., USN, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence until February 1, 1969
Thanat Khoman, Foreign Minister of Thailand
Thanom Kittikachorn, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand
Thieu, Nguyen Van, President of the Republic of Vietnam
Thompson, Sir Robert, British counterinsurgency expert
Tran Buu Kiem, member of the Provisional Revolutionary Government's Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks
Tran Thien Khiem, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vietnam until late 1969
Tran Van Huong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vietnam after late 1969
Trueheart, William C., Deputy Director for Coordination, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, until September 1969

Unger, Leonard, Ambassador to Thailand

Vance, Cyrus R., Deputy Head of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam until January 20; thereafter, adviser to the talks until February 1969
Vang Pao, Gen., RLA, Commander of Military Region II and leader of the Hmong (Meo) forces
Vo Nguyen Giap, General, PAVN, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Vien, *see* Cao Van Vien
Vogt, Lieutenant General John W., Jr., USAF, Director for Operations, Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Vy, *see* Nguyen Minh Vy

Walters, Brigadier General Vernon, USA, Senior Defense Attaché to France
Walsh, Lawrence E., Deputy Head of the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam, January 20–November 21, 1969
Ware, Richard A., Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Watts, William, Staff Secretary of the National Security Council Secretariat until April 1970
Westmoreland, General William C., USA, Army Chief of Staff
Wheeler, General Earle G., USA, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Xuan Thuy, Head of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam

Yem Sambaur, Cambodian Minister of Justice, October 1969; Deputy Prime Minister in Charge of Justice, Health, Social Affairs, Labor, Land Development, and Parliamentary Affairs in March 1970; also Foreign Minister in April 1970

Ziegler, Ronald L., Press Secretary to President Nixon
Zorin, Valerian, Soviet Ambassador to France

Note on U.S. Covert Actions

In compliance with the *Foreign Relations of the United States* statute that requires inclusion in the *Foreign Relations* series of comprehensive documentation on major foreign policy decisions and actions, the editors have identified key documents regarding major covert actions and intelligence activities. The following note will provide readers with some organizational context on how covert actions and special intelligence operations in support of U.S. foreign policy were planned and approved within the U.S. Government. It describes, on the basis of declassified documents, the changing and developing procedures during the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford Presidencies.

Management of Covert Actions in the Truman Presidency

The Truman administration's concern over Soviet "psychological warfare" prompted the new National Security Council to authorize, in NSC 4–A of December 1947, the launching of peacetime covert action operations. NSC 4–A made the Director of Central Intelligence responsible for psychological warfare, establishing at the same time the principle that covert action was an exclusively Executive Branch function. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) certainly was a natural choice but it was assigned this function at least in part because the Agency controlled unvouchered funds, by which operations could be funded with minimal risk of exposure in Washington.[1]

CIA's early use of its new covert action mandate dissatisfied officials at the Departments of State and Defense. The Department of State, believing this role too important to be left to the CIA alone and concerned that the military might create a new rival covert action office in the Pentagon, pressed to reopen the issue of where responsibility for covert action activities should reside. Consequently, on June 18, 1948, a new NSC directive, NSC 10/2, superseded NSC 4–A.

NSC 10/2 directed CIA to conduct "covert" rather than merely "psychological" operations, defining them as all activities "which are conducted or sponsored by this Government against hostile foreign states or groups or in support of friendly foreign states or groups but which are so planned and executed that any US Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons and that if uncovered the US Government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them."

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[1] NSC 4–A, December 17, 1947, is printed in *Foreign Relations,* 1945–1950, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment, Document 257.

The type of clandestine activities enumerated under the new directive included: "propaganda; economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberations [*sic*] groups, and support of indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries of the free world. Such operations should not include armed conflict by recognized military forces, espionage, counter-espionage, and cover and deception for military operations."[2]

The Office of Policy Coordination (OPC), newly established in the CIA on September 1, 1948, in accordance with NSC 10/2, assumed responsibility for organizing and managing covert actions. OPC, which was to take its guidance from the Department of State in peacetime and from the military in wartime, initially had direct access to the State Department and to the military without having to proceed through CIA's administrative hierarchy, provided the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) was informed of all important projects and decisions.[3] In 1950 this arrangement was modified to ensure that policy guidance came to OPC through the DCI.

During the Korean conflict the OPC grew quickly. Wartime commitments and other missions soon made covert action the most expensive and bureaucratically prominent of CIA's activities. Concerned about this situation, DCI Walter Bedell Smith in early 1951 asked the NSC for enhanced policy guidance and a ruling on the proper "scope and magnitude" of CIA operations. The White House responded with two initiatives. In April 1951 President Truman created the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) under the NSC to coordinate government-wide psychological warfare strategy. NSC 10/5, issued in October 1951, reaffirmed the covert action mandate given in NSC 10/2 and expanded CIA's authority over guerrilla warfare.[4] The PSB was soon abolished by the incoming Eisenhower administration, but the expansion of CIA's covert action writ in NSC 10/5 helped ensure that covert action would remain a major function of the Agency.

As the Truman administration ended, CIA was near the peak of its independence and authority in the field of covert action. Although CIA continued to seek and receive advice on specific projects from the NSC, the PSB, and the departmental representatives originally dele-

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[2] NSC 10/2, June 18, 1948, printed ibid., Document 292.

[3] Memorandum of conversation by Frank G. Wisner, "Implementation of NSC–10/2," August 12, 1948, printed ibid., Document 298.

[4] NSC 10/5, "Scope and Pace of Covert Operations," October 23, 1951, in Michael Warner, editor, *The CIA Under Harry Truman* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1994), pp. 437–439.

gated to advise OPC, no group or officer outside of the DCI and the President himself had authority to order, approve, manage, or curtail operations.

NSC 5412 Special Group; 5412/2 Special Group; 303 Committee

The Eisenhower administration began narrowing CIA's latitude in 1954. In accordance with a series of National Security Council directives, the responsibility of the Director of Central Intelligence for the conduct of covert operations was further clarified. President Eisenhower approved NSC 5412 on March 15, 1954, reaffirming the Central Intelligence Agency's responsibility for conducting covert actions abroad. A definition of covert actions was set forth; the DCI was made responsible for coordinating with designated representatives of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense to ensure that covert operations were planned and conducted in a manner consistent with U.S. foreign and military policies; and the Operations Coordinating Board was designated the normal channel for coordinating support for covert operations among State, Defense, and CIA. Representatives of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the President were to be advised in advance of major covert action programs initiated by the CIA under this policy and were to give policy approval for such programs and secure coordination of support among the Departments of State and Defense and the CIA.[5]

A year later, on March 12, 1955, NSC 5412/1 was issued, identical to NSC 5412 except for designating the Planning Coordination Group as the body responsible for coordinating covert operations. NSC 5412/2 of December 28, 1955, assigned to representatives (of the rank of assistant secretary) of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the President responsibility for coordinating covert actions. By the end of the Eisenhower administration, this group, which became known as the "NSC 5412/2 Special Group" or simply "Special Group," emerged as the executive body to review and approve covert action programs initiated by the CIA.[6] The membership of the Special Group varied depending upon the situation faced. Meetings were infrequent until 1959 when weekly meetings began to be held. Neither the CIA nor the Special Group adopted fixed criteria for bringing projects before the group; initiative

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[5] William M. Leary, editor, *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents* (The University of Alabama Press, 1984), p. 63; the text of NSC 5412 is scheduled for publication in *Foreign Relations,* 1950–1955, Development of the Intelligence Community.

[6] Leary, *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents,* pp. 63, 147–148; *Final Report of the Select Committee To Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate,* Book I, *Foreign and Military Intelligence* (1976), pp. 50–51. The texts of NSC 5412/1 and NSC 5412/2 are scheduled for publication in *Foreign Relations,* 1950–1955, Development of the Intelligence Community.

remained with the CIA, as members representing other agencies frequently were unable to judge the feasibility of particular projects.[7]

After the Bay of Pigs failure in April 1961, General Maxwell Taylor reviewed U.S. paramilitary capabilities at President Kennedy's request and submitted a report in June that recommended strengthening high-level direction of covert operations. As a result of the Taylor Report, the Special Group, chaired by the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, and including Deputy Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric, Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Lyman Lemnitzer, assumed greater responsibility for planning and reviewing covert operations. Until 1963 the DCI determined whether a CIA-originated project was submitted to the Special Group. In 1963 the Special Group developed general but informal criteria, including risk, possibility of success, potential for exposure, political sensitivity, and cost (a threshold of $25,000 was adopted by the CIA), for determining whether covert action projects were submitted to the Special Group.[8]

From November 1961 to October 1962 a Special Group (Augmented), whose membership was the same as the Special Group plus Attorney General Robert Kennedy and General Taylor (as Chairman), exercised responsibility for Operation Mongoose, a major covert action program aimed at overthrowing the Castro regime in Cuba. When President Kennedy authorized the program in November, he designated Brigadier General Edward G. Lansdale, Assistant for Special Operations to the Secretary of Defense, to act as chief of operations, and Lansdale coordinated the Mongoose activities among the CIA and the Departments of State and Defense. CIA units in Washington and Miami had primary responsibility for implementing Mongoose operations, which included military, sabotage, and political propaganda programs.[9]

President Kennedy also established a Special Group (Counter-Insurgency) on January 18, 1962, when he signed NSAM No. 124. The Special Group (CI), set up to coordinate counter-insurgency activities separate from the mechanism for implementing NSC 5412/2, was to confine itself to establishing broad policies aimed at preventing and resisting subversive insurgency and other forms of indirect aggression in friendly countries. In early 1966, in NSAM No. 341, President Johnson assigned responsibility for the direction and coordination of counter-insurgency activities overseas to the Secretary of State, who

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[7] Leary, *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents,* p. 63.

[8] Ibid., p. 82.

[9] See *Foreign Relations,* 1961–1963, vol. X, Documents 270 and 278.

established a Senior Interdepartmental Group to assist in discharging these responsibilities.[10]

NSAM No. 303, June 2, 1964, from Bundy to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the DCI, changed the name of "Special Group 5412" to "303 Committee" but did not alter its composition, functions, or responsibility. Bundy was the chairman of the 303 Committee.[11]

The Special Group and the 303 Committee approved 163 covert actions during the Kennedy administration and 142 during the Johnson administration through February 1967. The 1976 Final Report of the Church Committee, however, estimated that of the several thousand projects undertaken by the CIA since 1961, only 14 percent were considered on a case-by-case basis by the 303 Committee and its predecessors (and successors). Those not reviewed by the 303 Committee were low-risk and low-cost operations. The Final Report also cited a February 1967 CIA memorandum that included a description of the mode of policy arbitration of decisions on covert actions within the 303 Committee system. CIA presentations were questioned, amended, and even on occasion denied, despite protests from the DCI. Department of State objections modified or nullified proposed operations, and the 303 Committee sometimes decided that some agency other than CIA should undertake an operation or that CIA actions requested by Ambassadors on the scene should be rejected.[12]

The effectiveness of covert action has always been difficult for any administration to gauge, given concerns about security and the difficulty of judging the impact of U.S. initiatives on events. In October 1969 the new Nixon administration required annual 303 Committee reviews for all covert actions that the Committee had approved and automatic termination of any operation not reviewed after 12 months. On February 17, 1970, President Nixon signed National Security Decision Memorandum 40,[13] which superseded NSC 5412/2 and changed the name of the covert action approval group to the 40 Committee, in part because the 303 Committee had been named in the media. The Attorney General was also added to the membership of the Committee. NSDM 40 reaffirmed the DCI's responsibility for the coordination, control, and conduct of covert operations and directed him to obtain policy approval from the

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[10] For text of NSAM No. 124, see ibid., vol. VIII, Document 68. NSAM No. 341, March 2, 1966, is printed ibid., 1964–1968, vol. XXXIII, Document 56.

[11] For text of NSAM No. 303, see ibid., Document 204.

[12] *Final Report of the Select Committee To Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate,* Book I, *Foreign and Military Intelligence,* pp. 56–57.

[13] The text of NSDM 40, February 17, 1970, is printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1969–1976, vol. II, Organization and Management of U.S. Foreign Policy, 1969–1972, Document 202.

40 Committee for all major and "politically sensitive" covert operations. He was also made responsible for ensuring an annual review by the 40 Committee of all approved covert operations.

The 40 Committee met regularly early in the Nixon administration, but over time the number of formal meetings declined and business came to be conducted via couriers and telephone votes. The Committee actually met only for major new proposals. As required, the DCI submitted annual status reports to the 40 Committee for each approved operation. According to the 1976 Church Committee Final Report, the 40 Committee considered only about 25 percent of the CIA's individual covert action projects, concentrating on major projects that provided broad policy guidelines for all covert actions. Congress received briefings on only a few proposed projects. Not all major operations, moreover, were brought before the 40 Committee: President Nixon in 1970 instructed the DCI to promote a coup d' etat against Chilean President Salvador Allende without Committee coordination or approval.[14]

Presidential Findings Since 1974 and the Operations Advisory Group

The Hughes-Ryan amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 brought about a major change in the way the U.S. Government approved covert actions, requiring explicit approval by the President for each action and expanding Congressional oversight and control of the CIA. The CIA was authorized to spend appropriated funds on covert actions only after the President had signed a "finding" and informed Congress that the proposed operation was important to national security.[15]

Executive Order 11905, issued by President Ford on February 18, 1976, in the wake of major Congressional investigations of CIA activities by the Church and Pike Committees, replaced the 40 Committee with the Operations Advisory Group, composed of the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the DCI, who retained responsibility for the planning and implementation of covert operations. The OAG was required to hold formal meetings to develop recommendations for the President regarding a covert action and to conduct periodic reviews of previously-approved operations. EO 11905 also banned all U.S. Government employees from involvement in political assassinations, a prohibition that was retained in succeeding executive orders, and prohibited involvement in domestic intelligence activities.[16]

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[14] Final Report of the Select Committee To Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate, Book I, Foreign and Military Intelligence, pp. 54–55, 57.

[15] Public Law 93–559.

[16] Executive Order 11905, "United States Foreign Intelligence Activities," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents,* Vol. 12, No. 8, February 23, 1976.

Vietnam, January 1969–July 1970

1. Special National Intelligence Estimate[1]

SNIE 14–69 Washington, January 16, 1969.

THE PACIFICATION EFFORT IN VIETNAM

Conclusions

A. The pacification program as a whole has made a significant contribution to the prosecution of the war and strengthened the political position of the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) vis-à-vis the Communists. Thus far the GVN's principal success has been in expanding its presence into the countryside. Providing permanent security for these gains has been more difficult. Security conditions continue to fluctuate with the intensity of combat. Low level terrorism, political agitation, and propaganda efforts by the Viet Cong (VC) continue to hamper progress, particularly since no more than a promising start has been made in reducing the effectiveness of the VC infrastructure. A large part of the countryside is still contested and subject to the continuing control of neither side.

B. As for gaining the allegiance of the people, this is almost impossible to measure. The turnout in the 1967 elections and the failure of the Communists to gain popular support at Tet suggest progress. Apprehension over the settlement of the war and the firmness of the American commitment tends to reduce popular confidence. The most common attitude among the peasants, however, continues to be one of war-weariness and apathy.

C. Saigon now seems finally to have accepted the need for a vigorous pacification effort. However, progress may still be hampered by the political situation in Saigon, continuing inefficiency, corruption, and the parochial concerns of the GVN.

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[1] Source: Central Intelligence Agency, NIC Files, Job 74–R1012A, NIEs and SNIEs. Secret; Sensitive; Limdis; Controlled Dissem. Prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency and intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Agency. On January 16 Helms sent this SNIE to the United States Intelligence Board, which concurred with its release.

D. Another major uncertainty is how much time is left to make up past deficiencies and consolidate current gains. Over the next several months, further progress in pacification will almost certainly not make the GVN much more able to cope with the VC, given peacetime conditions, than it would be today; a significant advance in this respect would probably require at least a year.

E. Finally, there is the question of how the Communists will react to the growing pressures on them. Despite improvements in the overall security situation, gains in pacification are still vulnerable to adverse military developments. The chances are good that the Communists will attempt to make an intensified effort to counter the gains in pacification and they will probably have some success. Thus, consolidation of gains is likely to continue to be a very slow and uncertain process.[2]

[Omitted here is the 5-page Discussion section of the estimate.]

[2] In the Discussion section, the estimate concluded that "the overall situation in Vietnam is such that pacification was less vulnerable to Communist countereffortts than in 1967." In a footnote dissent, Thomas L. Hughes, Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, argued "that the estimate does not support the conclusion that the pacification situation is less vulnerable than it was in 1967, but rather that it is essentially as vulnerable now as it was then."

2. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, January 19, 1969, 5:30 p.m.

MEETING WITH PRESIDENT-ELECT NIXON
STATLER HILTON HOTEL

President-elect Nixon said that Lodge could assure the South Vietnamese of his strong support but that they should understand that American public opinion was in a highly critical condition.

They discussed the question of a cease-fire and the difficulty of explaining the dangers of a cease-fire to the public. Lodge suggested that it might be expedient for the US to preempt the field with a proposal whereby a cease-fire would be tied in with a withdrawal. Kissinger seemed to think this idea had merit.

[1] Source: Massachusetts Historical Society, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Reel 9. No classification marking. Drafted by Lodge.

Mr. Nixon said for Lodge not to be concerned about adverse press in the immediate future. He said he was willing to tolerate an adverse press rather than give up a matter of importance in the negotiations.

Mr. Nixon believed that some of the outgoing administration's statements with regard to the Vietnamese were unduly harsh, and in view of the high regard with which the South Vietnamese hold him, he wanted Lodge to make it clear to them on a personal basis that Mr. Nixon has great sympathy with them and will not let them down. Mr. Lodge should explain to them that public opinion in the United States with respect to the South Vietnamese was at a low point and that they should not be concerned.

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3. Memorandum of Conversation Between Secretary of State Rogers and the Former Head of the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam (Harriman)[1]

Washington, January 21, 1969.

This morning I saw Rogers.[2] I had about a half-hour's talk with him. I was very frank, telling him the need for a decision as to whether they were going to follow Rusk's policy for all-out fight and talk, or mutual deescalation and disengagement through talks, in accordance with Clark Clifford's view. I said Cy [Vance] and I strongly advised the second course for two reasons: (1) we thought the talks for political settlement would go better, although we couldn't guarantee this, but

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Harriman Papers, Box 562, Special Files of Public Service, Kennedy–Johnson Administration, Trips and Missions, 1968–1969, Paris Peace Talks, Memoranda of Conversation. No classification marking. Drafted by Harriman.

[2] On January 18 Habib wrote Harriman his impressions of the "new team" on the basis of two meetings with members of the Nixon administration and "a little browsing around." Habib believed the Nixon administration had not yet focused on Vietnam, but thought they planned to take a careful and deliberate look at the problem. After a long meeting on January 17 with Rogers, Lodge, Kissinger, Bundy, Richard Pedersen, Walsh, and Green, Habib had the feeling that the Nixon team was still open-minded and he encouraged Harriman "to make your views known at the top level as soon as possible." (Ibid., Box 12, Classified, H–Ham) On November 19 Harriman met with Lodge at Harriman's house on N Street in Georgetown. He encouraged Lodge to treat Walsh as a co-equal head of the delegation as he had done with Vance. The North Vietnamese were very protocol minded and this status would not be lost on them. Harriman also mentioned that the Russians in Paris had been helpful and urged Lodge to call on Zorin and Walsh to develop a close relationship with Oberemko. (Ibid., Box 562, Trips and Missions, 1968–1969, Paris Peace Talks, Memoranda of Conversation)

(2) it was essential to reduce American casualties and get some of our troops coming home in order to retain the support of the American people. He appeared to agree with the latter point.

I told him about the help that we had been given by the Soviet Embassy in Paris, and he asked whether Lodge could establish that relationship. I said I thought he could if he tried. Certainly Walsh could, with Oberemko. I told him that Zorin had indicated some question of whether Lodge would want to talk to him because of their disputes in the UN. I said I had told him Lodge was very grateful to him for his attacks had made it possible for him to answer him on national TV which had made Lodge's political career and gotten him the Vice Presidential nomination.

In answer to his question, I expressed a very high regard for Phil Habib. I considered his judgment was good, but as a loyal Foreign Service Officer he would carry out all policy directives effectively. I mentioned Ambassador Bill Sullivan and Ambassador Bill Porter as the two others I thought were sound on Viet-Nam. I expressed considerable concern over Bunker and Alex Johnson. We both agreed Lodge had adjusted his views.

W. Averell Harriman[3]

[3] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

4. National Security Study Memorandum 1[1]

Washington, January 21, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Situation in Vietnam

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 365, Subject Files, NSSMs 1–42. Secret.

In an effort to develop an agreed evaluation of the situation in Vietnam as a basis for making policy decisions, the President has directed that each addressee of this memorandum, the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and MACV prepare a separate response to the attached questions. The answers should include a discussion of uncertainties and possible alternative interpretations of existing data.

The President wishes to receive, as well, the Secretary of State's comments on the Ambassador's response, and the comments of the Secretary of Defense on the responses of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and MACV.

All replies should be forwarded to the President by February 10, 1969.

Henry A. Kissinger

Attachment

VIETNAM QUESTIONS

Environment of Negotiations

1. Why is the DRV in Paris? What is the evidence?

(Among the hypotheses:
a. Out of weakness, to accept a face-saving formula for defeat.
b. To negotiate the withdrawal of U.S. (and NVA) forces, and/or a compromise political settlement, giving a chance for NLF victory in the South.
c. To give the U.S. a face-saving way to withdraw.
d. To undermine the GVN and U.S./GVN relations, and to relieve U.S. military pressure in both North and South Vietnam.
e. Out of desire to end the losses and costs of war on the best terms attainable.)

2. What is the nature of evidence, and how adequate is it, underlying competing views (as in the most recent NIE on this subject,[2] with its dissenting footnotes) of the impact of various outcomes in Vietnam within Southeast Asia?

3. How soundly-based is the common belief that Hanoi is under active pressure with respect to the Paris negotiations from Moscow (for) and Peking (against)? Is it clear that either Moscow or Peking believe they have, or are willing to use, significant leverage on Hanoi's

[2] Reference is to NIE 50–68, "Southeast Asia After Vietnam," November 14, 1968; see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. VII, Document 220.

policies? What is the nature of evidence, other than public or private official statements?

4. How sound is our knowledge of the existence and significance of stable "Moscow" and "Peking" factions within the Hanoi leadership, as distinct, for example, from shifting factions, all of whom recognize the need to balance off both allies? How much do we know, in general, of intraparty disputes and personalities within Hanoi?

NVA/VA

5. What is the evidence supporting various hypotheses, and the overall adequacy of evidence, relating to the following questions:

a. Why did NVA units leave South Vietnam last summer and fall?
b. Did the predicted "third-wave offensive" by the NVA/VC actually take place? If so, why did it not achieve greater success?
c. Why are VC guerrillas and local forces now relatively dormant?

(Among the hypotheses: 1) response to VC/NVA battle losses, forcing withdrawal or passivity; 2) to put diplomatic pressure on U.S. to move to substantive talks in Paris; 3) to prepare for future operations; and/or 4) pressure of U.S. and allied operations.)

6. What rate of NVA/VC attrition would outrun their ability to replenish by infiltration and recruitment, as currently calculated? Do present operations achieve this? If not, what force levels and other conditions would be necessary? Is there any evidence they are concerned about continuing heavy losses?

7. To what relative extent do the U.S./RVNAF and the NVA/VC share in the *control* and the rate of VC/NVA attrition; i.e., to what extent, in terms of our tactical experience, can heavy losses persistently be imposed on VC/NVA forces, despite their possible intention to limit casualties by avoiding contact?

(Among the hypotheses:
a. Contact is predominantly at VC tactical initiative, and we cannot reverse this; VC need suffer high casualties only so long as they are willing to accept them, in seeking contact; or
b. Current VC/NVA loss rates can be maintained by present forces—as increased X% by Y additional forces—whatever the DRV/VC choose to do, short of further major withdrawal.)

8. What controversies persist on the estimate of VC Order of Battle; in particular, on the various categories of guerrilla forces and infrastructure? On VC recruiting, and manpower pool? What is the evidence for different estimates, and what is the overall adequacy of evidence?

9. What are NVA/VC *capabilities* for launching a large-scale offensive, with "dramatic" results (even if taking high casualties and without holding objectives long), in the next six months? (e.g., an offensive against one or more cities, or against most newly "pacified" hamlets.) How adequate is the evidence?

10. What are the main channels for military supplies for the NVA/VC forces in SVN, (e.g., Cambodia and/or the Laotion panhandle)? What portion of these supplies come in through Sihanoukville?

RVNAF

10A. What differences of opinion exist concerning extent of RVNAF improvement, and what is evidence underlying different views? (e.g., compare recent CIA memo with MACV views.)[3] For example:

a. Which is the level of effective, mobile, offensive operations? What results are they achieving?
b. What is the actual level of "genuine" small-unit actions and night actions in ARVN, RF and PF: i.e., actions that would typically be classed as such within the U.S. Army, and in particular, offensive ambushes and patrols? How much has this changed?
c. How much has the officer selection and promotion system, and the quality of leadership, actually changed over the years (as distinct from changes in paper "programs")? How many junior officers hold commissions (in particular, battlefield commissions from NCO rank) despite lack of a high school diploma?
d. What known disciplinary action has resulted from ARVN looting of civilians in the past year (for example, the widespread looting that took place last spring)?
e. To what extent have past "anti-desertion" decrees and efforts lessened the rate of desertion; why has the rate recently been increasing to new highs?
f. What success are the RF and PF having in providing local security and reducing VC control and influence in rural populations?

11. To what extent could RVNAF—as it is now—handle the VC (Main Force, local forces, guerrillas), with or without U.S. combat support to fill RVNAF deficiencies, if all VNA units were withdrawn:

a. If VC still had Northern fillers.
b. If all Northerners (but not regroupees) were withdrawn.

12. To what extent could RVNAF—as it is now—also handle a sizeable level of NVA forces:

a. With U.S. air and artillery support.
b. With above and also U.S. ground forces in reserve.

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[3] Reference to "recent CIA memo" is apparently to Document 1. MACV's recent views are in COMUSMCV telegram 3247 to CINCPAC, January 16, in which COMUSMACV concluded that the accelerated pacification program "continues to show good progress as all levels of the GVN maintain interest and exert considerable pressure for results." At the end of December 1968, the Hamlet Evaluation System showed a rise of 3 percent in relatively secure population to 76.3 percent of the total GVN population. "More than any other factor," MACV concluded, the "low level of enemy opposition has allowed the campaign to proceed at an encouraging pace." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 62, Vietnam Subject Files, 1–B Revolutionary Development Program)

c. Without U.S. direct support, but with increased RVNAF artillery and air capacity?

13. What, in various views, are the required changes—in RVNAF command, organization, equipment, training and incentives, in political environment, in logistical support, in U.S. modes of influence—for making RVNAF *adequate* to the tasks cited in questions 9 and 10 above? How long would this take? What are the practical obstacles to these changes, and what new U.S. moves would be needed to overcome these?

Pacification

14. How much, and where, has the security situation and the balance of influence between the VC and GVN actually changed in the countryside over time, contrasting the present to such benchmarks as end-61, end-63, end-65, end-67? What are the best indicators of such change, or lack of it? What factors have been mainly responsible for such change as has occurred? Why has there not been more?

15. What are the reasons for expecting more change in the countryside in the next two years than in past intervals? What are the reasons for not expecting more? What changes in RVNAF, GVN, U.S., and *VC* practices and *adaptiveness* would be needed to increase favorable change in security and control? How likely are such changes, individually and together; what are the obstacles?

16. What proportion of the rural population must be regarded as "subject to significant VC presence and influence"? (How should hamlets rated as "C" in the Hamlet Evaluation System—the largest category—be regarded in this respect?) In particular, what proportion in the provinces surrounding Saigon? How much has this changed?

17. What number or verified numbers of the Communist political apparatus (i.e., People's Revolutionary Party members, the hard-core "infrastructure") have been arrested or killed in the past year? How many of these were cadre of higher than village level? What proportion do these represent of total PRP membership, and how much—and how long—had the apparatus been disrupted?

18. What are the reasons for believing that current and future efforts at "rooting out" hard-core infrastructure will be—or will not be—more successful than past efforts? For example, for believing that collaboration among the numerous Vietnamese intelligence agencies will be markedly more thorough than in the past? What are the side-effects, e.g., on Vietnamese opinion, of anti-infrastructure campaigns such as the current "accelerated effort," along with their lasting effect on hard-core apparatus?

19. How adequate is our information on the overall scale and incidence of damage to civilians by air and artillery, and looting and misbehavior by RVNAF?

20. To what extent do recent changes in command and administration affecting the country-side represent moves to improve competence, as distinct from replacement of one clique by another? What is the basis of judgment? What is the impact of the recent removal of minority-group province and district officials (Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Montagnard) in their respective areas?

Politics

21. *How adequate is our information,* and what is it based upon, concerning:

a. Attitudes of Vietnamese elites not now closely aligned with the GVN (e.g., religious leaders, professors, youth leaders, professionals, union leaders, village notables) towards: Participation—if offered—in the GVN; the current legitimacy and acceptability of the GVN; likewise (given "peace") for the NLF or various "neutralist" coalitions; towards U.S. intent, as they interpret it (e.g., U.S. plans for ending the war, perceived U.S. alignments with particular individuals and forces within Vietnam, U.S. concern for various Vietnamese interests).

b. Patterns of existent political alignments within GVN/RVNAF and outside it—reflecting family ties, corruption, officers' class, secret organizations and parties, religious and regional background—as these bear upon behavior with respect to the war, the NLF, reform and broadening of the GVN, and responses to U.S. influence and intervention.

22. What is the evidence on the prospects—and on what changes in conditions and U.S. policies would increase or decrease them—for changes in the GVN toward: (a) broadening of the government to include participation of *all* significant non-Communist regional and religious groupings (at province and district levels, as well as cabinet); (b) stronger emphasis, in selection and promotion of officers and officials, on competence and performance (as in the Communist Vietnamese system) as distinct from considerations of family, corruption, and social (e.g., educational) background; and (c) *political* mobilization of non-Communist sympathies and energies in support of the GVN, as evidenced, e.g., by reduced desertion, by willing alignment of religious, provincial and other leaders with the GVN, by wide cooperation with anti-corruption and pro-efficiency drives.

23. How critical, in various views, is each of the changes in question 22 above to prospects of attaining—at current, reduced or increased levels of U.S. military effort—either "victory," or a strong non-Communist political role after a compromise settlement of hostilities? What are views of the risks attendant to making these changes, or attempting them; and, to the extent that U.S. influence is required, on U.S. practical ability to move prudently and effectively in this direction? What is the evidence?

U.S. Operations

24. How do military deployment and tactics today differ from those of 6–12 months ago? What are reasons for changes, and what has this impact been?

25. In what different ways (including innovations in organization) might U.S. force-levels be reduced to various levels, while minimizing impact on combat capability?

26. What is the evidence on the scale of effect of B–52 attacks in producing VC/NVA casualties? In disrupting VC/NVA operations? How valid are estimates of overall effect?

27. What effect is the Laotian interdiction bombing having:

a. In reducing the capacity of the enemy logistic system?
b. In destroying matériel in transit?

28. With regard to the bombing of North Vietnam:

a. What evidence was there on the significance of the principal strains imposed on the DRV (e.g., in economic disruption, extra manpower demands, transportation blockages, population morale)?
b. What was the level of logistical through-put through the Southern provinces of NVN just prior to the November bombing halt? To what extent did this level reflect the results of the U.S. bombing campaign?
c. To what extent did Chinese and Soviet aid relieve pressure on Hanoi?
d. What are current views on the proportion of war-essential imports that could come into NVN over the rail or road lines from China, even if all imports by sea were denied and a strong effort even made to interdict ground transport? What is the evidence?
e. What action has the DRV taken to reduce the vulnerability and importance of Hanoi as a population and economic center (e.g., through population evacuation and economic dispersal)?

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5. Editorial Note

On January 21, 1969, from 2 to 3:30 p.m., President Nixon met in the Cabinet Room of the White House with the National Security Council. (President's Daily Diary; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files) At this inaugural meeting, President Nixon asked Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms to prepare for the second National Security Council Meeting (see Document 10) "a good job on the situation in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, adding that he also wanted an overview from State and CIA on the views of

other Asian nations on the situation and stating that much of what we will do depends on the effect that these actions will have on the peoples of the area, not only on the leaders but on the people themselves." The Council then discussed events in East Asia, Nigeria, Peru, and procedural and administrative issues.

Toward the end of the meeting, the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, stated that the Council would address at the next meeting the situation in Vietnam and "alternative courses of action open to us." At this point, the following discussion occurred:

". . . the President emphasized that while he did not believe in changing policy for change sake alone that he felt with respect to Vietnam that we must rethink all of our policy tracks by reviewing all past instructions and determining whether or not we are proceeding down the correct tracks. He stated we do not want the enemy to assume that we are locked on the same old tracks as the previous Administration, emphasizing that we will change if the situation dictates.

"Secretary of State emphasized that the U.S. has not really made any commitments in this regard, pointing out that Ambassador Harriman informed him that we really had no policy with respect to negotiating objectives.

"General Wheeler said that both Harriman and Vance had only been provided preliminary instructions to get the talks started in Paris but that they had not been provided any finite objectives from Washington.

"The President stated, 'I was very disturbed about this since it was obvious from the conduct of the negotiations.' He stated that he had discussed the problem with Lodge and Walsh, emphasizing that he did not want any coercive action with respect to the South Vietnamese, pointing out that while they may be difficult to deal with they are our allies and this was the basis for the selection of Lodge and one of his principal missions is to rebuild South Vietnam's confidence and trust in the U.S.

"Dr. Kissinger stated that they had been operating in Paris with a laundry list of objectives which served as probing vehicles with the other side.

"Secretary Rogers stated that this was the Administration's effort to get something started before the election.

"The President said he was very much aware of the domestic issues but that he would rather take the heat now and achieve a sound settlement subsequently. He emphasized that he does not want a lot of promising press pizazz which we may not be able to deliver on later. He told Lodge to avoid the type of over optimism which had characterized past press treatment. He stated that while it looks fairly rosy now, we may not be able to achieve acceptable agreements.

"The President added that he instructed Lodge not to be quite so friendly with the North Vietnamese and assured him that if he made the President look a little tougher, that was just fine.

"The President stated that we cannot panic by moving the wrong way.

"Mr. Kissinger stated that the most difficult problem on Vietnam can be traced to fundamental disagreements on facts and that is why we are inventorying the facts to insure that we have them in hand before considering our basic objectives, referring to the questions on Vietnam which are to be developed interdepartmentally with a short deadline."

The discussion then turned again to procedural matters. (Minutes of NSC Meeting, January 21; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS–82, NSC, NSC Meetings, January–March 1969)

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6. Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency[1]

No. 0550/69 Washington, January 24, 1969.

SUBJECT

The Situation in Vietnam: Overview and Outlook

[Omitted here is table of contents.]

SUMMARY

The present time is particularly appropriate for a review of the situation in Vietnam since we are at the close of a phase that began with the Tet Offensive last January. With the change in American administrations, the opening of the substantive negotiations in Paris and the current reintensification of the fighting after an appreciable lull, a new phase is now beginning.

Since Tet 1968, military trends have been increasingly favorable for allied forces. The Communists have taken staggering casualties, their combat effectiveness has declined, and their overall strength has

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 63, Vietnam Subject Files, 2–C General Military Activity. Secret; Sensitive. Helms sent this memorandum to Kissinger under cover of a January 24 note in which he wrote: "Herewith are two copies of a study on Vietnam, which Bill Bundy requested some days ago. I wanted you to have these immediately since I think you will find this effort a useful updating of the situation. A copy has been sent to the Secretary of State."

been maintained only through huge inputs of North Vietnamese manpower. Hanoi recognizes its military shortcomings and has been seeking for several months to redress them. Many of the units withdrawn from combat last year are now returning after refitting and the level of infiltration has risen sharply since late November. The enemy has already begun to step up the level of his military action and we can expect more activity along the lines we have seen over the last few weeks. This may include at least terrorist and sapper attacks on major urban centers, including Saigon. Such attacks could come at anytime.

Politically, the Communists are engaged in a major effort to weaken the GVN and to create the appearance if not the substance, of an ongoing administrative apparatus "governing" as much of South Vietnam as possible. Their aim is to boost the prestige and image of the National Liberation Front and its claims of control over territory and people. These claims are wildly exaggerated. At the moment, the GVN's position is a strong one: the political surface in South Vietnam is reasonably calm, progress is being made toward the elusive goal of stability, and the pace and effectiveness of pacification has increased appreciably in the past few months. Events of the next few months, however, are certain to test South Vietnam's internal stability, the solidity of recent pacification gains, and particularly the GVN's ability to withstand the war of nerves the Communists patently intend to wage in Paris.

In the negotiations, the Communists have already proved to be tough and skillful bargainers. They obviously want to move into substantive issues, which they hope will prove explosive in Saigon and divisive in relations between the GVN and the United States. We believe, however, that they also view the Paris talks as a serious effort to explore the possibilities of a negotiated settlement.

We cannot predict the terms the Communists would eventually accept as a compromise settlement. Hanoi's minimum position, however, probably will include total American troop withdrawal in a clearly defined period, and a restructuring of the political order in South Vietnam which guarantees the Communists a role and a power base from which they can work to achieve their ultimate objective of domination.

Over the next few months the Communists will attempt to combine political action and military efforts in a mix that will enable Hanoi to cope with whatever policies are adopted by the new US administration. At the moment the Communists believe the war can be continued at acceptable costs long enough to convince the United States that a compromise political settlement is mandatory.

Over the near term, the critical variable in all major aspects of the Vietnamese struggle—decisions in Hanoi, negotiations in Paris, and the course of events in South Vietnam—will be the posture and policies of the new American administration.

[Omitted here are sections: I. "The Current Setting," II. "The Military Picture," III. "The Political Picture," IV. "Pacification," V. "The View From Hanoi," VI. "Communist Intentions: The Near Term" and VII. "Outlook" and three annexes entitled "The Vietnamese Protagonists," "Military Forces," and "Hanoi's Four Points and the Front's Five Points."

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7. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, January 24, 1969, 0444Z.

1474. For the Secretary from Bunker.

1. Now that the new team is in harness in Washington and Paris, and as we are heading into the substantive phase of the negotiations, I would like to make some general observations on our basic posture in dealing with the enemy and with our Vietnamese allies. All of us here fully understand the great importance of making rapid progress in the negotiations, and I am quite aware of the pressures from American public and Congressional opinion. The question is how we best conduct ourselves to achieve this progress that is desired by all of us. What follows, therefore, is not intended to be critical in any sense but to offer some suggestions, in the light of a fairly comprehensive experience in negotiations covering some 18 years in government service and a much longer period in business, which I hope will be found constructive.

2. As I look over the record of the very difficult negotiations with the DRV between May and November, I am struck with the importance of patience.[2] It was only when we convinced them that they simply could not obtain from us an unconditional cessation of the bombing that they began to move. This took five difficult months. The last weeks

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET. Secret; Nodis.

[2] An unattributed memorandum, January 24, entitled "Ambassador Bunker's Suggestions for the U.S. Negotiation Posture" summarized for Nixon's daily briefing Bunker's observations as follows: "The main thrust of Bunker's message (Saigon 1474) is that we must be patient, not overeager, in dealing with the Vietnamese Communists. If we set any deadlines for ourselves, the other side will sense it and exploit it. The new team's posture, he says, should be one of deliberation and patience, of purposeful and responsible search for an end to conflict." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1, President's Daily Briefs)

of that negotiation are especially instructive, for as we approached agreement it became apparent that the enemy was willing to give up a great many unreasonable demands in order to get the substantive negotiations started. Then, however, came the period of our difficulties with our South Vietnamese allies, and Hanoi soon became aware of deadlines that we were imposing on ourselves and on the GVN. I think it is fair to say that our patent eagerness to get the procedural arrangements out of the way may have delayed agreement as the enemy found it possible and even profitable to sit tight and to exploit through propaganda the differences that were developing between Washington and Saigon.

3. My first conclusion is that pressure for speed and the practice of fixing deadlines are quite likely to result in slower, rather than faster, progress on the substantive issues. One of the last messages I received from the outgoing administration referred to "excessive and unrealistic public and Congressional expectations" as requiring us to push ahead as rapidly as possible. I think we should be clear in our minds that the negotiations will be arduous, complex, difficult and probably long (unless we want agreement at any price). I hope the new administration can find some ways to get that message across to our Congress and our public. Such an effort would in itself have a very salutary effect on the enemy. If, instead, we signal to him that we are in a hurry and working to deadlines, he will merely dig in, try to exact every possible concession from us, and thus prolong the negotiations. This is a matter of basic style, which as you know is so important in diplomacy. The coming weeks will establish the style of the new team. It should be one of deliberation and patience, of a purposeful and responsible search for an end to the conflict, without any undue time-pressure or expectation of quick results.

4. I now turn to our Vietnamese allies, who are negotiating partners in a double sense: We must first negotiate with them to keep in tandem whenever possible, and then we must work as a team with them in negotiating with the enemy. This is a difficult operation even under the best of circumstances, but all of us should recognize at the outset that the GVN simply does not have the organizational depth or the capacity to make decisions as rapidly as we. This is true not only of South Viet-Nam but of all the underdeveloped countries. We only risk frustrating ourselves and creating a sense of frustration also in the government we deal with if we expect them to operate with the efficiency and despatch of our own government. I think a good deal of our trouble with them in late October stemmed from the fact that they simply could not gear themselves up for action as quickly as we had thought (and as President Thieu, initially, had thought). When under the lash of time limits, they panic and become paralyzed.

5. We should also recognize, I think, that under the form of government that has been set up in Saigon two years ago (actually largely at our urging), Thieu and Ky no longer have the freedom of action that was enjoyed by the military dictatorships of former years. The moves of the GVN are now closely watched by an elected National Assembly and by a public opinion that has a surprising latitude for expression. They have to take these factors into consideration just as we do in our country. Thieu has felt it necessary to consult what he calls his expanded national security council (the key military and cabinet officers plus the leaders of the two houses) at every important step. We may regard this a sign of weakness and may feel that he should exert more leadership; but we are not likely to change the basic character of Thieu who by and large is the best and most widely accepted leader his country has had in ten years. Ky is decisive but impulsive and sometimes irresponsible. Thieu has none of these characteristics; he is cautious and methodical, and in any case he lacks the political power to move by fiat.

6. There is one still more important and still more basic factor in our posture vis-à-vis the GVN which has to do with the intangible of mutual confidence. As I mentioned in my seventy-fifth and last message to President Johnson,[3] at the root of many of the hesitations and delays in Saigon during the last two months lay a deep suspicion about our ultimate intentions. Were we getting ready to turn our backs on them? Was the outgoing administration perhaps so intent on results that it was ready to sacrifice vital interests of our allies? Unfair questions perhaps, but deeply troubling ones to many of South Viet-Nam's leaders. Whenever we try to push them beyond their capacity, it revives and increases their doubts about our commitment. If rightly or wrongly they come to feel that essential positions and commitments to them are being abandoned, we will be even less able to get them to do what we want, and the bargaining power of the communists would be enormously increased.

7. As I mentioned in my last message to President Johnson, I think a good deal of our troubles during the last few months could have been avoided if we had made haste more slowly. I am deeply convinced on the basis of my experience here and elsewhere that our enemy and our ally will both dig in if we try to drive ahead too quickly. I am quite aware, of course, that a time may come when we have to lower the boom on the GVN, but we cannot do this all the time and during recent weeks we have in fact reached a situation of rapidly diminishing returns because we tried to too often. In view of our strongly held common conviction that we must make progress in Paris as rapidly as pos-

[3] See *Foreign Relations,* 1964–1968, vol. VII, Document 285.

sible, I think agreement on a basic negotiating posture should figure high on our agenda.

8. You may wish to repeat this message to Cabot Lodge in Paris for his information and possible comment.[4]

Bunker

[4] In telegram 1195 from Paris, Delto 1245, January 27, Lodge wrote: "I think Saigon's 1474 is full of wisdom." Lodge suggested that the South Vietnamese could not be pushed too rapidly in negotiations, that they should be privately informed of U.S.-North Vietnamese private bilateral negotiations in Paris, and that there would be instances when they would disagree with U.S. strategy and tactics, but their concerns should be tolerated. Lodge concluded that there were times when North and South Vietnam needed "a hard push from the outside," but while this pressure "is sometimes indispensable, equally obviously, it cannot be done all the time." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1, President's Daily Briefs)

8. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, January 24, 1969.

SUBJECT

NSC Meeting of January 25 on Vietnam[2]

At Tab A are proposed talking points[3] for the NSC meeting on Saturday.

At Tab C is the paper on Vietnam Alternatives.[4] (You will recall that you saw and approved it for distribution while at Key Biscayne.) The members of the NSC have had the paper since Tuesday[5] and I understand that each has a number of comments.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 74, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, Memos to the President for NSC, 1969. Secret. Nixon wrote the following notes on the first page of the memorandum: "1. Helms should stay. 2. Police forces. 3. V. Nam training."

[2] See Document 10.

[3] Attached but not printed.

[4] Tab C was a 27-page undated paper consisting of two parts: I, a more detailed version of the summary provided in Tab B, and II, "Alternative Military Strategies," that contained three options with analysis: "A. Escalation, B. Current Military Posture, C. Substantial Reduction in U.S. Presence with RVNAF Assuming Increased Responsibility."

[5] January 21.

Since the paper was prepared by the NSC staff prior to January 20, it was not coordinated with the agencies. It is designed to be an initial cut at broad alternative objectives and courses of action. It will have served its purpose if it stimulates a discussion of basic issues. Following the discussion on Saturday[6] and next Wednesday,[7] it would probably be most useful to draft a completely new inter-agency paper which focuses more sharply on the real choices in objectives, negotiating strategy and U.S. troop levels and the major points of disagreement among your advisers.

You may wish to re-read the five-page summary paper at Tab B before the meeting.

Tab B

VIETNAM POLICY ALTERNATIVES

To choose among military and negotiating strategies for Vietnam, the U.S. needs to determine what its objectives are. In turn, the choice of objectives depends on an estimate of the costs and risks of alternative military strategies and the probabilities of their success.

This memorandum first describes alternative outcomes that the U.S. might seek, and then alternative military strategies. Third, combinations of military and negotiating strategies in pursuit of various outcomes are described and their implications evaluated.

I. Alternative Outcomes (Tab I)[8]

A. Assured GVN Control of All of South Vietnam

U.S. would seek to bring all of SVN under complete and assured GVN control. U.S. forces would remain until either the NVA had been withdrawn and the VC forces and structure eliminated, or until Hanoi had negotiated a settlement for such withdrawals including assured GVN control and perhaps international supervision and guarantees.

B. Mutual Withdrawal Without Political Accommodation

U.S. would seek the withdrawal of NVA forces from South Vietnam and the end of infiltration. In return, U.S. would phase out the withdrawal of its own forces with those of the NVA, tacitly or by agreement, even in the absence of political accommodation in SVN. (The U.S. will have to decide whether to insist upon a withdrawal of NVA forces from the Laotian panhandle and from Cambodia.) With U.S. military and economic assistance, the GVN could confront the indigenous

[6] January 25, at the NSC meeting.

[7] January 29.

[8] The tab cited here and under II below are the two parts of Tab C referred to in footnote 4 above.

communist forces; or agreement could be reached between the GVN and the groups opposing it during the withdrawal process on a political or territorial accommodation.

C. Political Accommodation (with Mutual Troop Withdrawal)

The U.S. would seek a political accommodation which would end the military conflict in South Vietnam in a manner acceptable to both sides. The U.S. could seek to participate in the negotiation of this accommodation or it could leave such negotiations to the South Vietnamese. U.S. forces would be withdrawn from SVN only after an agreement acceptable to the GVN and the NLF had been negotiated. International forces might play a role in the election arrangements or in support of a coalition government.

D. Territorial Accommodation

The U.S. would accept or even encourage a division of South Vietnam into several large Vietcong and GVN regions, and seek to terminate the war through a ceasefire, explicit or tacit. U.S. forces could be reduced or perhaps completely withdrawn as the threat from the NVA could be handled by RVNAF, or as the NVA withdrew.

II. Alternative Military Strategies (Tab II)

The two basic approaches in selecting a military strategy are:

(1) to continue pressures on Hanoi through the current strategy, threats of escalation, or actual escalation; or

(2) to reduce the U.S. presence in South Vietnam which, by making U.S. presence more sustainable, could be another form of pressure.

A. Escalation

(1) Expanded military operations, from resumption of bombing or ground operations into Cambodia, to limited or full invasion of North Vietnam and Laos.

(2) Alternatively we could *threaten* such escalation.

B. Current Military Posture

Continue current force levels and current military operations, i.e., emphasis on defense of Saigon and other cities, wide-spread intensive patrolling, sweeps, and operations into communist base areas. (A variant would involve restructuring of U.S. ARVN into small units, deployed throughout populated areas.)

C. Substantial Reduction in U.S. Presence with RVNAF Assuming Increasing Responsibility

To reduce costs and fatalities and to increase credibility of the U.S. remaining as long as necessary, a substantial number of U.S. forces

would be withdrawn in the first year and more in the second year, to reach a level that can be sustained. U.S. would continue programs to modernize RVNAF and expect South Vietnamese to carry an increasing share of the burden.

III. Negotiating and Military Strategies To Attain Alternative Outcomes

A. Assured GVN Control of All of South Vietnam

This objective could be obtained either through a "fade away" of all North Vietnamese forces (hence requiring only a *tacit* agreement by Hanoi), or through a more formal agreement. The latter might be harder to obtain since Hanoi would have to acknowledge defeat, but it could include international guarantees against renewed infiltration. (Yet, this has proven of little help in the past.)

Advocates of the *current military strategy* argue the NVA could be destroyed or driven out and the VC defeated (sufficiently for RVNAF to cope with them) within 1–2 years. Assuming this military outcome can be achieved, how can Hanoi then be induced to give up? Is it possible that with the VC eliminated, NVA attacks could be handled by an improved RVNAF and U.S. forces small enough to maintain indefinitely?

If not, or if the NVA cannot be driven out, *threats of escalation* or *actual escalation* might be used. However, it is possible that Hanoi might not give in because, (1) it withstood previous escalation and might believe it can withstand more, and (2) it might expect to receive aid from Russia and China which would at least offset the effects of U.S. escalation.

Arguments against seeking this objective are: (1) that U.S. objectives in South Vietnam could be achieved with other outcomes; and (2) that because of VC/NVA strength and limitations in GVN/RVNAF improvements, it would require prolonged fighting, unacceptable to U.S. public.

B. Mutual U.S.–NVA Withdrawal Without Political Accommodation

The objective would be the withdrawing of NVA forces, at the price of U.S. withdrawal, giving the GVN a fair chance of overcoming the VC insurgency. Should the GVN nonetheless be defeated eventually by the VC, it would be the result of a primarily indigenous conflict. Such a withdrawal by outside forces might lead quickly to agreement on political or territorial accommodation. Withdrawal might result from formal agreement or it might be tacitly coordinated. (The U.S. would continue economic and military aid to the GVN.)

The reason for not seeking an overall political accommodation as part of mutual withdrawal is that (1) the GVN would oppose it, (2) it would probably require protracted negotiations, and (3) might deeply involve the U.S. in a settlement that results in a Communist takeover.

The U.S. could seek to press Hanoi to agree to mutual withdrawal with the current military strategy or even through threats of escalation or actual escalation. By thus confronting Hanoi with a more complete defeat (perhaps leading to assured GVN control of all of the South), it might be easier to obtain a compromise settlement and Hanoi would be prevented from dragging out negotiations.

On the other hand, the U.S. could seek the mutual withdrawal outcome by reducing its own forces, so as to (1) avoid the risk of having a new military commitment fail, (2) make it less costly for the U.S. to engage in prolonged bargaining and hence convince Hanoi of its staying power, and (3) perhaps stimulate the GVN to better performance. (Indeed, if the GVN and RVNAF really improved, assured GVN control of all of South Vietnam might then still be possible.)

With mutual U.S.–NVA withdrawal, the GVN could keep the VC from over-running population centers and could probably extend its control in the countryside. (However, some believe that, under VC pressure, RVNAF might be forced to consolidate its strength and to abandon some districts to VC control.) If Hanoi refuses military withdrawal, the U.S. could keep its forces in Vietnam, while building up RVNAF. If NVA forces were reintroduced later, the U.S. could reintroduce troops or escalate in other ways.

C. Political Accommodation (and Mutual Withdrawal)

The argument is made that there is sufficient common interest among South Vietnamese to make possible an independent non-communist state even if the NLF participated in the political process. Alternatively, this could lead to the Communists coming to power by peaceful means, but the U.S. would still have fulfilled its commitments. And given the enemy's costs of continuing the war, he might accept the uncertainty of a political contest. Some argue that the NVA would withdraw only if there is first a political settlement.

Should the U.S. participate in negotiating a political settlement? An argument in favor is that it would lead to a more satisfactory and perhaps speedier agreement. An argument against is that it would make the U.S. more responsible for the outcome.

The pros and cons here of alternate military strategies are essentially the same as those for the mutual withdrawal outcome discussed above.

D. Territorial Accommodation

While there are few if any direct advocates of partition, some degree of territorial accommodation exists and any tacit de-escalation or stand-down during negotiations might further solidify it. The VC and GVN, in default of a political compromise, may evolve a greater acquiescence in a territorial status quo.

For this outcome to emerge by an evolutionary process, rather than by negotiated agreement, there probably has to be a progressive lessening of hostilities. A modified version of the present military posture is probably compatible with territorial accommodation. Some reduction of troops, a deliberate concentration of counter-insurgency in certain areas, and a reduction of offensive sweeps (except against large-unit enemy concentrations), would probably contribute to this outcome.

A substantial reduction of U.S. troops is compatible with such an accommodation, and would probably contribute to it if the VC wished such an accommodation. But substantial reduction undoubtedly would raise the VC temptation to enlarge its control and to demoralize the GVN, i.e. to upset the status quo; U.S. troop reduction probably increases GVN willingness to accept a territorial status quo.

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9. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, January 24, 1969.

SUBJECT

Conversation with South Vietnamese Ambassador Bui Diem, January 24, 1969

I saw the Vietnamese Ambassador for a few minutes this evening and made the following points to him:

—The Nixon Administration believes it essential that the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) and the U.S. Government work closely together in the months to come.

—We have the impression that some of the difficulty between us over the past few months resulted from unnecessary arguments over language.

—We intend to be tough with the North Vietnamese on the issues, but will try to get maneuvering room by using soft language.

—South Vietnamese attitudes over recent months, we believe, were partly a result of distrust of the U.S. Perhaps the GVN was re-

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 136, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. I, Through 3/19/69. Secret. Nixon wrote "Excellent" on the memorandum. Kissinger sent an identical memorandum to Rogers dated January 28. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 1 US–VIET S)

luctant to concede anything because of uncertainties over what we might next ask.

—This Administration will deal honestly and frankly with the GVN. We will listen carefully and sympathetically to the GVN, although we may not always be able to do what is asked of us.

Bui Diem admitted that relations had deteriorated over the past months, and said that he personally believed unnecessary things had been said by both sides.

I told the Ambassador that he should feel free to call on me any time he wished. I emphasized that I would like him to tell me what the *real* Vietnamese concerns were, rather than to go over arguments largely put out for public consumption.

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10. Minutes of National Security Council Meeting[1]

Washington, January 25, 1969.

The National Security Council convened at 0930 hours, January 25, 1969, in the Cabinet Room of the White House. Attendees are at Tab A.[2]

Substance of Meeting

The first formal briefing was given by Mr. Helms, Director of CIA, the text of which is at Tab B.[3] The briefing included a summary of Hanoi's objectives in South Vietnam which included (1) unified country under Communist control, (2) elimination of dividing lines, (3) acceptance of the concept that North Vietnamese forces are not foreign troops and (4) the recent determination that they cannot win by military means and a decision that they can negotiate a settlement which will permit attainment of objectives.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–109, NSC Minutes, Originals, 1969. No classification marking. No drafting information appears on the minutes. There are many handwritten corrections on the text. Kissinger briefly summarizes this NSC meeting in *White House Years,* pp. 237–238, as follows: "the team was too new and career officers too demoralized. The briefings did not offer new and imaginative ideas to a new President eager for them, even from the military."

[2] Tab A was not found. According to the President's Daily Diary, the following attended this NSC meeting: William Rogers, Melvin Laird, General Wheeler, Richard Helms, Henry Kissinger, Elliot Richardson, U. Alexis Johnson, George A. Lincoln, Robert Murphy, Andrew Goodpaster, William Bundy, Philip Habib, Alexander Haig, and Bryce Harlow. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files)

[3] Tab B was not found, but Helms' briefing is summarized below.

The internal situation in South Vietnam was discussed. The Director concluded that under the present ground rules, assuming the withdrawal of our troops, South Vietnam would be able to go it alone in approximately one year. Director reviewed the probable negotiating position of the North Vietnamese government stating that while he believes they are serious about negotiations, they will insist on (1) total U.S. withdrawal and (2) a role in the South Vietnamese government which they believe will optimize their opportunities for ultimate takeover. Director turned next to Laos and made the following points:

—War started when the French withdrew.

—Majority of the fighting is done by North Vietnamese troops with the view towards protecting their logistic lines into South Vietnam.

—Up until now, there has been a reluctance on both sides to expand the war in Laos. At present, government represents a three-way coalition of neutralists, rightists and the Pathet Lao.

—Souvanna has recently shifted from a neutralist alignment to a rightist stance and generally supports the U.S. view, especially a compromise political settlement in South Vietnam.

Director turned next to Cambodia making the following points:

—Sihanouk has long expected a Communist win.

—Has recognized NLF.

—Protests U.S. incursions.

—Has recently developed second thoughts as the Communist foothold in his country has increased and has initiated tentative feelers to renew relations with the U.S.

—Cambodia realizes significant revenue through logistic support to NVA.

—The Communist organization in Cambodia controls the logistics framework for the war effort in South Vietnam which includes both land and water routing but CIA lacks hard intelligence with respect to the latter.

Director turned next to Thailand, making the following points:

—Thailand participates with 12,000 troops in support of South Vietnam, provides pilots and artillery elements in support of Royal Laotian government.

—Has made little progress in controlling insurgency in Northeast Thailand.

—Thailand extremely concerned about possible U.S. withdrawal from South Vietnam.

The President interrupted and told the Director that he wished to have an in-depth analysis of Indonesia.

Director stated that in general the U.S. image in Southeast Asia was quite favorable and the primary concern in the area is that the U.S. might withdraw precipitously.

The President then inquired about Malaysia, Singapore and Burma.

Director stated that Ne Win, leader of Malaysia [*Burma*] has spoken out against the war in South Vietnam. At this point, Mr. William Bundy interrupted and stated that as early as 1966 Ne Win had shifted privately to support of the U.S. war effort and reaffirmed this in discussions with Mr. Bundy at that time. He added that in 1967 Ne Win again reaffirmed his support for the U.S. in discussions with Premier Sato of Japan, much to the surprise of the latter.

Concerning Burma [*Singapore*], the Director stated that Li Quon Hu [*Lee Kuan Yew*] generally supported the U.S. position but was pessimistic about the Thieu government in South Vietnam.

The President then asked how the other leaders feel about the Thieu government. Mr. Helms stated that the picture was generally mixed, adding that President Marcos of the Philippines supports the U.S. but has been preoccupied with internal problems. Japan appears to be the main center of the Communist echo in the area. Most of the leaders of the Southeast Asia countries believe the U.S. is willing to settle the war in good faith but are fearful of South Vietnamese delaying tactics. Mr. Helms listed Thailand, South Vietnam and South Korea as countries who were most fearful of the results of a U.S. withdrawal from the area.

The President then asked how the Indonesians felt. Mr. Helms replied that they strongly support the U.S. since the fall of the Sukarno regime, recognizing that the U.S. presence in South Vietnam actually assisted in his downfall. President Suharto has become increasingly willing to encourage a return of U.S. business to Indonesia. At this point, William Bundy emphasized that initial fears in Indonesia concerning U.S. persistence in South Vietnam seemed to be settling.

The President then asked the Director, CIA, to provide him with a review of the outlook of all the countries in Southeast Asia with respect to the options which have been laid out in the paper for consideration by the National Security Council.[4]

Mr. Helms' briefing was concluded.

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[4] On February 4 Helms sent the President a 22-page memorandum entitled "Probable Reactions of Non-Communist Asian Countries to Vietnam Policy Options," along with a 2-page summary of it. In that summary, Helms suggested that although most Asian countries preferred an early end to the war, they were concerned about a Vietnam settlement causing a gradual reduction of U.S. commitments in Asia. Helms also noted that the further an Asian country was from the Vietnam conflict—Japan or India were specifically mentioned—the more willing it was to accept a settlement that included compromise with Hanoi. Helms noted that Sihanouk's Cambodia was the exception to this rule. On the other hand, Thailand, Laos, Nationalist China, and South Korea favored a continued struggle to ensure that South Vietnam controlled all its territory. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 136, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. 1, Through 3/19/69)

The briefing by Lt. Colonel Thrush, member of the Joint Staff is at Tab C.[5] Colonel Thrush's briefing consisted of a series of charts which covered (1) infiltration statistics, (2) force projections (Note: The V.P. joined the Security Council meeting at 0934 hours), (3) enemy casualty statistics, (4) enemy logistics framework, (5) main enemy logistics routes, (6) enemy bases, (7) enemy bases in Cambodia, (8) location of supply centers in South Vietnam.

At this point, the President interrupted and asked why we are finding more and better enemy caches recently. General Wheeler replied that this was due to better intelligence, a greater number of defectors who are willing to talk. General Goodpaster added that this also resulted from increased operations in enemy gut areas, withdrawal of main force units from some of these areas.

Mr. Alexis Johnson then added: "I was informed while in Saigon that enemy PWs are now quite disillusioned, even angry and are willing to talk". The President retorted, "I think there is a tendency to get skeptical of these optimistic reports". Both Mr. Johnson and the Chairman reiterated that there is a positive and honest shift in the enemy's attitude in South Vietnam and in his willingness to surrender. General Goodpaster added that there has been a striking but not as yet significant increase in Chieu Hoi rates. Secretary of Defense Laird stated, "I have heard these briefings each year and each year they get more optimistic and, therefore, I hope that we will be very careful in digesting the material which is put forth."

Briefer continued showing chart no. 9 on food shortages. General Goodpaster pointed out that the logistic situation in each area of activity is quite different. In the I Corps area to the north, the enemy's logistics are weak and he is suffering. In the III Corps area which includes Saigon, the picture is quite different due to the extensive availability of food and supplies moving through Cambodia.

The briefer then turned to what the Joint Staff considered to be four main enemy options in their future operations which could be undertaken individually or in combination:

1. Attack across the DMZ.
2. Attack in North and South Vietnam, flanking the DMZ via Laos.
3. Attacking east and southeast across the Cambodian border towards Saigon.
4. Continue current operation of maintaining sporadic effort in all areas of South Vietnam, utilizing main force to attack U.S. forces and guerilla operations to disrupt pacification operations and to strengthen Communist political infrastructure.

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[5] Tab C has not been found.

The Chairman, General Wheeler, suggested that the last option appeared to be the one that the Communists would continue with for the time being. Briefer then displayed Chart on air operations and at this point, President interrupted and asked the Chairman whether or not the military were being restricted in their operations in South Vietnam. General Wheeler replied, "only by the decision of the President." The President asked if General Wheeler agreed with these restrictions. General Wheeler replied that if we need authority to do more, it will be requested. The President commented that he hoped these restrictions were reviewed and reexamined regularly.

Secretary of State Rogers asked whether or not U.S. drones go into China. Chairman replied that on several occasions over the last few years drones have strayed over China but generally over insular territory. President asked whether or not a drone aircraft was distinguishable from conventional aircraft. General Wheeler replied that I believe that Chinese radar operators can now distinguish between drone and conventional aircraft, certainly between drones and our SR–71 aircraft. General Wheeler noted that the North Vietnamese react very quickly to aircraft north of the 19th Parallel.

Briefer then reviewed type military operations conducted in the various Corps zones in South Vietnam. Under Secretary Richardson inquired, "do our forces involved in interdiction action just set astride enemy supply routes or infiltration routes?" The briefer replied, "yes, but with aggressive patrolling outward". Mr. Richardson then inquired, "does this involve much movement?" General Wheeler and General Goodpaster then described the style of U.S. operations with focus on the III Corps area, commenting that the three ARVN divisions in the III Corps area were their poorest units but that this situation has been resolved through the utilization of the ARVN strategic reserve which includes their airborne division plus their ranger and marine battalions. He also added that the recent redeployment of the 1st Air Mobile Division from the II Corps zone to the III Corps zone had added immeasurably to our capabilities in this area. General Goodpaster then explained the technique of "pile-on tactics" through which U.S. forces rapidly converge on enemy contacts with superior mobile force and firepower whenever the contact develops.

The President then asked, "is this what you described to me as 'wielding the force'?" General Goodpaster replied affirmatively. The President then asked about the caliber of the ARVN Generals in the Saigon area and what we are doing about their inferior quality. General Wheeler replied that General Abrams has been pressuring the South Vietnamese on both this issue and on the alarmingly high rate of South Vietnamese defections. Dr. Kissinger then asked for some statistics which would enable us to compare friendly and enemy casualties when

(a) actions were friendly initiated or (b) enemy initiated. General Goodpaster said he would judge that about 80 to 90% were the result of friendly initiated actions. He also added that U.S. and ARVN casualties inflicted on the enemy were running about equal. General Lincoln then asked why the enemy was willing to sacrifice approximately 2,000 casualties per week in what appeared to be a meat grinder. General Wheeler stated that the enemy must continue its military activities to maintain the most favorable negotiating stance, adding that furthermore if they were to slow down, pacification operations would pick up. General Wheeler stated that the 2,000 casualties per week figure is probably modest since it is based on body count and does not reflect the untold casualties inflicted by air nor include the numerous enemy wounded in action. Under Secretary Richardson again asked if this figure could be firm. General Wheeler reemphasized its modest content.

The President then asked what the reason was for the drop-off in enemy captured during the last quarter of 1968. General Goodpaster stated he was not sure but it might be due to statistical lag.

The President then inquired whether or not we felt the enemy had deescalated since the bombing halt and if they had whether or not it was forced by friendly effectiveness or was the result of a willful decision to do so. General Goodpaster stated they are continuing to attempt to achieve a success, especially in the III Corps areas and have not been holding back.

The President asked whether enemy initiatives had been increasing or dropping. General Goodpaster replied in the III Corps area they have definitely increased, especially in the III Corps areas, particularly the Tay Ninh and Michelin areas.

The President inquired if they were trying to keep up the pressure during the talks. General Goodpaster replied definitely but they have been restricted by our operations to their jungle sanctuaries.

The President then asked if we were ready for enemy activity during Tet, emphasizing that he wished to be updated on the military situation so that he could approve contingency actions which might be necessary. General Wheeler stated that General Abrams is ready to move quickly, adding that intelligence indicates that the enemy hopes to move in the Saigon area but has been frustrated by General Abrams' employment of B–52s, tactical air and artillery, together with the logistical attrition that the enemy has suffered.

The President then asked what would happen if the enemy moved massively across the DMZ. General Wheeler replied that he would immediately request authority to initiate bombing in and north of the zone. The President again asked if the military was able to do what they wanted in the conduct of the war. General Wheeler replied, "yes," with the exception of the bombing of the north and mentioned that if

Saigon were attacked, that a contingency plan is in existence which included strikes in North Vietnam to reflect our serious concern for a breach of understandings arrived at in Paris.

The President asked to see the plan.

Secretary of State Rogers then inquired, "how long General Wheeler thought the enemy could continue in the face of the present losses?" The Chairman replied that in his judgment about two years, pointing out that the conflict was not like World War II where at this point in time exploitation could be initiated and a decisive victory achieved. The Director of DIA interrupted and stated, "but at this point there are still 500,000 regulars that have not been used in North Vietnam." Secretary of Defense stated, "but attacks are dropping off". General Lincoln then asked whether or not the continuing losses of the enemy were a result of a failure of local units to get the word to fall off. General Wheeler said, "no, they are attacking on orders from Hanoi".

Dr. Kissinger then asked about casualty rates in the event we were to deescalate our operations. General Wheeler replied we would then suffer greater losses as a result of turning the initiative over to the enemy. General Goodpaster added, "we must keep pressure on the enemy or he will achieve local initiative, overrun exposed static U.S. units and, in general, add to the U.S. losses". Secretary Rogers then inquired about the possibility of mutual deescalation by agreement. General Wheeler replied, "I can see no viable agreement of that type in the wind". General Lincoln added, "such an agreement need not be explicit but could be tacit". Secretary Rogers said, "frankly I just cannot accept such a concept".

At this point, the JCS briefer continued covering air operations, B–52 operations and carrier operations, naval operations, to include Market Time, Game Warden and naval gunfire. Briefer then reviewed ground reconnaissance operations in Laos (Prairie Fire), Cambodia (Daniel Boone) and current restrictions and ground rules involved. Briefer turned next to modernization and improvement of Vietnamese forces under Phases I and II, stating that we were now in Phase II, programmed for completion in FY 72. A discussion on desertion rates followed and General Wheeler stated that he is convinced that the ARVN leadership is improving and should continue upward, adding that some of the deserters were statistical only in that they deserted one unit to go to another unit which had higher pay or better living conditions.

The President then asked whether or not our modernization program for the Vietnamese Armed Forces was adequate. Secretary Laird stated, "I think we are moving but started very late". General Wheeler stated, "I think we are going about as fast as both we can provide and the South Vietnamese can accept". General Goodpaster added, "we are paced about right with about two or three qualifications." These

include engineer artillery, transportation and medical equipment which we are planning to provide through selective reduction in U.S. units. The worst problem area is the development of the Vietnamese helicopter capability. We would like to deactivate some U.S. units but don't dare at this time.

The President then asked about the situation with respect to local ARVN forces, stating that in his view the AID people are totally unsuited to supervise the development of local security forces, stating it is like the blind leading the blind, adding AID is incompetent to handle this mission. General Goodpaster suggested that we receive a report from the field.

The President stated, "I know this operation is inadequate and recognize that a police force must be developed." The President then told General Wheeler to get a complete report on the whole program to include who is doing it, whether he is qualified, what system he is employing.

The briefer then continued showing some pacification statistics. At this point, Dr. Kissinger asked what are your criteria for the various categories of pacification (referring specifically to statistics which reflected that 73% of South Vietnam was pacified). General Wheeler replied, "that figure is probably vulnerable" adding that the pacification chart is significant primarily because it reflects trends and further noting that subsequent to Tet there was an initial drop but with a steady increase shortly thereafter.

Briefer showed a chart on Chieu Hoi which reflected statistics for the month of December 1968 which were the second highest to date. The briefer then showed a chart reflecting the roundup of Viet Cong infrastructure. The Director of DIA commented that President Thieu has finally moved out in this area. Dr. Kissinger asked, "why is there such a problem in getting the South Vietnamese to move against people who are bent on doing them in?" To which Mr. Bundy replied "it is primarily a problem of organization and leadership". The President asked who was our representative charged with this job to which Mr. Bundy replied, "this comes under the COORDS organization under Mr. Colby".

The President then asked "is he a specialist, does he have any idea of what he is doing?" Mr. Bundy replied "he was the Chief of Station in Saigon when you were Vice President."

JCS briefer then concluded.

Secretary of State Rogers introduced Mr. William Bundy at 1100 hours. The President stated we will listen to Mr. Bundy for 30 minutes, take a five minute break and then return for our discussion.

Mr. Bundy introduced his briefing, stating that he would comment on (1) pacification, (2) the economic situation in South Vietnam, (3) the

political situation in South Vietnam and (4) the situation in Southeast Asia in general.

Mr. Bundy made the following points:

—Agree that pacification trends are upwards but emphasized that this is extremely vulnerable.

—Pacification is mostly a GVN effort supported by the COORDS organization under Colby which includes some 5,000 military and 1,200 civilians, the latter being primarily AID with some foreign service officers.

—The economic situation indicates that inflation continues to be a serious problem.

—There has been progress in the countryside on rice production.

—Main problems center on requirement to control budget (U.S. must carefully gauge its input), post-Tet progress has been good, on a long-term basis South Vietnam has good economic recovery potential.

Discussing the political situation, the following points were made:

—Until June 1967, Ky appeared to have the helm in South Vietnam. Then Thieu took over an uneasy primary role, with Ky controlling cabinet appointments and providing a basically technician cabinet.

—Thieu began last May to reform cabinet and installed Huong and the power struggle resolved in favor of Thieu.

—During Fall, Thieu's stock raised and then fell back to its current low point.

—Huong is on Ky's bad list although he looks like a good man and a man of honor. The cabinet is of Thieu's and Huong's formulation and although it has weaknesses is better than previous models. The General Assembly has performed well as a sounding board, albeit hard lined.

—Until recently, Corps commanders wielded autonomous and considerable power which has been reduced since June.

—I Corps Commander still very strong. At the district and province level, Chiefs are now appointed from Saigon.

—Civil Service is of mixed quality.

Mr. Bundy then turned to political forces in South Vietnam, pointing out that it is a conglomerate of geographic, religious and ethnic divergency.

—The major problem is the confidence effectiveness index of the central government.

—Tet was their Pearl Harbor which crystallized their confidence. Confidence grew as a result of Tet, our presence and the retirement of President Johnson.

—It appears they can do the job assuming a third factor is properly added to the index, i.e., a sense of reality.

—Despite this, there is a great distance to go.

—Main problem is corruption.

At this point, Secretary of State interrupted and stated that he has spoken to Senator Kennedy about the recent Kennedy report on

corruption and has been assured by Kennedy that he will not release this report.[6]

—The second major problem is how the South Vietnamese can politically organize to permit participation by the NLF either through legitimization or a front solution. There has been little progress in this area. The Lin Minh party supported by Thieu has been floundering due to lack of positive leadership by Thieu who hangs back until he is convinced that success is assured.

—An effective coalition must be organized.

Mr. Bundy then turned to his view of Southeast Asian reactions to types of settlements referring to the November NIE[7] on this subject.

The President interrupted and stated that he wished to look at this NIE. Mr. Bundy made the following points:

—In general, the nations would be appalled by U.S. defeat, and defeat in their view has military overtones but in the final analysis will be measured by the ultimate results, i.e., if the Communists prevail in South Vietnam we are defeated.

—Nations are sure we have the power but are less certain of our will.

—In Laos, Souvanna would not survive. In Cambodia, Sihanouk would become a satellite. In Thailand, the situation would be knife-edge, especially with the obvious fall of Laos. In Malaysia, the situation would deteriorate. In Singapore, there is some pessimism about the future and hope that the U.S. will hang in. The Indonesians would like a peaceful solution and might be willing to play a role in Hanoi. They would definitely be shaken if the U.S. were to fail but would probably not collapse as a result. In the Philippines, failure would be a setback and might combine with the Huk problem to escalate difficulties.

The President then emphasized that he wished to read the NIE on this subject and asked how it was prepared. Mr. Bundy replied that it was an intelligence community document under the Chairmanship of CIA, approved by the U.S. Intelligence Board. Mr. Bundy concluded his presentation and was succeeded by Mr. Philip Habib, Member of U.S. Paris negotiating team.

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[6] Senator Edward Kennedy's report has not been identified, however, following his trip to Vietnam in January 1968 as Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees, he urged a "confrontation" with the Saigon government which he believed was "infested with corruption" and inefficiency. According to Kennedy, half of the $30 million a year in U.S. refugee aid for South Vietnam was pocketed by government officials and province chiefs. Appearing on the CBS–TV program "Face the Nation" on January 28, 1968, Kennedy said "I do not see how we can possibly tolerate the increased losses of American troops . . . and still see this cancer of corruption in all aspects of the Vietnamese government." (Stanley Millet, ed., *South Vietnam: U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia*, Vol. 3, 1968, pp. 242–243)

[7] See footnote 2, Document 4.

Mr. Habib brought the group up to date on the Paris negotiations, making the following points:

—U.S. kicked off with a limited bombing pause.

—Hanoi insisted on total halt and was noncommital on what would follow.

—U.S. insisted that while we were willing to stop bombing we wanted assurance that serious negotiations would follow.

—Negotiations started slowly with typical propaganda theme. Hanoi would not engage in discussion of gut issues.

—Hanoi continued to demur until during private talks with Vance and Habib indicated they might be willing to do something.

—In two months, U.S. got a basic understanding which included (1) cessation of U.S. bombing and all acts involving the use of force against the Territory of North Vietnam. At this point, Mr. Habib implied that the North Vietnamese understood that we would continue reconnaissance operations over North Vietnam. In response to the above, North Vietnam assured us that (1) they would respect the DMZ by not moving through it or massing north of it, (2) discontinue indiscriminate attacks on major cities, such as Saigon, Da Nang and Hue. Attacks included not only ground attacks but shelling and mortaring.

—While the North Vietnamese never subscribed to the above agreement, they "understood that if it were broken, talks could not be conducted." While there was no written agreement to this understanding, the North Vietnamese understood what we expected.

—U.S. side believe the Soviets moved in and applied some modest pressure at this point and also felt that the approaching U.S. election also exerted pressure on the North Vietnamese.

—Initially, Hanoi did not want the GVN in the picture. This was the genesis of our side-your side formula which was to permit a four-sided solution. As talks became more specific GVN became increasingly fearful and it was obvious that Thieu was under pressure.

—Our side-your side formula confirmed NLF participation and raised GVN fears.

The President then asked what was the U.S. relationship with the GVN at this point. Habib replied, "the only South Vietnamese who really knew what was going on was Thieu and a handful of his advisers. As we approached agreement, he realized he did not have the political support needed to accept the package."

The President then asked what was his main concern then? Habib replied, "two areas. First the provisions of the non-agreement itself and second, the fact that he might not have the political support to accept such a package but mostly he did not know what the specific role of the NLF would be under the formula." General Goodpaster added that another problem was the timing of the non-agreement. Thieu needed more time to get the support of the generals and we were pushing very hard.

The President then asked, "am I right that the main problem was the role of the NLF"? Habib replied, "correct, they could see a three on one situation developing and our agreement was finally arrived at using the our side-your side formula."

—Next the procedural wrangle started, the time barrier being the President's inauguration and the feeling on the other side that a settlement should be reached before the new President was installed. It was at this point that the Russians played a key role, suggesting that conversations be conducted on a two-sided basis. Habib conjectured that the Soviets may have applied a little arm twisting. Mr. Habib then reviewed where we are pointing out that he expected:

—A renewed period of intense propaganda sessions followed shortly by secret talks with DRV. Habib emphasized that the DRV has already agreed to meet at any time at any level.

—The outlook is for a circus arena, followed by private sessions which will get down to brass tacks.

—Negotiating team views the future in Paris as a subtle balance between political and military negotiating tracks.

—The U.S. perhaps to pursue the military track, such as withdrawals, ceasefire and DMZ.

—The North Vietnamese to seek a political solution providing for participation by the NLF in the south, combined with U.S. withdrawal.

—Habib states all subjects can be raised at the meeting.

—U.S. probably should initiate pressing for restitution of DMZ and mutual withdrawal. The North Vietnamese will probably insist on U.S. withdrawal, plus political entre initially through the so-called "peace cabinet" which could negotiate with the NLF, Thieu ultimately seeking a coalition government.

—NLF will carry main thrust of Communist political objective.

Mr. Habib then stated to the President, "what we need from you Mr. President are answers to the following questions:

1. What are the issues on which we should negotiate in order to secure the objectives you have defined?

2. What is the objective of the negotiations? Should it be: (a) withdrawal, (b) neutrality, (c) use DMZ as separate and distinct early negotiating objective, (d) what will be the treatment of the internal political solution in Vietnam, (e) what should be the level of hostilities as related to negotiations, i.e., the relationship of deescalation to negotiation, (f) how should we treat inspection, verification, supervision and guarantees, (g) how should we treat the question of Laos and Cambodia?

The above is the balanced mixture of political and military issues which will concern us in the negotiations, not only in their substantive content but also as these issues relate to one another in the sense of time." Habib stated that the North Vietnamese are worried about keeping strength on the ground to provide leverage. This will influence their timing.

The President then asked what the South Vietnamese think. Habib replied, "they consider themselves the victims of aggression from the north. If that aggression would cease, they believe they could work bilaterally with the NLF or any other opposition groups."

—The south wants to talk primarily to the DRV but have reluctantly agreed to talk to the NLF if need be.

—The heart of their problem is withdrawal by all Vietnamese who came down across the DMZ plus all those in South Vietnam who will not lay down their arms.

—The South Vietnamese are not yet in tandem with us on this withdrawal issue.

—In June, we had talks between Vance and Lo and in these initial talks the North Vietnamese seemed easy on the DMZ issue and most difficult on the withdrawal issue, claiming as Vietnamese they had the right to fight anywhere in Vietnam. Initially, they insisted that the present government and constitution must go but their line continued to change.

—First, insisted on patriotic coalition.

—Second, insisted on coalition less Thieu and Ky.

—Third, insisted on "peace cabinet" alternative.

—Fourth, they dropped their requirement for a reunification.

—Fifth, as talks continued, they expressed great concern about U.S. escalation.

—The North Vietnamese felt that we abrogated initial understanding when we moved military assets involved in northern operations to participate in southern operations. North Vietnamese indicated that Cambodia and Laos are not acceptable for early discussion.

—On the issue of supervision and guarantees while appealing to the Geneva Accords, the north does not want to discuss or provide for them. Hanoi insists on recognition of "political realities."

At this point, Dr. Kissinger asked if the North Vietnamese had not asked what we actually meant by the Manila formula.[8] Habib replied, "under authority from Washington, we said withdrawal under Manila indicated mutual withdrawal but that we would not be completely out until six months after they were completely out". The U.S. also indicated that the level of violence did not mean a total cessation of violation but assuming complete North Vietnamese withdrawal, "residual violence" would not be included under Manila.

The President then stated that he anticipated that the thrust of future negotiations would be done in private and that there would be no public agreement. Habib stated that this was probably true and that initially the North Vietnamese would prefer to negotiate down both tracks—mutual withdrawal and political settlement. At this point, General Wheeler stated that the north had not abided by the understandings on the DMZ. Habib replied that their violations had been minor, such as patrolling and reconnaissance, pointing out that the north had really never agreed on the reconnaissance issue and emphasizing that

[8] Reference is to paragraph 29 of the Manila Communiqué negotiated at the Manila Summit Conference of seven nations (Australia, South Korea, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, United States, and South Vietnam) held in the Philippines on October 24–25, 1966, to consider the conflict in South Vietnam. For text of the communiqué, see *Public Papers: Johnson, 1966,* Book II, pp. 1256–1259. See *Foreign Relations,* 1964–1968, vol. IV, Document 284, for a Department of Defense response to the communiqué.

they have abided by the provisions of the no-attack on major cities. General Wheeler retorted "yesterday they fired five times on our reconnaissance aircraft".

The President asked what was the GVN attitude. Habib replied the GVN want international guarantees and supervised withdrawal similar to that in 1954. They will insist on guarantees but might accept the pragmatic withdrawal, provided some border guarantees are offered.

The President then surmised "then from Thieu's viewpoint withdrawal without political settlement may be good, is that right?" Habib replied affirmatively. The President asked "can we do this without formal agreement? Then if this happens the GVN might be able to do the job and, of course, the north knows this and will insist on the dual track."

At this point, the President interrupted the proceedings to tell General Lincoln to get moving on the tornado problem in Mississippi. He also asked where Ky's wife came from. Bundy stated she was a southerner and the President replied, "she is a dandy".

The President thanked Mr. Bundy and Mr. Habib and they departed at 12:40 p.m.

The President stated:

—Obviously the questions that have been circulated will provide us a factual basis for proceeding with our investigation and we need the answers soon. We want to approach this problem without inhibitions as to where we have been. I want you to think of the problem as a new one. Seek ways in which we can change the game. We must know what we want. The gain could take many turns. I visualize that it could take two years to settle this thing. Give me your ideas.

At this point, he turned the meeting over to Dr. Kissinger who made the following points:

—A paper for consideration was drafted in New York without access to government machinery.[9] It can be refined when we get the answers to the questions.[10]

—There are many topics not included in the paper such as what are the world-wide implications, the domestic implications.

—Three options are the easiest to choose but depth and problems associated with these options must be fleshed out and judged.

—There are four outcomes or objectives, with three military postures ranging from escalation to reduction.

—The time relationship is important in this regard. For example, some reduction might suggest to the other side greater staying power.

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[9] See the attachment to Document 8.

[10] NSSM 1, January 21, Document 4. For a summary of responses to the questions, see Document 44.

An escalation of force might suggest to the other side that our staying power has been compressed.

—It is obvious that assured GVN control is the desirable objective but what are the costs and will it take longer to achieve than we are willing?

—If we can't accept this, we then turn to the other formulas which include risks. We could press for mutual withdrawal, achieve a military settlement and leave the political side to the Vietnamese.

—This could be a good initial approach to give us time to work out the others, i.e., political, plus the military or the political alone.

—It is very difficult to translate negotiating language to reality. This might be a good start.

—Should we go the political withdrawal route and, if so, I believe we would have to press the GVN to broaden its base. This is a two-edge sword.

—In sum, we should study and determine what kind of a settlement we would accept short of assured GVN control and to go down the political withdrawal route without knowing this could be disastrous.

—The next question is should we go the laundry list route or concentrate on one or more objectives.

—Should we establish priorities?

—Will deescalation help or hinder the process?

—I believe we need an early decision on whether or not the maximum or lessening pressure would be preferable. The team in Paris must know this. Similar judgments must be made on ceasefire. Doesn't this issue imply some form of political settlement? These are some of our questions that must be answered. While we have listed in the paper territorial settlement, this is so fundamental that I believe it would require basic changes. Other questions involved should the scale of military operations be an object of the early negotiations in Paris are:

—Would unilateral US reductions help or hurt?

—Should the team in Paris go for a large menu or focus on a few or give priorities to some?

—Do we wish to continue priority development of South Vietnamese army and police?

Many of the above questions can be decided without prejudice to subsequent negotiations. Group convened for luncheon and reconvened at 1400 hours.

The President asked whether or not it would be appropriate to seek the reestablishment of relationships with Cambodia. Ambassador Murphy commented that he thinks this would be a wise move.

The President stated, "I remember him [Sihanouk] and think we can do business. Perhaps I should write a note to him."

The President then discussed his views on the ceasefire, pointing out that in his view a guerilla war does not lend itself to a ceasefire. Secretary Rogers added, "no one wants to advance this as a negotiating position but what are we going to do if the other side raises it? How will we proceed from there? The public will give us problems in the event we did not have an acceptable reply." It was agreed that his

reply should follow the lines that a ceasefire without a withdrawal of forces would not be feasible in a guerilla conflict.

The President stated that the ceasefire issue should be stricken from the U.S. negotiating menu. General Goodpaster added that some work was done on this subject in Saigon. A staff paper[11] was prepared which concluded that a ceasefire should be related to or linked with force withdrawal and should start with the DMZ where withdrawals might be effected early. Since the DMZ is already in the U.S. negotiating position, linking ceasefire with that piece of territory might prove the feasible course of action.

The President summed up the issue by saying that this might be a good initial position. General Goodpaster added that, in essence, a ceasefire in South Vietnam constitutes a political settlement unless the GVN have the freedom to move anywhere in South Vietnam.

The President directed that the US think through its reaction to a ceasefire proposal from the other side, especially if Hanoi decides to drag the negotiations on they may raise this issue. Secretary Rogers agreed that this could happen, adding if they propose it without proclaiming it, then what is our reaction?

The President then asked for a recap of what the North Vietnamese negotiating position will be. It was agreed that they will press for U.S. withdrawal, seek a political settlement in the south, initially through a peace cabinet and ultimately a coalition government. They will probably follow two tracks to insure complete flexibility but with accent on the political settlement issue. Their basic objective would be to use negotiations to break the back of the current regime in South Vietnam. Recent efforts to establish front groups in South Vietnam by the Viet Cong have failed. Secretary Rogers said our maximum objective in our negotiations would, of course, be option (a) but our minimum objective should be to give South Vietnam an opportunity for time to insure their ultimate control of the government. General Goodpaster added Hanoi will initially also target on the U.S. domestic problem, i.e., U.S. public opinion, stating he is sure that a short range target of the north is to erode U.S. patience and willingness to continue. Secretary of Defense stated it appears we should get a grip on our world-wide objectives. We should know why the Russians are pressing Hanoi.

The President stated that is exactly why I want so much to know exactly where the Soviets stand on this issue. We may be closer to a limited goal than we realize, primarily because of what the Soviets have

[11] Goodpaster is referring to an early version of the cease-fire paper which was under consideration during 1969. For a summary of cease-fire proposals, see Document 152.

done. For that reason, I believe our best course of action would be to hang on. On the other hand, we do have the internal problem in the U.S. and it will be very difficult to continue without some change. We do have this problem. We thus need much from Paris as it affects our public attitudes at home. It also means we may have to take more risks in a settlement than we would prefer. While I am optimistic that it can be done, I am worried about our ability to sell it to the American people. In summary, maybe our best course would be to focus on mutual withdrawal. Secretary of State Rogers added, "I think we can expect more from the American people, especially if we could at some point reduce our commitment by perhaps 50,000."

The President stated if you can do this perhaps maybe we can buy time and perhaps some support. Secretary Rogers mentioned the Bunker telegram outlining his proposed style for American negotiations with emphasis on the patient approach (Saigon 1474).[12]

The President stated that he wished that there be absolutely no public or private criticism of the GVN, that he is tired of seeing them kicked around.

Dr. Kissinger suggested that we should consider ways of insuring that the Soviets know that we are determined to settle this issue one way or the other.

The President asked why the Soviets pressured Hanoi. General Wheeler replied, "economics, strengthening U.S.–Soviet ties, perhaps an effort to move in the Middle East." Ambassador Murphy asked in a tactical sense might it not be better to let the Soviets take the initiative. Dr. Kissinger stated, "I think the Soviets are nervous about you, Mr. President".

The President stated I think we will need about six months of strong military action, combined with a good public stance which reflects our efforts to seek peace. I feel we must not lose our nerve on this one. We should buy time with negotiations and continue to punish the enemy.

Under Secretary of State Richardson stated, "could we not also seek a small reduction of U.S. forces along the route, perhaps three or four months from now"?

The President asked why Thieu agreed to some U.S. force reduction. The Chairman replied, "to insure U.S. support and maybe also to help his own domestic image in the sense that it suggests that the government is progressing and their forces are growing. What we visualize is the replacement of certain U.S. units with certain GVN units. Reductions must be balanced at any rate. We are now talking at the staff

[12] Document 7.

level in Saigon on this issue. It would also involve the turnover of U.S. equipment of certain types to the Vietnamese."

The President stated, "this might be the thing to do in four months or so, after the initial negotiations are underway. Maybe we had better cut out the bilateral staff talks and conduct this as a unilateral move in four months or so. It certainly should not be done in the context of the negotiating framework". General Goodpaster stated, "I would be most reluctant to commit [the] US on this at this time." The Viet Cong are concerned with progress in the pacification area. General Abrams may be able to push up some reductions earlier than May or June. If we can confirm this, we may be ready in a couple of months.

The President stated if we do this it must be held very closely until the time of execution. The President said our press line on the troop withdrawal issue is important. Dr. Kissinger stated you might say that this issue is under full factual review by the NSC but that we will never keep more troops in Vietnam than are necessary.

The President stated he might ask in return, "what is the most effective way to bring the war to a conclusion? Our interest now is to get peace and I shouldn't comment now on the troop withdrawal issue since our position has been stated clearly in Paris". The President then turned to the issue of the political settlement, stating that he saw little hope for such a settlement. We might end up with a settlement of some type without a formal agreement, a sort of mutual accommodation in which either side is not deprived of the hope of ultimate success. The south must know that we are with them. The north thinks they are going to win anyway. We must leave some hope on both sides. When you lose your nerve, you can lose the basket. The mix of actions should be something like this. We talk hard in private but with an obvious peaceful public stance, seeking to gain time, initially giving the South Vietnamese a chance to strengthen the regime and add to the pacification effort while punishing the Viet Cong. Within three or four months bring home a few troops unilaterally as a separate and distinct action from the Paris negotiations, and as a ploy for more time domestically, while we continue to press at the negotiating table for a military settlement.

Under Secretary of State Richardson asked, "yes, but can we hang on with heavy draft calls?" General Wheeler added that our draft calls in the next few months will be high.

The President then said, "yes and there is a question of our European troop levels, the 6 Division issue." General Wheeler commented "the Army is at the end of its two-year cycle. Consequently, draft calls will increase."

The President asked when the new pay bill would go into effect and General Wheeler replied about July 1st.

The President then said, "what about an all volunteer Army? I would like something on this".

The President then asked about the issue of prisoner exchange. Dr. Kissinger stated this is in the opening statement. The President then turned to Secretary Laird and stated, "I would like your views on the draft issue." Ambassador Murphy raised the issue of U.S. covert efforts to discredit the Hanoi leadership group.

The President directed that the 303 Committee look at this very carefully stating he was tired of permitting this kind of thing to go on and registering concern about groups in the U.S. who supported Hanoi.

The President asked again about the feasibility of sending a letter to Sihanouk with the view towards reopening diplomatic relations.

The President then asked where our contact with the Soviets is at present. Secretary Rogers said the Soviet Ambassador here in Washington but also the Soviet Ambassador in Paris. The President stated, "I would like to get some recommendations on getting to the Soviets. In a tactical sense, we need a solution to bridge the gap but we also need strategic help in making Hanoi change its policy, a sort of carrot and stick approach. These efforts should be centered here in Washington. Talking on the strategic arms issue is certainly the carrot. We should get planning started on this immediately."

Dr. Kissinger added actions can be undertaken which look threatening which worry the Soviets but actually may not occur. These also may help. General Goodpaster stated if we are to contact Sihanouk, we should discuss our concern about Sihanoukville and the movement of North Vietnamese arms through that port. Dr. Kissinger stated, "Sihanouk's main value is the fact that he mirrors the attitudes of the Asians. He is a sort of barometer. You can be sure he will never stick his neck out."

The President said, "another carrot with respect to the Soviets would *be* the Nonproliferation Treaty. As you know, we will go forward after discussing this here—first with the Soviets and then with our legislative leaders a week later. This will be a great symbol."

The President then stated that he had a press conference on Monday[13] and emphasized that he did not like to use the term "no comment".

The meeting concluded at 2:20 p.m.

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[13] On Monday, January 27, the President held his first press conference; see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 15–23.

resolved. Until it is, the survival of Laos as a sovereign and independent nation remains in peril.

2. The war is a vicious cycle. So long as it continues, the country must maintain a large military establishment. So long as the country must maintain a large military establishment, the budget will remain hopelessly out of balance and revenues will never suffice to permit economic independence or progressive development.

3. While this same military establishment is the prime instrument for defending the country and has done better than we expected, it has also built up institutionalized privilege, corruption, and law-evasion, which, in turn, alienate the villagers from the government which the military represent. Therefore, while intended to defend the central government and advance its interests, the military end by corrupting its rule and corroding its prestige. Thus the enemy, merely by posing a threat to the government, succeeds in weakening the authority of that government.

4. The Lao had genuinely hoped, when the Paris negotiations began, that peace would be restored in Southeast Asia before the current dry season. They felt grievously deceived when this hope was dashed and had little stomach for the fight this year. Hence, they gave up more terrain this season than was truly taken from them by force of arms. It remains to be seen how much more will be lost in the six or seven weeks which remain in the dry season.

5. But, no matter what situation we find when the rains come, I think we should be under no illusions as to the future. The Lao have suffered enormously under all these years of war. Among the Meo, for example, practically an entire generation of fighting men has been wiped out.[2] It is pitiful to see their units so heavily manned by young boys of 14 and 15 years of age.

6. In fact, it is, in my judgment, a miracle that the Lao have fought so sturdily for so long and that the fabric of their primitive society has not totally collapsed prior to this time. They have been held together by spit and straw, aid, encouragement, and hope.

7. But all this is drawing to a close. If the North Vietnamese push as heavily next dry season as they have this year, and if they abandon

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[2] CIA officers drew a similar picture in a weekly meeting of March 13 between representatives of EAP of State and DDP of CIA. According to a March 18 memorandum by Trueheart to Hughes: "CIA drew a rather bleak picture of the outlook for friendly forces during the remainder of the dry season and stressed that there is no possibility of further strengthening Laotian ground forces, conventional or guerrilla, from indigenous resources." While tactical air support had blunted and delayed the North Vietnamese offensive, CIA officers were convinced that only better and more ground troops could halt the advance. (Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, EAP General CA, Country Files, EA Weekly Meetings, 1969)

their political restraints, I doubt that Laos could successfully weather another offensive without losing some vital areas of its territory and without severe strain on the stability of the current political leadership. Therefore, in my view, the period between now and next November is critical.

8. There obviously are conclusions to be drawn from this evaluation. As I understand it, my new responsibilities in Washington will, in part, concern those conclusions. In view of that fact, I will refrain from stating any of them in this message. When I reach the clear, safe atmosphere on the Potomac, I will not wish to have my vision impaired by any myopic observations which I might have written from the miasma of the Mekong.

9. Ave atque vale.

Sullivan

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44. Summary of Interagency Responses to NSSM 1[1]

Washington, March 22, 1969.

THE VIETNAM SITUATION

The responses to the questions posed regarding Vietnam[2] show agreement on some matters as well as very substantial differences of opinion within the U.S. Government on many aspects of the Vietnam situation. While there are some divergencies on the facts, the sharpest differences arise in the interpretation of those facts, the relative weight to be given them, and the implications to be drawn. In addition, there remain certain areas where our information remains inadequate.

There is general agreement, assuming we follow our current strategy, on the following:

—(1) The GVN and allied position in Vietnam has been strengthened recently in many respects.

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[1] National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–122, NSSM Files, NSSM 1 Response. Top Secret. Davis sent copies of this summary to Agnew, Rogers, Laird, and Director of Emergency Preparedness Lincoln under cover of a March 22 memorandum. Copies were also sent to Richardson, General Wheeler, and Helms.

[2] See the attachment to Document 4.

—(2) The RVNAF alone cannot now, or in the foreseeable future, stand up to both the VC and sizable North Vietnamese forces.

—(3) The GVN has improved its political position in certain respects. It remains weakest, and the VC/NLF strongest, in rural areas. It is not clear whether the GVN and other non-communist groups would be able to survive a peaceful competition with the NLF for political power in South Vietnam.

—(4) The enemy have suffered some reverse but they have not changed their essential objectives and they have sufficient strength to pursue these objectives. We are not attriting enemy forces faster than they can recruit or infiltrate. Soviet and Chinese supplies have enabled the enemy to carry on despite our operations.

—(5) The enemy basically controls both sides' casualty rates. They can still launch major offensives, though not with 1968 Tet effectiveness or impact.

—(6) The enemy is in Paris for a variety of reasons, including a desire to pursue his objectives at lower costs. He is not there primarily out of weakness, but rather from a realization that a military victory is not attainable as long as U.S. forces remain in SVN, yet a victory in the political area is very possible.

—(7) Hanoi is attempting to chart a course basically independent of Moscow and Peking.

Within these parameters of agreement there are different overall perspectives. There is some shifting between agencies or shading of their positions depending on the issues, so it would be somewhat misleading to categorize them overall. Agency positions will be clear in the remainder of the paper.

A composite of more hopeful views would look as follows:

—an overall allied momentum on various fronts is in large part responsible for the enemy's presence at the negotiating table and lower profile on the battlefield.

—U.S. military operations have been increasingly effective and with less constraints could be even more so.

—there are more South Vietnamese fighting with better effectiveness.

—recent gains in pacification represent real advances against the VC and should hold up.

—the GVN is more stable than at any time since Diem and is making good political progress.

—one cannot forecast "victory," within current constraints, but our negotiators should know that the tides are favorable.

A composite of more skeptical views would shape up as follows:

—there have been recent improvements in the allied position but these have produced essentially a stalemate.

—enemy activities in Paris and Vietnam do not flow primarily from weakness.

—Allied military efforts—short of unacceptable risks of widening the war—cannot now or in the foreseeable future bring the enemy to his knees.

—great problems confront the larger, better equipped South Vietnamese forces.

—pacification gains are inflated and fragile.

—inadequate political progress is being made.

—while our negotiators are in a stronger position with regard to the military situation, a compromise settlement is the most likely outcome for Vietnam and our focus needs to be increasingly on political actions.

Thus there are U.S. Government disagreements on a number of questions including the following:

—In explaining reduced enemy military presence and activities, some give greater weight to allied military pressure, others to the enemy's political motives and tactics.

—The improvements in RVNAF are considered much more significant by some agencies than others.

—Some observers see no cutback in U.S. forces possible without a proportionate reduction in combat capability, while others see a certain amount of "fat" in current U.S. force levels.

—Some underline advancements in the pacification program, while others are extremely skeptical both of the evaluation system used to measure progress and of the solidity of recent advances.

—In looking at the political scene, some accent recent improvements while others highlight the necessities of continued and accelerated political actions by the GVN to overcome remaining obstacles if the GVN is to have a reasonable chance to compete with the VC/NLF/PRP [*PRG?*].

—Some respondents assign much greater effectiveness to past and current bombing in Vietnam and Laos than others.

—Some believe, and others totally disagree, that a vigorous interdiction campaign against land and sea supply routes in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia could choke off enough Soviet and Chinese supplies to make North Vietnam give up the struggle.

In addition to these differences, there are major intelligence community disagreements concerning:

—the enemy order of battle;

—the importance of Cambodia (in particular Sihanoukville) as a supply channel for the enemy;

—the impact of possible Vietnam outcomes on Southeast Asia.

Following is a summary of the major conclusions and disagreements about each of six broad areas with regard to Vietnam: the negotiating environment, enemy capabilities, RVNAF capabilities, pacification, South Vietnamese politics, and U.S. military operations.

1. Negotiating Environment
(Questions 1–4)

(Reasons for the enemy presence in Paris. Impact of Vietnam on Southeast Asia. Influence of Moscow and Peking on Hanoi. Possible factions in North Vietnamese leadership.)

There is general U.S. Government agreement that Hanoi is in Paris for a variety of motives, including a desire to pursue his objectives at lower costs, but he is not there primarily out of weakness; that Hanoi is charting a course independent of Moscow, which favors negotiations, and of Peking, which opposes them, despite the DRV reliance on its allies for supplies; and that our knowledge of possible political factions among North Vietnamese leaders is imprecise. There continues disagreement about the impact on Southeast Asia of various outcomes in Vietnam.

Why is the DRV in Paris?

Various possible North Vietnamese motives for negotiating are discussed, and there is agreement that the DRV is in Paris for mixed reasons. No U.S. agency responding to the questions believes that the primary reason the DRV is in Paris is weakness. All consider it unlikely that Hanoi came to Paris either to accept a face-saving formula for defeat or to give the U.S. a face-saving way to withdraw. There is agreement that Hanoi has been subject to heavy military pressure and that a desire to end the losses and costs of war was an element in Hanoi's decision. The consensus is that Hanoi believes that it can persist long enough to obtain a relatively favorable negotiated compromise. The respondents agree that the DRV is in Paris to negotiate withdrawal of U.S. forces, to undermine GVN–USG relations and to provide a better chance for VC victory in the South. State believes that Hanoi's increasing realization that it could not win the conflict by continued military and political pressure also played a major role. Hanoi's ultimate goal of a unified Vietnam under its control has not changed.

Vietnam Impact on Southeast Asia

There continues to be sharp debate between and within agencies about the effect of the outcome in Vietnam on other nations. The most recent NIE on this subject (NIE 50–68)[3] states that a settlement which

[3] See *Foreign Relations,* 1964–1968, vol. VII, Document 220.

would result in the communists taking control of the Government in South Vietnam, not immediately but within a year or two, would be likely to have adverse psychological effects throughout the area and bring Cambodia and Laos into Hanoi's orbit at a fairly early state, but that these developments would not necessarily unhinge the rest of Southeast Asia.

The NIE dissenters believe that an unfavorable settlement would stimulate the communists to become more active elsewhere and that it will be difficult to resist making some accommodation to the pressure then generated. They believe, in contrast to the Estimate, these adjustments would be relatively swift and insensitive to subsequent U.S. policy.

The assessments rest more on judgments and assumptions than on tangible and convincing evidence, and there are major disagreements within the same Departments. Within the Defense Department, OSD and DIA support the conclusions of the NIE, while Army, Navy and Air Force Intelligence dissent. Within State, the Bureau of Intelligence supports the NIE while the East Asian Bureau dissents. CIA supports the NIE conclusions while Embassy Saigon generally sides with the dissenters.

Factors entering into the judgments are estimates of (1) Hanoi's and Peking's behavior after the settlement; (2) U.S. posture and policy in the regions; (3) Asian leaders' estimates of future U.S. policy; (4) the reactions of the area's non-communist leaders to the outcome in Vietnam; (5) vulnerabilities of the various governments to insurgency or subversion; and (6) the strengths of opposition groups within each state.

All reject the view that an unfavorable settlement in Vietnam will inevitably be followed by communist takeovers outside Indo China and there is agreement that much will depend on what the countries do for themselves and the other factors mentioned.

Moscow and Peking Influence

There is general governmental agreement on this question. Peking opposes negotiations while Moscow prefers an early negotiated settlement on terms as favorable as possible to Hanoi. Neither Peking nor Moscow have exerted heavy pressure on Hanoi and for various reasons they are unlikely to do so, although their military and economic assistance give them important leverage. CIA notes that "in competing for influence Peking and Moscow tend to cancel out each other." For its own reasons, Hanoi's tendency in the last year has been in the Soviet direction. However, the Hanoi leadership is attempting to chart its own independent course, despite its reliance on its allies for supplies.

Hanoi Leadership Factions

There is agreement that knowledge of the existence and significance of possible factions within the Hanoi leadership is imprecise. There are differences of opinion within the leadership on tactics as opposed to ultimate objectives but there are not stable "Moscow" and "Peking" factions. The Hanoi leadership will form different alignments on different issues. The attempts by the agencies to ascertain the position of various North Vietnamese leaders on specific issues shows the imprecision of our information and analysis. For example, different agencies set forth sharply conflicting identifications of the position of individual leaders such as Giap on particular questions.

2. The Enemy
(Questions 5–10)

(Explanation of recent enemy military activities. Attrition of enemy forces. Enemy order of battle, offensive capabilities, supply channels.)

Analyses of various enemy tactics and capabilities reveal both significant agreements and sharp controversies within the Government. Among the major points of consensus:

—A combination of military pressures and political tactics explains recent enemy withdrawals and lower levels of activity.

—Under current rules of engagement, the enemy's manpower pool and infiltration capabilities can outlast allied attrition efforts indefinitely, although the quality of enemy personnel suffers.

—The enemy basically controls both sides' casualty rates.

—The enemy, if he is willing to take the risks, can still launch major offensives, although not at 1968 Tet levels or with dramatic effect.

Major controversies include:

—CIA, DIA and State assign much higher figures to the enemy Order of Battle than MACV. They also quantify additional categories that are not part of the Order of Battle but are judged to be significant in terms of the enemy's political/security capabilities.

—MACV/CINCPAC/JCS and Saigon consider Cambodia an important enemy supply channel. A joint CIA–DIA–State team acknowledges the importance of Cambodia as a source of food supplies but feels that the Laotian supply corridor is the primary channel for the movement of military supplies (arms and ammunition).

Recent Enemy Activities

Military pressures and political considerations are viewed as responsible for the withdrawal of some North Vietnamese units into Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries during the summer and fall of

1968. Military factors included heavy enemy losses, effective allied tactics, material shortages, and bad weather. Political factors centered on enemy efforts to make a political virtue out of a military necessity in a talk-fight strategy to influence the Paris negotiations.

Although the question asked of agencies indicated some doubt, all respondents agreed that the enemy did undertake a third-wave offensive during the week of August 17. At a cost of 5,500 enemy KIA, the enemy tripled the number of his attacks to 100 per week and his attacks during the second half of August were about one half the level of his "second-wave" offensive in May. Prisoners and captured documents reported the goal of achieving a general uprising and overthrow of the GVN. The lack of greater success was attributed to: the enemy's economy-of-forces tactics; his desire to demonstrate initiative but at reduced risk; effective U.S. spoiling actions and increased intelligence; and the continuing deterioration of enemy Post-Tet capabilities in terms of quality of men and officers and lack of training.

In contrast to the implication of a question posed to the agencies, all evaluators except the Department of State and Embassy Saigon state that VC guerrillas and local forces are *not* relatively dormant and that levels of harassment and terror remain high. The Embassy notes "the current low level of guerrilla and local forces activity," and State agrees there has been a "relative decline." Both agree that among the reasons are the heavy casualty rates, manpower problems and loss of cadres. But according to Embassy evaluators, the main factor is that "the VC are husbanding their resources to give themselves the option of a 'climaxing' offensive." State notes that to support the VC counter-pacification campaign and their "Liberation Committees," "the Communists may feel that a demonstrably strong blow against the pacification program would have wide repercussions, particularly at a time of optimistic Allied claims about pacification successes."

NVN/VC Manpower

It is generally agreed that the NVN/VC manpower pool is sufficiently large to meet the enemy's replenishment needs over an extended period of time within the framework of current rules of engagement. According to the JCS, "The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong have access to sufficient manpower to meet their replenishment needs—even at the high 1968 loss rate of some 291,000—for at least the next several years. . . . Present operations are not outrunning the enemy's ability to replenish by recruitment or infiltration." Enemy losses of 291,000 in 1968 were roughly balanced by infiltration and recruitment of 298,000. North Vietnamese manpower assets include 1.8 million physically fit males aged 15–34 of whom 45% are in the regular forces (475,000) and paramilitary (400,000) forces; 120,000 physically fit males reach draft age each year and 200,000 military and labor

personnel have been freed by the bombing halt from defensive work. The potential manpower pool in SVN is estimated at half a million men and recruitment, while down, is running at approximately 3,500 per month. Enemy maintenance of the current commitment of 300,000 new men per year requires that the Allies inflict losses of 25,000 KIA per month, or 7,000 more than the current rate. MACV considers current Allied force levels adequate to inflict such casualties if the enemy chooses to engage.

The enemy's employment of economy of forces tactics since the fall of 1968 and intelligence evidence reflect the enemy's concern about his 1968 level of losses, which amounted to nearly 100% yearly attrition of his full-time fighters in the South and, if continued, could lead to nearly total North Vietnamization of main force units in South Vietnam. He is judged unlikely to undertake the heavy losses of a major offensive unless he believes he could thereby achieve a breakthrough in Allied will-power in Vietnam or Paris. Yet, without a VC/NVA offensive on the scale of Tet 1968, the JCS believe "it will be exceedingly difficult in 1969 for allied forces to attrite the enemy at 1968 levels."

Control of NVA/VC Attrition

There is general agreement with the JCS statement, "The enemy, by the type action he adopts, has the predominant share in determining enemy attrition rates." Three fourths of the battles are at the enemy's choice of time, place, type and duration. CIA notes that less than three percent of about 1.7 million Allied small unit operations conducted in the last two years resulted in contact with the enemy and, when ARVN is surveyed, the percentage drops to one tenth of one per cent. There are inaccuracies and variations in service reporting but these figures indicate the general magnitude. With his safe havens in Laos and Cambodia and with carefully chosen tactics, the enemy has been able during the last four years to double his combat forces, double the level of infiltration and increase the scale and intensity of the main force war even while bearing heavy casualties. MACV/CINCPAC/JCS consider that a resumption of full scale hostilities with a relaxation of rules of engagement would result in depletion of the enemy's manpower and war-making resources, forcing him to recognize the futility of continuing the war or to face the inevitable destruction of his capability to continue the war.

VC/NVA Order of Battle

There is considerable disagreement concerning the estimates of Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Order of Battle. Both MACV/CINCPAC and CIA/DIA—the only two groups making independent estimates—include the same elements in their estimate of the military threat that is quantified in the Order of Battle. When these two estimates are made

comparable in terms of major units included or excluded, the CIA/DIA estimate of the elements making up the enemy's military threat is at least 35,000 and possibly 125,000 greater than the MACV/CINCPAC estimate.

There is no great controversy over the size of the Political Infrastructure. The somewhat larger CIA/DIA estimate (see the table) allows for the inclusion of certain supporting staffs excluded from the MACV/CINCPAC estimate.

The CIA/DIA estimates of enemy strength include an additional category made up of the Self Defense Forces and Assault Youth, estimated at 90,000 to 140,000 persons. They are not judged to be part of the military threat but are quantified because they are partially armed, perform military support functions, and are a principal target of the Allied pacification and security program. MACV/CINCPAC do not quantify these forces.

The Department of State, noting that the MACV estimates results from adding up so-called "hard" field intelligence figures for main force and local and guerrilla forces, believes CIA's extrapolation is developed more realistically from the totality of evidence. OSD presents both the MACV/CINCPAC and CIA/DIA estimates, pointing out that the differences in overall strength presented by the two are not sufficient to cause a change in overall strategy. CIA feels, however, that the difference could be significant if the true military threat is closer to the higher end of the range estimated by CIA/DIA. CIA also feels that the difference in estimates could have a significant bearing on peace terms and in judgments of the residual military capabilities of VC forces should the NVA forces be withdrawn. On the following page is a table laying out these different estimates.

Recruiting figures vary for reasons similar to the divergencies on strength. Monthly VC recruitment is estimated by CIA at 8,500 in 1966, 7,500 in 1967, double the 1967 rate during the first quarter of 1968 and dropping sharply after the Tet offensive to approximately 3,500 per month. CIA estimates a smaller drop than MACV. Saigon reports that the last six months reflect a reduced level of recruitment, citing as evidence GVN expansion, reduction in VC standards, VC attempts to improve existing cadre, increased use of NVA fillers in VC units, and GVN mobilization effectiveness.

NVA/VC Capabilities for a Large-Scale Offensive

All agree that (as recent events have borne out) the enemy has a capability for a large scale offensive against cities, bases and/or villages in the Accelerated Pacification Program if he wishes to bear the heavy casualties that would result. Allied countermeasures and preemptive capabilities make it highly unlikely that such an attack would

COMPARISON OF ESTIMATES OF MILITARY-POLITICAL STRENGTHS IN SOUTH VIETNAM[4]

Military Threat	*DIA/CIA*	*MACV/CINCPAC*
Combat forces		
NVA	105,000 to 125,000[a]	92,000[b]
VC	45,000 to 55,000	37,000
Subtotal	150,000 to 180,000	129,000
Administrative services		
NVA	10,000 to 20,000	
VC	45,000 to 55,000	
Subtotal	55,000 to 75,000	42,000
Guerrillas	60,000 to 100,000[c]	59,000
Total military threat	265,000 to 355,000	230,000
Infrastructure	80,000 to 100,000	83,000
Other irregular organizations	90,000 to 140,000[d]	N.A.[e]

[a] An estimated 20,000 to 25,000 of the NVA troops are serving in VC units. This estimate excludes an estimated 28,000 NVA troops deployed north of the DMZ. [Footnote in the source text.]

[b] This is a MACV/CINCPAC estimate of 106,000 NVA troops adjusted to exclude the same elements excluded from the CIA/DIA estimate because they are north of the DMZ. [Footnote in the source text.]

[c] DIA/CIA believe that the military threat represented by guerrilla forces is not on a parity with that of main and local forces because probably only about one-third of the guerrillas are well-armed, trained, and organized. [Footnote in the source text.]

[d] Includes self defense, secret self defense, and assault youth forces. [Footnote in the source text.]

[e] MACV and CINCPAC do not quantify these forces. [Footnote in the source text.]

[4] Secret.

have an impact on the scale of the Tet offensive of 1968. Further the enemy would weigh the effect of such an offensive on the Paris talks and on the risk of touching off a resumption of bombing in North Vietnam.

NVA/VC Supply Channels

There is general agreement that the main channels for military supplies reaching enemy forces in the northern areas of South Vietnam (I, and northern II Corps) are the Laos Panhandle and the DMZ. Disagreement exists as to the channel of supplies for III Corps and southern II Corps. MACV points to Cambodia, believing that no large shipments of ordnance are coming into III or IV Corps and southern II Corps via Laos and that Cambodia has during the last two years become a major source of supplies for these regions. MACV has estimated that some 10,000 tons of arms and ammunition have gone through Sihanoukville to the border between October 1967 and September 1968 for the use of the enemy in III, IV, and parts of II Corps. CIA and State disagree strongly with that estimate, and point out the lack of reliable information on the volume of munitions shipments entering Sihanoukville as well as the volume moved across the border. CIA also points out that the volume of Communist supplies flowing through Laos has been more than adequate to cover the external requirements of all Communist forces in South Vietnam. CIA, nevertheless, does not contest the MACV view that Communist forces in IV Corps also are supplied principally from Cambodia, but points out that a substantial part of the munitions supplies moved into this area do not move through Cambodian-controlled channels.

OSD summarizes without comment the national level CIA/DIA estimates for total enemy external daily supply requirements of 80 tons: 34 tons come from Laos, 14 tons across the DMZ, and 32 tons from Cambodia (of which 29 tons involve mainly food and other noncombatant goods).

3. The South Vietnamese Armed Forces (Questions 10A–13)

(Extent and types of RVNAF improvements. Present and future RVNAF capabilities against various threats, with and without U.S. support. Changes required of RVNAF.)

In general, points of disagreement among U.S. agencies on the RVNAF capabilities are more numerous than points of agreement. There is consensus that the RVNAF is getting larger, better equipped and somewhat more effective. All agree that it could not now, or in the foreseeable future, handle both the VC and sizable NVA forces without U.S. combat support. On other major points there are sharp differences. The military community gives much greater weight to

RVNAF statistical improvements while OSD highlights remaining obstacles and CIA points out that qualitative factors must also be considered in evaluating the RVNAF. Paradoxically, MACV/CINCPAC/JCS see RVNAF as being less capable against the VC alone than do CIA and State.

RVNAF Capabilities Against the Enemy

The Vietnamese Armed Forces (RVNAF) are being increased in size and re-equipped to improve their ground combat capability. The best measure of this improvement is the RVNAF's expected performance against a given enemy threat. However, there is a paradoxical divergence in agency views on the RVNAF ability to handle the internal VC threat without U.S. assistance. State (both EA and INR) and CIA—who generally rate RVNAF improvement and effectiveness lowest among the respondents, and who accept the highest estimates of overall VC strength—believe that, "Without any US support, . . . ARVN would at least be able to hold its own and make some progress against the VC unsupported by the NVA" (i.e. the VC without NVA fillers, though with regroupees and matériel support). CIA caveats this judgment, however, by noting that a critical factor, and one almost impossible to judge, would be the effect on the will of both the ARVN and VC of a pullout of North Vietnamese and U.S. forces.

In contrast is the view of MACV/CINCPAC/JCS, who rate RVNAF improvement and effectiveness highest and who accept the lowest estimates of VC armed strength. The military community, nevertheless, believes that without U.S. combat support, in opposing VC main and local forces without any NVA units or fillers, RVNAF "would have to reduce the number of offensive operations and adopt more of a defensive posture," resulting in "loss of control by the Government of Vietnam over substantial rural areas." Thus, MACV/CINCPAC/JCS believe that RVNAF would not be able to cope with purely indigenous VC forces without U.S. combat support until the completion of the modernization program in 1972.

OSD, however, believes RVNAF's capability against VC forces is closely associated with time. If most U.S. forces withdraw now, RVNAF's newly gained confidence may collapse; however, RVNAF capabilities should increase over time provided that a number of major reforms are made in addition to the current modernization program, if even this goal is to be met. "Without major reforms within the RVNAF command and selection system, however, it is unlikely that the RVNAF, as presently organized and led, will ever constitute an effective political or military counter to the Viet Cong." OSD also believes that some reduction of U.S. forces would give impetus to RVNAF to make the required changes.

All agencies agree that RVNAF could not, either now or even when fully modernized, handle both the VC and a sizable level of NVA forces without U.S. combat support in the form of air, helicopters, artillery, logistics and major ground forces.

RVNAF Improvements

There is consensus that RVNAF forces are now much larger (826,000) than in December 1967 (743,000) and will be further increased to 876,000, with the greatest increases in manpower given to the Popular and Regional Forces needed for local security. The RVNAF is also better equipped. All regular combat units have M16 rifles and are beginning to receive increases in their own artillery and helicopter support. Regional and Popular Forces (393,000 of the total RVNAF strength in December 1968) have 100,000 M16 rifles and are scheduled to receive 150,000 more in 1969. MACV has stepped up his training efforts by forming 353 mobile teams in 1968 to train and advise the militia.

Moreover, all agencies agree that overall RVNAF capabilities, number of operations and effectiveness increased during 1968. Data presents a mixed picture in some areas, but it is clear that the larger number of enemy killed by RVNAF resulted from better effectiveness (more kills per 1000 troops, along with higher kill ratios) as well as increased force size. In spite of these statistical improvements (which CIA in particular finds unreliable indicators), RVNAF is best thought of as a force which enlarged its contribution in 1968 within a total allied effort which also expanded. The modernization program, just beginning to have a high impact in the field, promises that results will continue to increase so long as RVNAF receives backbone in the form of a U.S. ground combat presence.

RVNAF Problems

All agree that RVNAF faces severe motivation, leadership and desertion problems. The differences lie in assessing the magnitude and impact these problems have on the prognosis for RVNAF's future. The continuing motivation problem involves loyalty to the government, getting RVNAF troops to fight and doing the right things to improve relations between soldiers and the Vietnamese people. The officer problem is mixed in politics and little has been done to correct it. Poor leadership and motivation contribute to regular ground combat forces deserting (net) at an annual rate of 34% of their strength (gross rate for 1/3 of the divisions is more than 50%). Total RVNAF desertions (net) are equivalent to losing one ARVN division per month.

Thus, OSD does not believe that current expansion and reequipment programs are sufficient to make RVNAF into an effective fighting force unless major political and military actions, which are not now emphasized, are taken. OSD considers essential action to recognize and

reward combat leadership and development of a favorable attitude by the military towards their own people which will result in acceptance and support of the government by its citizens.

JCS, CINCPAC, and MACV recognize leadership and motivational problems, and believe that substantial progress has been made in these areas since 1965, and with current remedial programs RVNAF is making reasonable progress toward development as a self-sufficient force able to hold its own against an internal VC threat. CIA feels that RVNAF is making limited progress, despite the fact that many of its weaknesses are uncorrected. OSD and State also see limited progress and note that many RVNAF weaknesses remain uncorrected. (Within State, INR is less hopeful than the East Asian Regional Bureau.)

4. Pacification
(Questions 14–20)

(Changes in the security situation in Vietnam. Future prospects. Strength of the Viet Cong and efforts against them.)

Two well-defined and divergent views emerged from the agencies on the pacification situation in South Vietnam. One view is held by MACV and Embassy Saigon and endorsed by CINCPAC and JCS. The other view is that of OSD, CIA and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) in State. (The East Asian bureau in State lies somewhere in between.) The two views are profoundly different in terms of factual interpretation and policy implications. Both views agree on the obstacles to improvement and complete success. What distinguishes one view from the other is each's assessment of the *magnitude* of the problem, and the assessment of the degree of improvement likely to take place in the near future.

The Two Views

The first group, consisting of MACV/JCS/Saigon, maintains that "at the present time, the security situation is better than any time during period in question," i.e., 1961–1968. MACV cites a "dramatic change in the security situation," and finds that the GVN controls three-fourths of the population. JCS suggests that the GVN will control 90% of the population in 1969. The second group, OSD/CIA and INR in State, on the other hand, is more cautious and pessimistic; their view is not inconsistent with another Tet-offensive-like shock in the countryside—for example, wiping out the much-touted gains of the 1968 Accelerated Pacification Program, or with more gradual erosion. Representing the second group's view, OSD arrives at the following conclusions:

(1) "The portions of the SVN rural population aligned with the VC and aligned with the GVN are apparently the same today as in 1962: 5,000,000 GVN aligned and nearly 3,000,000 VC aligned."

(2) "At the present, it appears that at least 50% of the total rural population is subject to significant VC presence and influence."

CIA agrees, and INR in State goes even further, saying:

"Our best estimate is that the VC have a significant effect on at least two-thirds of the rural population."

The Major Issues

The substance of the argument is evident in the chart on the next page.[5] Using HES data for 1967–1968, the chart shows that the first group's interpretation leaves only 26.7% of SVN's population to be pacified as of November 1968. The second group thinks 41.3% of the population was yet to be pacified. More importantly, the second view shows little pacification progress over the period except for the gains of the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC) program, and they are skeptical about these gains. State (INR), OSD, and CIA maintain that the October–December APC acquisition of 9.4% of the population for the GVN is a fragile claim because these gains were achieved by spreading our military and administrative resources thinly over contested areas. These agencies, therefore, argue that the APC gains have stood so far only because the VC/NLF have not challenged them, and they believe it is "quite likely" the gains will be contested in the coming months.

If the APC gains and those other gains secured in the wake of the fall NVN withdrawals are removed the substance of the long-term debate emerges clearly. The chart then shows that according to the second view, thus modified, pacification programs have registered no progress over 1967–68. The first view sees significant progress over the 1967–68 period. It is further seen that the second view placed the chart's relatively secure line much lower. For example, in August 1968, the first group says 65.8% of the population was under GVN control; the second group places only 49.9% in the GVN category.

The source of this difference is a derivative of a wider dispute over the value of the HES composite indicator which is really an average of eighteen indicators, indiscriminately mixing security factors with development factors and not assessing appropriate weighting for each indicator. The second group arrives at their estimate by allocating a portion of the first group's GVN controlled population to the contested category. They do this by breaking out the "grey area" population on the basis of military and political activity instead of the composite HES indicator. According to their view, in the fall of 1968 at least one-half of South Vietnam's rural population was subject to a significant VC/NLF presence; for the first group, this figure was approximately

[5] Not reproduced here.

one-third. The East Asian Bureau in State takes a middle position and believes that the "relatively secure" population figures derived from HES should not be accepted in toto.

By neither view can pacification be said to have progressed greatly in the last three years, at least, prior to the last few months. This conclusion is emphasized in the OSD view if consideration is given to the fact that about the same number of people have been brought under GVN control by population migration as have been by pacification gains. Nor does either view promise anything close to complete success within two to three years. MACV/JCS anticipates snowballing gains in the future, but other agencies note that stalemating of GVN pacification efforts could make the rural population more ready to accommodate with the NLF. The East Asian Bureau of State believes that the moment for pacification gains was not opportune until late 1967 and that we can anticipate further progress in the next two years.

It is noteworthy that the gap in views that does exist is largely one between the policy makers, the analysts, and the intelligence community on the one hand, and the civilian and military operators on the other.

The implications of the disagreement are very divergent. One view sees a high probability of GVN success and generally applauds the GVN's performance. It finds that the GVN has been ineffective at times, but that it has not been negligent, and overall progress has been most satisfactory.

The other view is greatly different. The GVN has yet to succeed in the countryside. The rural population situation has not changed significantly and certainly not at a rate which will free us of noticeable burdens within 2–5 years. We may even be over-extended in the rural areas and open to a damaging VC counterattack.

In CIA's view, progress has been slow but there has been progress. The real test of how solid recent gains in pacification have been will come when the VC initiate serious counter-pacification activity.

Changes Required

As to the changes required to increase favorable change in security and control, all agree that improvement in leadership, both civil and military, and at all levels, is a primary prerequisite. Other changes recommended are improvements in quality and quantity of small-unit operations in support of territorial security and pacification. A shopping list of recommended changes is provided by MACV/JCS, Embassy Saigon, and OSD. INR in State essentially states that "the basic deficiencies [of pacification][6] remain and give little reason to expect a

[6] Brackets in this and following paragraph are in the source text.

significant change in the situation in the countryside in the next two years." Additionally, OSD has provided gradations of changes which depend upon assessments of present progress and with the more radical changes calling for a reorientation of the advisory system and refocusing of pacification efforts.

Lesser Issues

In 1968, 15,776 members of the Viet Cong political and administrative Infrastructure (VCI) were neutralized, 87.1% of whom were easily replaceable functionaries. Anti-VCI operations showed major improvements, but all agree with the MACV statement "these [VCI] losses have not unduly disrupted the communist political apparatus." A precise estimate of VCI operations is complicated by the fact that current estimates of the size of the VCI differ by 25% or more. Moreover the criteria used to measure neutralizations are different from those used to estimate the infrastructure. Thus any direct comparison of the numbers neutralized and the numbers estimated to be in the VCI are misleading. Analysis of Phoenix and other anti-VCI activities also shows that there are major difficulties with the GVN's method of detainee disposition, and suggests the need for GVN judicial reforms.

All agencies agreed that the Phoenix program was long overdue and potentially very valuable. The respondents agreed that it is too early for a thorough assessment of the Phoenix program, and they predict it is unlikely to cause the NLF major problems in 1969. Embassy Saigon noted that Phoenix bears close watching with respect to the attitudes or rural population, attitudes toward the American sponsors, and a potentially deleterious effect on the possibilities for rural GVN–VC accommodations.

Every agency except MACV/JCS agrees that the available data on war damage to the civilian population is inadequate. CIA concluded the rural hamlets take a tremendous beating both from friendly and enemy forces. The responses received suggest that this is a very serious problem in need of further U.S. Government attention and analysis.

Recent GVN personnel changes were found by all agencies to have brought a significant upgrading in the averaging quality of GVN officials. Nonetheless, corruption, favoritism, and neglect of the populace's problems were still seen as major GVN shortcomings. There was no conclusive evidence that the 1968 personnel changes affected the GVN's relations with minority groups.

5. The Political Scene
(Questions 21–23)

(Current attitudes toward the GVN. Efforts to strengthen it. Noncommunist prospects in Vietnam.)

This section on the political situation can be boiled down to three fundamental questions: (1) How strong is the GVN today? (2) What is being done to strengthen it for the political struggle with the NLF? (3) What are the prospects for continued non-communist government in South Vietnam?

The essence of the replies from U.S. agencies is as follows: (1) The GVN is stronger recently than for many years but still very weak in certain areas and among various elites. (2) Some steps are being taken to strengthen the GVN politically but these are inadequate. (3) It is most difficult to predict the prospects for continued non-communist government, but they are chancy at best.

Within these broad thrusts of the responses there are decided differences of emphasis among the agencies. The implication of these different emphases could very well tip the political balance in South Vietnam over the next several years. Thus, MACV/JCS and Saigon, while acknowledging the problems, accent more the increasing stability of the Thieu regime and the overall political system; the significance of the moves being made by the GVN to bolster its strength; and the possibility of continued non-communist rule in South Vietnam given sufficient U.S. support. OSD on the other hand, while acknowledging certain progress, is decidedly more skeptical and pessimistic. CIA takes a cautiously optimistic view, acknowledging certain progress, but warning of weak spots which still must be overcome. OSD and CIA note recent political improvements and GVN measures but they tend to deflate their relative impact and highlight the remaining obstacles. State's position, while not so consistent or clear-cut, generally steers a middle course, being somewhat skeptical about the overall political situation and the GVN position and seeing prospects as mixed. State both accents recent stability and acknowledges inadequate GVN political actions.

The Present Situation

We have a great quantity of information on Vietnamese politics but the quality is suspect. It varies greatly by elite and level and is usually sounder for broad groups than factions or individuals. OSD remarks that we are dealing with a nascent constitutional system in which the elective process has yet to take hold and elections are viewed as a manipulatory process designed to confirm present leaders with their power positions.

Non-communist elements rally in times of common danger from the communist threat, but otherwise generally engage in a perpetual struggle for power. Most elites may be willing to participate in the GVN but their motives are often mixed. State observes that there generally is a greater commitment to the GVN and anti-communist struggle today and that active non-communist opposition has decreased. In their

view toward the military struggle, Northerners are most insistent on military victory, but the central and Southern Vietnamese indicate ambiguity and war-weariness. Firm support for the GVN, as long as it projects a strong anti-communist image, comes from most military elements, Catholics and portions of the bureaucratic and merchant classes. The major problem for the GVN remains in the rural villages where the VC are strongest. Opposition also comes from certain Buddhist, youth, union and professional elements. Various ethnic and religious minorities, while often anti-communist, are not strongly tied to the GVN. The Army could be a distinct threat to the continance of the GVN if it perceives a weakening of resolve by Thieu toward communists or if U.S. support for civilianization of the GVN or for Thieu is perceived as weakening.

In reading the Vietnamese political scene, one must keep in mind that pragmatism, expediency, war weariness, a desire to remain unaligned and end up on the winning side are all common features. So are family loyalty, corruption, social immobility and clandestine activities.

OSD points out (and a recent Saigon cable corroborates this view) that there has been a noticeable shift recently by many non-communists towards acceptance of the NLF in some capacity as part of an eventual political settlement. How much of this is political opportunism colored by the belief they can control the communists is unknown, but, in any case most elites would want to minimize the communist influence in the government. Most elites are now opposed to a forced coalition government which includes communists in significant positions of power. However, these elites may be highly vulnerable to manipulation by the NLF/PRP [*PRG*] given its organizational strength and political skills.

South Vietnamese attitudes toward the U.S. are varied and ambivalent. Our presence is seen as a necessary evil to forestall a communist take-over. Our involvement is viewed with a mixture of gratitude, shame, and suspicion. Essentially, recent events, especially the Paris talks, have made it apparent to the Vietnamese that the U.S. commitment is not open-ended and that some withdrawals are likely during 1969.

GVN Political Actions

All agencies agree that there has been substantial progress in broadening the government; all except OSD and State see significant movement against corruption; and all agree that political mobilization is both the most crucial and the weakest area. There is a certain ambivalence in agency views which maintain that U.S. pressure for reforms is needed but that we should not get too directly involved. OSD points out past U.S. failures at directing Vietnamese political life into desired channels.

Recent encouraging moves toward broadening the government include various elections, a national assembly with real deliberative powers, and greater Southern and civilian representation in the Cabinet. However, many groups are still not included or are under-represented. And the key problem of engaging the SVN population through GVN political organization from the top to the grass roots level has yet to be addressed by the GVN.

Recent dismissal of many unworthy officials and some increased emphasis on competence for promotion have not disspelled widespread corruption, reliance on personal loyalties and nepotism.

Events of the past year have sharpened the realization of the need for non-communist unity, but the GVN has made less progress on political mobilization than elsewhere. Its ability to gain support will depend primarily on the extent to which it can provide security, an alternative to the NLF, and social and economic progress. OSD has provided specific recommendations for U.S. actions to assist the GVN in attaining these ends.

Prospects

Political mobilization of non-communist elites is the most crucial factor, but it rests inter alia on broadening the government and advancement based on merit, and there are many other political steps needed. In general, all these factors will be increasingly important as the U.S. reduces its military effort. Such a reduction might stimulate political progress but it will also entail risks. As noted earlier, there is some ambiguity as well as differences of view about the proper U.S. role in SVN politics. State and Saigon caution against undue U.S. involvement and pressure. State adds that failure to act and U.S. actions elsewhere can also have impact. MACV/JCS place greater emphasis on the use of our leverage in effecting needed reforms. OSD argues for selective and less visible U.S. involvement in assisting the GVN politically while disengaging portions of the larger visible U.S. presence.

CIA notes that RVNAF will for some time remain the only national political force capable of matching the communists from the point of view of strength and organization. It does not appear realistic or prudent to expect that civilian groups alone can stand up to the communists within the next few years or that they should be given the practical burden of this effort at the expense of the military.

No agency clearly forecasts a "victory" over the communists, and all acknowledge the manifold problems facing the GVN as we withdraw. MACV/JCS stress the need for continued U.S. support. OSD and State believe that a compromise settlement is most likely and emphasize GVN self-reliance. The USIB state that progress in SVN has been sufficiently slow and fragile that substantial U.S. disengagement in the next few years could jeopardize all recent gains.

JCS and OSD each list their essential conditions for cessation of hostilities. While they agree on certain elements, the JCS look toward continued U.S. support to assure the sovereignty of the GVN while OSD requires only that the South Vietnamese be free to choose their political future without external influence.

6. U.S. Military Operations (Questions 24–28)

(Changes in U.S. deployments and tactics. Possibilities for U.S. force reductions. Effectiveness of B–52s, bombing in Laos and North Vietnam.)

The major points of agreement within the U.S. Government on these subjects are:

—the description of recent U.S. deployments and tactics;

—the difficulties of assessing the results of B–52 strikes, but their effectiveness against known troop concentrations and in close support operations;

—the fact that the Soviets and Chinese supply almost all war material to Hanoi and have enabled the North Vietnamese to carry on despite all our operations.

There are fundamental disagreements running throughout this section, including the following:

—OSD believes, and MACV/JCS deny, that there is a certain amount of "fat" in our current force levels that could be cut back without significant reduction in combat capability.

—MACV/JCS and, somewhat more cautiously, CIA and State ascribe much higher casualty estimates to our B–52 strikes than does OSD.

—MACV/JCS assign very much greater effectiveness to our past and current Laos and North Vietnam bombing campaigns than do OSD, State and CIA.

—MACV/JCS believe that a vigorous bombing and interdiction campaign could choke off enough supplies to Hanoi to make her stop fighting, while OSD and CIA feel that such a campaign could not reduce North Vietnam's capabilities to a level that would prevent it from continuing to support the struggle. CIA also is not convinced that the U.S. could sustain an unlimited interdiction and bombing program over a long period of time without losses reaching unacceptable levels.

U.S. Deployments and Tactics

In early 1968, MACV moved the equivalent of two divisions from II and III Corps to northern I Corps. This deployment was a defensive reaction to the threat of a major NVA seige of Khe Sanh and the coastal

lowlands. With the further enemy offensives in February and May, U.S. forces throughout the country (except for I Corps) were pulled back into screening positions around SVN's major cities and used to push the VC forces out. Since then, one of the two U.S. divisions redeployed to I Corps has been returned to III and IV Corps. MACV now gives top priority to the control of Saigon, the approaches to it in III and northern IV Corps, and the heavily populated upper Delta.

Until late 1968, allied (particularly U.S.) efforts were directed largely against enemy main forces through large (1,000 men or more) unit operations. With the recent withdrawal of NVA main force units from SVN, U.S. units have been able to operate in smaller units and with more emphasis on the enemy's infrastructure and support apparatus. U.S. field commanders estimate that nearly half of their operations are in support of pacification. The deployment of U.S. units in SVN's populated areas and the change in tactics has, MACV asserts, helped improve pacification progress.

U.S. Force Reductions

MACV/JCS and OSD agree that there is no way of reducing U.S. force levels in Vietnam without some reduction in combat capability. However, OSD argues that reducing some U.S. logistics headquarters, construction or tactical air personnel may not have any significant effect on U.S. combat capability or effectiveness. For instance, OSD concludes that because of the halt in bombing North Vietnam, the U.S. needs neither as many interdiction aircraft as we now have, nor our full force of three Navy carriers off North Vietnam, although reduction in any of these areas depends upon NVN's observance of the tacit conditions of the U.S. bombing halt. MACV/JCS feel that while some of the above elements would help to minimize loss of combat capability, in general significant reductions in our force levels will cause "at least equal" reductions in our combat capability.

OSD also thinks that U.S. forces could be reduced as the RVNAF improves and expands. By their estimates, the ongoing RVNAF improvement plan might free up to about 15–20 U.S. maneuver battalions and their support units (some 30–40,000 men) by mid-1969 without a decrease in total allied force capability. This projection assumes that RVNAF combat effectiveness increases along with their combat capability. Additionally, some U.S. forces could be reduced as they turn over equipment to selected RVNAF units. In their responses, MACV/JCS do not consider this question.

B–52 Effectiveness

All agencies acknowledge that sound analysis of the effectiveness of B–52 strikes is difficult. Consistent data bases are lacking. As a result there are sharp differences on casualty estimates. While JCS esti-

mates that about 41,000 enemy were killed in 1968 by the B–52s in all in-country strikes, OSD believes that perhaps as few as 7,100 were killed. The consensus is that some strikes are very effective, some clearly wasted, and a majority with indeterminate outcome.

There is agreement that B–52 strikes are very effective when directed against known enemy troop concentrations or in close support of tactical operations, and have served to disrupt VC/NVA operations. However, OSD and State, unlike MACV/JCS, find that B–52 strikes against suspected enemy infiltration routes, logistics or base camps/areas (50% of 1968's sorties) are probably much less effective than close support strikes. CIA cites a range of casualty estimates and considers it impossible to select one, but believes it is apparent that B–52 strikes have become a significant factor in the attrition of enemy forces.

The Laos and North Vietnam Interdiction Campaign

It is agreed that our bombing campaign both prior to and after November 1968 has reduced the enemy's throughput of supplies. However, State/CIA/OSD consider that this reduction has not materially affected the enemy's capability to supply his forces. MACV/JCS feel the bombing in Laos since 1 November 1968 has succeeded in reducing significantly enemy throughput capacity so that his minimum essential requirements in both Laos and SVN were not met during the period 1 November 1968 to 25 January 1969. State/CIA/OSD think it has failed to prevent the flow of supplies to SVN, though CIA feels it has cost the enemy heavily.

Post-November Campaign

Since early November, MACV has attempted to reduce the logistic capacity of the enemy by blocking the two key roads near the passes from NVN into Laos. MACV finds it has effectively blocked these roads 80% of the time and therefore caused less traffic to get through. OSD/CIA/State agree that enemy traffic on the roads attacked has been disrupted. However, they point out that the enemy uses less than 15% of the theoretical road capacity, that he is constantly expanding that capacity through new roads and bypasses, and that our air strikes do not eliminate, but only delay, traffic.

Besides blocking the roads, our bombing destroys material in transit on them. (In this connection, State notes the change in emphasis in Laotian bombing from the destruction of matériel, prior to mid-1968, to interdiction of the routes themselves.) JCS/MACV and OSD/CIA agree that we destroy 12% to 14% of the trucks sighted moving through Laos and 20% to 35% of the total flow of supplies in Laos. To MACV/JCS, the material destroyed forces the enemy to provide additional matériel to compensate for losses in order to maintain an acceptable level of support to the VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam. OSD

and CIA find that the enemy needs in SVN (10 to 15 trucks of supplies per day from the North) are so small compared with his logistics capacity that the enemy can replace his losses easily by increasing his traffic flows to offset attrition and get through to SVN as much supplies as he wants to despite the bombing.

Pre-November Campaign

Prior to November 1968, we bombed in southern North Vietnam as well as Laos. The MACV/JCS find that this campaign reduced the flow of supplies into Laos greatly and that this flow increased greatly after the bombing halt. The OSD/CIA agree that traffic followed this pattern, but argue that normal seasonal weather changes as well as the bombing affected the traffic pattern.

Alternative Campaign

All agencies agree that Chinese and Soviet aid has provided almost all the war material used by Hanoi. However, there is some disagreement on whether alternative military courses of action could reduce the flow enough to make a difference in South Vietnam. If all imports by sea were denied and land routes through Laos and Cambodia attacked vigorously, the MACV/JCS find that NVN could not obtain enough war supplies to continue. OSD and CIA question the effectiveness of a campaign to block the overland routes from China which alone could provide NVN enough material to carry on the war.

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45. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 25, 1969.

SUBJECT

Quarantine of Cambodia

Secretary Laird has sent you a study prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at your request, on the feasibility and utility for quarantining Cambodia against the receipt of supplies and equipment to support the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces operating in and from Cam-

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. I, 8–69. Top Secret; Sensitive.

bodia. (Secretary Laird's memorandum and the Joint Chief's study are attached at Tab A.)[2]

The basic conclusions of the Joint Chiefs are:

(1) An air/sea blockade and other steps to quarantine Cambodia are both militarily feasible and of some utility in intensifying enemy supply problems in the III and IV Corps areas.

(2) Ground operations to deny the enemy use of the Laos Panhandle for support of enemy forces operating in and from Cambodia are not feasible within current force levels. However, present interdiction operations against enemy lines of communication in Laos should be continued to the maximum extent.

(3) While diplomatic exchanges between the U.S. and Cambodia may present an opportunity to gain Cambodian assistance in reducing enemy use of Cambodia as a sanctuary, the most effective method would be preemptive ground and air operations of limited depth and duration in Cambodia and in the tri-border area of Laos.

On the basis of these conclusions, the Joint Chiefs made four recommendations:

(1) Air/sea blockade or quarantine be retained as an option to be undertaken when appropriate against the receipt in Cambodia of supplies and equipment for the support of VC/NVA forces operating in and from Cambodia against South Vietnam.

(2) Interdiction operations against the enemy's lines of communication in Laos be continued to the maximum extent.

(3) Current political initiatives be used to gain Prince Sihanouk's support or acquiescence in allied military efforts to reduce the enemy's sanctuary and the flow of supplies to VC/NVA forces operating in and from Cambodia.

(4) In concert with other appropriate initiatives outlined above, short-term air and ground raids be authorized against clearly identified VC/NVA forces and supplies in sparsely populated areas of Cambodia along the SVN border, and in southern Laos.

Secretary Laird has recommended that the National Security Council review this issue before any new military actions are authorized because of the political implications of the Joint Chief's recommendations. These political implications are briefly the need to estimate Prince Sihanouk's level of tolerance for operations inside Cambodia, and the question of consulting with Prince Souvanna

[2] Tab A, a memorandum from Laird to Nixon, March 18, and Annex A, an undated JCS study of a quarantine of Cambodia, are not attached. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

Phouma on further operations in Laos, as we have done in the past with good results. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are also preparing a list of specific military actions in Cambodia which would not be subject to National Security Council review.

Recommendation:

That Secretary Laird and Secretary Rogers be requested to prepare a joint study on the military and political implications of preemptive operations against Cambodia and Laos for consideration by the National Security Council.[3]

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[3] Nixon initialed the disapprove option and wrote: "Let's not make any 'decisions' on this until we get another crack or two at Cambodia. Later—have the study made." In an April 8 memorandum to Laird, Kissinger informed him that the President had reviewed the study on quarantining Cambodia and that he "desires that this matter be held in abeyance for the time being." (Washington National Records Center, OSD/ISA Subject Decimal Files: FRC 330 72 A 6308, Box 7, Cambodia 1969 000.1)

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46. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Vietnam Negotiations Papers for the NSC[2]

Attached are the General Negotiating Strategy Paper and a paper on Mutual Withdrawal approved by the Review Group for discussion

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 82, NSC Meetings, Jan–Mar 1969. Top Secret; Nodis; Paris Meetings; Plus. On a copy of this memorandum in the Johnson Library, Halperin Papers, Box 4, Chronological File, March–July 1969, a note on the first page reads: "HAK discussed with RN and perhaps shown to him."

[2] On March 12 Kissinger sent Rogers, Laird, and Helms NSSM 29, which informed them that the President had directed preparation of two papers described as: "1. *Negotiating strategy paper.* This paper should discuss the strategy we would follow in private talks with Hanoi. It should also consider our strategy for dealing with the GVN in regard to private talks. 2. *Mutual withdrawal of forces.* This paper should consider our basic objectives with regard to mutual withdrawal. It should discuss major issues and alternative positions on these issues." These papers were to be submitted to the Review Group by March 17. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–140, NSSM Files, NSSM 29)

at the NSC meeting on March 28.[3] Summaries of each of these papers are included, as well as an issues for decision paper.[4] This memo summarizes the major points of difference which you may wish to have discussed at the NSC meeting, and contains my recommendations.

Also attached is a summary of the agency responses to the questions on Vietnam which we prepared prior to January 20.[5] The summary has been agreed to by the agencies.

I. Strategy Paper

A. De-Escalation

The issue is whether we should be prepared to negotiate de-escalatory steps in Paris. Some argue that the enemy will raise the issue and we must be prepared to talk about it because critics of the war will keep on this issue. It is also argued that mutual de-escalation would increase public support for the war and give us time to work out a settlement. While acknowledging the difficulties of developing proposals, Paris argues that the scope and pace of B–52 strikes, U.S. offensive operations, and U.S. harassment and interdiction fire could be curtailed.

The opposing position is that we should not ourselves raise the subject in Paris and, if the other side raises it, say we are prepared to discuss it in the context of mutual withdrawal. MACV and the JCS feel very strongly that we should not be prepared to negotiate de-escalation. MACV argues that the cut-down on combat sweeps would shift degree of initiative from us to the enemy, which he would exploit to rebuild his strength in populated areas. He also argues that this would result in a shift in the KIA ratios in a direction less favorable to the U.S. He argues that a cutback in artillery and air support including B–52's would result in further loss of American lives and would have "seriously adverse" results. Furthermore, tacit understandings on mutual de-escalation have already been proved illusory.

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[3] Neither attached; Bundy sent a revised draft of both papers to the Chairman of the NSC Review Group under two separate covering memoranda, both March 21. They were found attached to an uninitialed and undated draft of Kissinger's memorandum to Nixon. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 182, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous/Memcons, Vol. II) The approved papers, comprising NSDM 9, are ibid., NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–209, NSDM Files, NSDM 9. For the NSC meeting, see Document 49.

[4] Attached were two summary papers, both March 25, entitled, "A General Strategy and Plan of Action for the Vietnam Negotiations" and "US Position on Mutual Withdrawal" and an undated paper which is printed as an attachment.

[5] Document 44.

I believe that we should not feel obliged to talk about de-escalation simply because the enemy may want to do so. Attempts to negotiate a de-escalatory agreement would only bog talks down while adversely affecting the morale of our troops. I, thus, recommend that the second position be included in the Game Plan.

II. Mutual Withdrawal

A. Residual U.S. Forces

The Joint Chiefs and MACV argue that we should keep open the option of maintaining U.S. combat forces in South Vietnam after we complete our mutual withdrawal. They argue that we cannot be sure that the GVN will be able to handle the NLF alone and should be free to leave our own combat forces in South Vietnam.

State and Paris argue that we need to be clear in our own minds that we are prepared to take out all of our combat forces, while leaving behind civilians and MAAG personnel, in the improbable event that Hanoi fully satisfies the conditions we set for mutual withdrawal.

This is in large part a theoretical issue. If we adopt the State/Paris position, we would be committing ourselves in principle to withdraw all of our combat forces only if Hanoi met all of our conditions. These conditions would be (1) withdrawal of all North Vietnamese regulars, all North Vietnamese serving in VC units, and all other personnel infiltrated from North Vietnam into the South, (2) withdrawal must be to North Vietnam, not to Laos and Cambodia, and (3) there must be adequate verification. It is very doubtful that Hanoi would ever adequately perform on each of these conditions. We will always be in a position to assert that Hanoi has not lived up to its commitments and hence we are free to leave troops behind. If Hanoi did meet all of our conditions fully, it is doubtful that we would need to leave any combat troops in South Vietnam. Our decision whether to proceed with a complete withdrawal will be a political one not bound by what we have agreed to in principle if Hanoi met our conditions.

On the other hand, an effort on our part to exempt some combat forces would be taken by the Soviets and our public, as well as Hanoi, as a hardening of our position. Hanoi would very likely seize on this issue to attempt to stir public controversy in the U.S. Thus, I believe we should be prepared in principle to withdraw all of our combat forces if Hanoi meets our conditions.

B. Completion of Withdrawal Within Six Months

State feels that we should not repudiate the Manila Declaration commitment to be out six months after all North Vietnamese forces

have been withdrawn. The Manila Communiqué was negotiated with and accepted by the GVN and the Troop Contributing Nations. Any new position on a time limit would require a further round of negotiations with them. Harriman assured DRV, on instructions, that this was our position. We could also have problems in Congress if we repudiated the Manila Communiqué.

On the other hand, Secretary Laird believes that the Manila six-month time limit is far too rigid. He has in the past indicated that he would like to have up to two years to take all of our troops out. Saigon, without noting any MACV dissent, accepts the six-month deadline for personnel, but points out that additional time will be required for the removal of military supplies and equipment.

State points out that the six-month formula gives us considerable leeway since we can decide when all of Hanoi's forces have in fact been withdrawn from South Vietnam all the way to North Vietnam. Since it is almost certain that North Vietnam will in fact leave behind some forces, we will, in actual fact, have flexibility in implementing the six-month provision.

This issue is closely related to the residual combat troop issue. Again, if Hanoi did not meet our conditions we could complete our withdrawal at our own pace—if at all. The one added element is that we introduced this concept initially at Soviet urging since they said Hanoi did not believe that we would ever really withdraw. If we back off this pledge, we are likely to find it harder to get the Soviets involved constructively.

If we interpret the conditions which Hanoi must fulfill rigidly, then the six months deadline gives us flexibility. If we are not going to be rigid—and there will be strong pressures on you not to be—then it would be better to have a longer deadline. However, you should take account of the problems with our public and Congress, with our allies, and with the Soviets which would result if we changed the time limit. Thus, if we do not change the time limit, you will face problems down the road; if we do change, you will face problems now.

We need urgently to have a study of the details and modalities of mutual withdrawal including, in particular, the question of adequate verification.

Attachment

Paper Prepared for President Nixon[6]

Washington, undated.

VIETNAM NEGOTIATIONS ISSUES FOR DECISION

Following the NSC meeting:

You may wish to approve the Negotiating Strategy and the Mutual Withdrawal papers as guidance for the first phase of the negotiations. Recognizing that our views on the issues discussed in the paper may require revision as the negotiations proceed, it would be extremely useful to be sure that everyone starts out on the same track.

I, therefore, recommend that you do approve the two papers. We would then distribute them on a very selective basis.

I. Negotiating Strategy Paper

A. *Approval of this paper* means in essence:

1. Objectives:

a. Our general objective is to give the South Vietnamese the opportunity to determine their own political future without outside interference.

b. Our first priority objectives are agreed or tacit mutual withdrawal (with attendant reduction in hostilities), reestablishment of the DMZ, eventual total ceasefire, release of allied prisoners, relevant interim policing machinery, and restoration of 17th parallel as provisional boundary line. Other objectives down the line include status of the two Vietnams, relationships between them, follow-on inspection and supervision machinery, international guaranties, Laos, Cambodia, and economic questions.

c. We leave to the Vietnamese themselves questions concerning the political future of South Vietnam and minimize our negotiating involvement in these issues.

2. Game Plan

a. Our emphasis will be on private talks, between the DRV and ourselves on the one hand, and the GVN and NLF on the other.

b. Our posture will be one of sincere desire for progress, but not an over-eagerness that could mislead Hanoi.

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[6] Top Secret; Sensitive.

c. Our early negotiating emphasis will be on mutual withdrawals, the DMZ, and POWs (as it already is in Paris).

B. In approving the paper you will have to choose between two positions on *deescalation:*

1. Express an interest in communicating with the enemy about possible deescalatory moves and authorize our negotiators to discuss the subject.

2. Indicate that you do not wish to enter into negotiations in Paris on deescalatory moves except in the context of mutual withdrawal.

I recommend Option 2. It is hard to visualize concrete deescalatory proposals that would be truly reciprocal. Most suggestions would seem to favor the enemy militarily. We need not feel obliged to talk about deescalation simply because the enemy may raise the issue. Attempts to negotiate deescalatory agreements would only bog talks down while adversely affecting the morale of our troops. However, there is no reason why we cannot proceed with in-house studies of this problem.

II. Mutual Withdrawal Paper

A. *Approval of this paper* means in essence:

1. Our basic objectives are to achieve the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia back to North Vietnam and to get adequate assurance that such withdrawals have taken place.

2. We would insist on the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese regular forces, fillers in nominally VC units and other personnel infiltrated from the North, although we would be prepared to live with some inevitable ambiguity about the latter category.

3. We would be willing to withdraw U.S. allied forces contingent upon withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces and units.

4. We would begin our withdrawals as North Vietnam begins its withdrawals and ceases its flow of new manpower; we would not require subsidence of violence as a formal precondition to our withdrawals but would look at this factor in assessing the enemy's compliance with withdrawal agreements.

5. We would work toward a timetable that would include phasing of agreed withdrawals on each side, simultaneous initiation of withdrawals, and completion of enemy withdrawals before our own.

6. In carrying out our withdrawals, we would continually look at the total pattern of North Vietnamese actions to assess their good faith.

7. We would not link the issue of mutual withdrawals with the future internal political structure of South Vietnam, although we would not complete withdrawals if the total picture in Paris and Vietnam gave us ground for serious doubt concerning Hanoi's intentions.

8. We would press for North Vietnamese withdrawals from Laos and Cambodia, particularly, in the case of Laos, those troops which have been supporting operations in South Vietnam.

9. We would insist that agreed withdrawals and future compliance must be subject to adequate policing, although we cannot yet be clear on what specific types of arrangements will be necessary and appropriate.

10. Any unilateral allied withdrawals would be based on full consultation with the GVN and our assessment of the overall picture, including the impact of such withdrawals on our negotiating position.

B. There are two issues discussed in the paper on which there is disagreement: (1) residual U.S. forces and (2) six month deadline.

C. With regard to *residual U.S. forces,* the options are:

1. Be prepared to state that agreed and verified mutual withdrawals will, in principle, in the end include the withdrawal of all U.S. and allied combat and directly combat-related forces, if there is a full and verified withdrawal to North Vietnam of the North Vietnamese forces.

2. At least for a period of time, plan to leave some combat forces behind and avoid any commitment to pull them all out.

I recommend Option 2. To attempt to exempt some combat forces from our withdrawals would clearly be considered a hardening of our position by all concerned. We would set back the negotiations and stir great controversy in this country (and not just among dovish elements). If Hanoi does fulfill its withdrawal obligations, it is not clear that U.S. combat forces would be needed.

D. With regard to the *six-month deadline,* the options are:

1. Be prepared to specify at an appropriate time that the period between completion of a full and verified North Vietnamese withdrawal to North Vietnam and the completion of our own withdrawal would be not more than six months.

2. Simply say that withdrawal would be completed as soon as practicable, avoiding any time limits.

I recommend Option 1. To drop the six month target would also be considered a hardening of our position in relation to past private and public statements. We will have considerable flexibility in defining the starting date for our six month obligation, and we can insist upon strict compliance by Hanoi with whatever withdrawal agreements are negotiated.

III. Further Studies

You may wish to direct studies on:

A. Actual modalities of mutual withdrawal, including verification procedures.

B. Possible forms of political accommodation in South Vietnam.

C. Laos, in the context of the Vietnam settlement.

D. Possible forms of deescalation.

I recommend all four studies. I believe that it would be useful to study deescalation in part to make clear the great difficulty of developing any concrete proposals.

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47. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March, 27, 1969.

SUBJECT

Covert Support for the Lien Minh (National Alliance for Social Revolution)

On 25 March 1969, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker briefed the 303 Committee on the present status of President Thieu's efforts to build a broad coalition of forces into a political structure, the Lien Minh, which will be capable of competing successfully with the communist political machinery following a peace settlement.[2]

President Thieu first discussed his Lien Minh concept with Ambassador Bunker in the early part of 1968. Subsequently, in 303 Committee discussions, it was agreed that this was the most potentially promising effort seen thus far in South Vietnam to develop a broadly based political structure with mass appeal and support. Ambassador Bunker was authorized to provide [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] in covert CIA funds to President Thieu to give impetus to the effort. This amount was passed directly to President Thieu in increments during the period August 1968–March 1969.

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 301, NSC Files, 303 Committee, 1969–1970. Secret; Eyes Only. Sent for action. Initialed by Kissinger on March 29.

[2] This memorandum essentially repeats Bunker's briefing of the 303 Committee on March 25. In addition the 303 Committee was told at the meeting that on March 20 the President agreed that a CIA paramilitary operation in Cambodia against North Vietnamese regulars "would not be worth the expense." The Committee was also informed that the President authorized monitoring possible diplomatic and covert ways to reduce arms traffic from Cambodia to South Vietnam. (Minutes of 303 Committee, March 25; Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, 303/40 Committee Meetings, 2/16/69–1/20/70)

President Thieu has moved slowly and cautiously but some progress has been made. Lien Minh is established and operating in Saigon/Cholon and running community projects in 9 of the 11 districts; some neighborhood money has been raised; 20 provincial committees have been formed and selection and training of provincial cadres is under way. Theoretically, its membership comprises some 40 or more groups, the principal ones being the National Salvation Front (NSF), Free Democratic Forces (FDF), and CVT, South Vietnam's largest labor federation, but not many cadres.

President Thieu, in his conversation with Ambassador Bunker last week, explained that he had been moving cautiously behind the scenes and not openly putting his full weight behind the Lien Minh as the time was not right.[3] Now that there is a rapidly growing awareness among the people and their leaders that a peace settlement is coming and that the fight against the communists will shift to the political field he is ready to move.

President Thieu is concentrating on development of middle-level working cadres and programs that will interest the masses and inspire them with hope. There are some 5,000 cadres now in Lien Minh in trade unions, some farmer groups, and in a few political, religious and other organizations. He plans to coalesce and expand these forces initially to something on the order of 16,000 and eventually to a 50,000 cadre organization. He will need money, training schools, indoctrination programs, and a range of activities to do this.

President Thieu has already begun talking with individual political leaders and plans to convene a national convention or "seminar" in April at which he expects to be elected leader of the new movement.

Ambassador Bunker strongly recommended that he be authorized to pass additional covert funds to President Thieu in the amount of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] in increments during the next six months to support further development of the Lien Minh during this crucial period. He estimates the risks of disclosure are slight since President Thieu receives the funds directly. He also estimates that this contribution will be initially about 50% of the support of the Lien Minh, but as its financial base broadens the U.S. contribution will become proportionately less.

The 303 Committee endorsed Ambassador Bunker's recommendation on the understanding that he will provide monthly progress reports on Lien Minh developments and any indications of increased risk of exposure of U.S. support.

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[3] As reported in a March 21 memorandum of conversation between Thieu, Bunker, and Berger at the Embassy in Saigon. It is attached to the minutes of the March 25 303 Committee. (Ibid.)

I recommend that you approve the 303 Committee's endorsement of Ambassador Bunker's recommendation and authorize the passage of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] in covert funds to President Thieu in increments during the ensuing six months.[4]

[4] Nixon initialed the approve option.

48. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 28, 1969.

SUBJECT

U.S. Relations with Cambodia

Secretary Rogers has recommended (Tab I),[2] the issuance of a border declaration on Cambodia *in two or three weeks,* following consultation with our allies. He has also recommended that you approve the draft letter (Tab B)[3] thanking Sihanouk for the release of four American airmen and acknowledging his letter of February 25.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. 1, 8–69. Secret; Exdis. Sent for action.

[2] Tab I, attached but not printed, is a memorandum from Rogers to Nixon, March 26, entitled "U.S. Relations with Cambodia," in which Rogers recommended that Nixon "approve the issuance of a declaration recognizing the territorial integrity of Cambodia within its present frontiers, as a further step toward resumption of diplomatic relations on satisfactory terms."

[3] The draft letter to Sihanouk and Sihanouk's February 25 letter to Nixon were attached to Rogers' March 26 memorandum. According to an April 2 memorandum from Moose to Walsh, the President approved the border declaration and transmission of the letter to Sihanouk through the Australians. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. 1, 8–69) The border declaration was delivered to Sihanouk by the Australian Ambassador on April 16. It read: "In conformity with the United Nations Charter, the U.S.A. recognizes and respects the sovereignty, independence, neutrality, and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Cambodia within its present frontiers." (Telegram 55018 to Bonn and 10 other posts, April 10; ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 1 CAMB–US) Sihanouk called a press conference on April 18 to thank Nixon for the "gesture of equity and justice" and expressed the conviction that "inevitable border incidents" would not cause another rupture in U.S.-Cambodian relations. (Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, April 18; ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 5, President's Daily Briefs)

Rogers' recommendations are consistent with the course of action you approved in early February looking toward a resumption of diplomatic relations with Cambodia. After issuing the border declaration, Rogers plans to send a diplomatic officer to Phnom Penh to explore reopening our embassy there. These actions assume a continued favorable attitude toward resumption of relations on the part of Sihanouk. In his messages to you, in conversations with diplomats in Phnom Penh, and in public statements, Sihanouk has consistently encouraged a resumption of relations.

I agree with Secretary Rogers' recommendations, but would urge that we push for somewhat faster action on the border declaration if the consultations with our allies go well.

Recommendations

1. That you approve the issuance of a border declaration, with instructions to Secretary Rogers that we should aim for delivery in about 10 days.[4]

Alternatively, I prefer to stick to three-week time table

2. That you approve the draft letter at Tab B.

[4] Nixon initialed the approve option.

49. Minutes of National Security Council Meeting[1]

Washington, March 28, 1969.

The Meeting started at 10:00 a.m. The following were in attendance:

The President
The Vice President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
Director, Office of Emergency Preparedness
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Director of Central Intelligence
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 82, NSC Meetings, Jan–Mar 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive. These minutes were based on notes taken by Haig that were typed by a White House secretary; Haig made corrections by hand to the typed transcript.

Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker
General Andrew Goodpaster
Mr. Philip A. Habib
Mr. Richard Sneider
Colonel Alexander M. Haig

The President introduced the meeting stating there were three issues to be addressed:

1. De-escalation.
2. Mutual withdrawal and the related issues of residual troops in-country; and
3. The provision of the Manila Declaration, i.e., the interpretation of the six-month clause.

The President stated that discussion would be held on these three points, following a briefing by Ambassador Bunker.[2] Ambassador Bunker made the following points in explaining President Thieu's and the South Vietnamese Government's attitude on a negotiated peace settlement:

1. The present offensive has demonstrated South Vietnam's growing confidence and conversely has highlighted the growing weakness of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese in a military sense.

2. President Thieu now visualizes and accepts that there will be a transition from purely military operations into a struggle which will be conducted within a political framework. This transition in his own estimate of the situation is a further reflection of the growing strength of the Thieu Government. In Thieu's words, "A year ago, we could only talk in terms of military victory. Six months ago, we could talk in terms of a peace settlement. Today we can talk in terms of a political settlement".

3. The bombing halt of 31 March [1968] led to the realization on the part of the South Vietnamese that U.S. would not underwrite them indefinitely. This tended to crystallize South Vietnam's resolve and combined with the growing dynamism and forceful and sagacious leadership of President Thieu, great progress has been made (Ambassador

[2] On March 12 Nixon sent Kissinger a memorandum indicating he "would like to talk with Bunker within the next two or three weeks. I have been reading his cables and he seems much more concerned about attacks in South Vietnam than we are here. I have never met Bunker and I feel that because of the importance of his position I need to talk to him so that I can judge for myself what weight to give to his cables. Get him back here as soon as it is convenient so that it does not look like a crisis, but under no circumstances do I want his return delayed beyond three weeks." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Personal Files, Box 1, Memorandum for the President, RN Memos 68–12/69, Mar. 69) Nixon met Bunker in San Clemente on March 23 for an early Sunday morning meeting also attended by Rogers, Kissinger, and Goodpaster. (Ibid., White House Central Files, Daily Diary) No other record or time of this meeting has been found. The President, apparently accompanied by Bunker, Kissinger, Rogers, and Goodpaster, flew to Washington at 12:39 p.m. (Ibid.)

Bunker emphasized that he knew of no equal to President Thieu within the ranks of South Vietnamese leaders).

4. In the past two months, President Thieu has talked of a settlement in two terms:

a. A general election which would permit the NLF to function as a party but perhaps under a different name.

b. Acceptance by Thieu of private talks and also an acceptance of the possibility that the NLF would be included in such talks but with emphasis on conversations between the U.S. and Hanoi; but still recognizing the possible expansion of the talks to all four parties if required.

An alternate approach to the political settlement in Thieu's mind would include general elections with possible accompanying changes in the Constitution and the inclusion of international supervision of the election procedure.

5. Concerning 4 above, Ambassador Bunker stated that he had warned Thieu on the issue of the NLF's fear of reprisals from the South Vietnamese Government and confirmed that Thieu had agreed to discuss this as well as a political settlement. Thieu indicated that perhaps an international supervisory commission could oversee this situation.

6. Thieu has discussed the question of guarantees and has expressed strong concern that viable guarantees be provided to insure that the North would pay a heavy price for renewed attacks. At the same time, he recognized that South Vietnam's armed strength would be a major factor, together with outside guarantees in precluding the renewal of North Vietnamese attacks. In general, Thieu believes he could maintain his control of the government under the above circumstances because the NLF has been badly hurt in recent months and their infrastructure is in a bad state of repair.

7. The Government and the people of South Vietnam now recognize the need for peace. At this point, the President asked when this shift in South Vietnamese attitude occurred. Ambassador Bunker replied that Thieu has known this for some time. Secretary Rogers asked "but when did it occur?" Ambassador Bunker answered to the effect that this has been true for several months. In December, for example, Thieu agreed to accept a greater share of the burden of conducting the war. He has admitted over the past six months that the people must get ready for political warfare. At the same time, he has had to bring the government along at a pace which he felt personally was best suited to the circumstances. He has managed this extremely well. The evolution has occurred primarily due to the growing strength of the government in both political and psychological terms.

Secretary Rogers asked whether or not Bunker knew that Thieu was going to make his recent statement on private talks. Ambassador Bunker replied "no".

The President commented, "I think the main point here is that the error made by the previous Administration was in beating the South Vietnamese over the head publicly to be more forthcoming," commenting that he had informed a Congressional group last night that we had carefully avoided this approach in order to build the South Vietnamese's trust. The President asked Ambassador Bunker whether or not Thieu really trusts us. Bunker replied, "yes, and this is my main point. We have re-established trust since January and this, in turn, has been a major contributor to their willingness to come along with us on the peace issue. The principal factors in this phenomena have been your talk with Ky and our generally coordinated posture."

Secretary Rogers interjected, "Thieu saw my statement before the Foreign Relations Committee and gave us his OK overnight."[3]

The President turned the briefing over to Mr. Habib who reminded the Council that since his last appearance before him, the U.S. had received signals through the Russians that the North Vietnamese were anxious to move on private talks. He confirmed that the U.S. movement in Paris had been very deliberate and that as a result our relations with the GVN in Paris had improved greatly. Habib emphasized that the Plenary Sessions have not changed very much in tone and serve primarily as propaganda sessions and a forum for tentatively exploring new ideas. In these sessions, Habib emphasized, there continues to be a sharp contrast between the conduct and expertise of the NLF on the one hand and GRV on the other, the latter being far more skilled and polished.

Habib emphasized that the U.S. Delegation had accomplished much in the public forum in Paris through the maintenance of a businesslike stance, the avoidance of polemics, and the presentation of brief and specific proposals. Habib summarized that there had been two private meetings since January, the first primarily a protest meeting and the second dealing with substantive issues. Both private meetings were conducted with the full blessing of the GVN Delegation. During the second meeting, the U.S. concentrated on the issue of withdrawal. The North Vietnamese, on the other hand, came in with a Plenary Session type statement but in a private mood. Habib noted that much of that statement was used in yesterday's Plenary Session,

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[3] Apparent reference to Rogers' statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 27, in which he described the U.S. and South Vietnamese negotiating position and the essential elements in an ultimate settlement. His testimony is in Department of State *Bulletin,* April 14, 1969, pp. 306–307.

confirming that it was clearly just the opening round in the secret forum. Habib judged that the North's opening statement was not surprising, and it emphasized:

a. Complete withdrawal of U.S. forces,
b. Requirement that we deal with the NLF,
c. Charges of U.S. escalation, and
d. Confirmation that they are willing to continue the fight.

The North Vietnamese made no specific proposal rather reemphasizing the four and five points and emphasizing participation by the NLF. They did not exclude the possibility of the GVN's participation in the negotiation; made it quite clear that they wanted to continue secret talks; indicated the probability that the bilateral track was acceptable and, in general, continued to give hints of some anxiety. On balance, it appears that we have rattled them in recent weeks, Habib maintained.

The President then asked, "is this just wishful thinking on our part", to which Habib replied, "it might be but I think they want to talk and this is just the first of a series of secret sessions. In this regard, we left open the determination of the next meeting with the general language that "when either side has something to say", the next talk will occur. Habib emphasized that the North Vietnamese nodded as this statement was made and nodded again afterwards. The North also emphasized the importance of secrecy.

The President asked what the implications were of the North Vietnamese side's rejection of Thieu's offer to go into secret talks. Habib replied that this rejection was not as rigid as it appeared in the press and that they actually placed their main stress on refusal to meet with the GVN, leaving the door open somewhat. Habib added "when their spokesman was pressed, they hedged and didn't attack the secret meeting as much as they did the other parts of Thieu's statements."

The President then asked Ambassador Bunker whether or not the GVN would accept a role in four-sided talks which would place them in a position of tagging along with the U.S. Ambassador Bunker replied that when it comes to actual negotiations on the political side that the U.S. cannot do this in behalf of the South Vietnamese but that they will probably go along initially with a four-sided forum.

The President stated, "then it is very important how we proceed on this issue".

Secretary Rogers then emphasized his concern that we were overly sensitive about this point, remarking that first we were concerned whether or not they would accept secret talks at all, but then when we asked Thieu, he readily went along. The Secretary of State then stated he thought the only thing that was really important is that the U.S. does not meet only with the NLF.

The President asked Mr. Habib how long he thought the talks would go on, "18 months, two years? Do you see a Panmunjon situation developing here? Looking at this problem, how long are we going to be in negotiations with sub-threshold fighting continuing?"

Habib replied, "we think it will take some time but in very short order we will get to the heart of the thing in the discussions probably in a month or two." Ambassador Bunker stated that President Thieu sees this year as the critical one. Providing the North sees no flagging in our determination; with such determination, a settlement should probably occur this year.

Secretary Rogers said, "yes, but suppose we lose out, can we start to turn over the fighting to the South Vietnamese?"

General Goodpaster replied, "this depends—we can move in this direction but it depends on what the South Vietnamese themselves do." Secretary Rogers stated that we were told this years ago but we see no movement. "How can we convince the people after all of this failure?"

Habib stated, "the North reads this very carefully, based on how things are gong on the ground but also how they read U.S. domestic attitude. They are most sensitive to it. This is the basis for their current tactics. They are conducting a long, low-level attack and watching U.S. opinion concurrently."

The President then asked, "how do we de-Americanize this thing in such a way as to influence negotiations and have them move along quicker?"

Secretary Rogers said "certainly pacification is a poor explanation."

The President replied "in fairness I must say progress has been made, especially under Thieu. I can certainly defend it to that extent but I need some symbol."

Ambassador Bunker stated, "our problem has always been a case of over-optimism in over-stating the issues. It is time that we tell the American people it is going to be long and tough."

Secretary Laird remarked, "oh, we have been telling the people that. We told them there were going to be improvements in the South Vietnamese forces. There are only a couple of divisions that are worth anything. In several, there have been no improvement whatsoever."

General Goodpaster asked who said this a year ago. The Secretary of State said, "we have been saying this for over a year and a half. What do we say now?"

General Lincoln said, "I think South Vietnam has improved its forces but it is not being reported, especially back here."

General Goodpaster stated, "it is true that the 5th and 18th Divisions have been weak and continue to stay that way."

Mr. Helms said, "yes, we have heard this story before."

Secretary Rogers stated, "we have to de-Americanize the war to safeside a failure in the negotiations. We need discernible progress." The President stated that timing is a problem. "We must move in a deliberate way, not to show panic. We cannot be stampeded by the likes of Fulbright."

Secretary Rogers said, "but if we say we are going to be deliberate, the American people won't stand for it."

General Goodpaster said, "I think we must remember that the money for the improvement of the RVNAF did not come until after Tet and progress has been substantial since that time. We have moved from 750,000 to 855,000 troops and the caliber of the force has improved. There can be no question about their improvement. The RF and the PF have grown quantitatively and qualitatively. The overall improvement has been substantial and we are, in fact, closer to de-Americanizing the war but we are not at the decision point yet."

The President stated, "we need a plan. If we had no elections, it would be fine. Just like Great Britain in Malaysia, we cannot sustain this at current rates for two years. The reality is that we are working against a time clock. We are talking 6 to 8 months. We are going to play a strong public game but we must plan this. We must get a sense of urgency in the training of the South Vietnamese. We need improvement in terms of supplies and training."

Secretary of Defense Laird stated, "I agree, but not with your term de-Americanizing. What we need is a term Vietnamizing to put the emphasis on the right issue."

The President agreed.

The Secretary of Defense then stated that there are considerable problems on Phase II add-ons with respect to the Congress. They are not willing to pay for the sophisticated equipment, especially trucks. The Secretary had told General Westmoreland to visit the people on the Hill and explain to the people our problem.

General Goodpaster stated, "they must have mobility. The ARVN uses the road to a greater degree than we have to. For example, they are using cranes for all kinds of purposes."

The President asked if the Viet Cong had cranes.

General Goodpaster replied that we are now at a time when we can plan for the first increment for our withdrawal but only based on a decision in the light of conditions at the time. Our view this time will be July.

The President noted that U.S. casualties were down this week and asked if the offensive was over. General Goodpaster replied, "not yet. The enemy has some forces it has not committed, primarily because they have not been able to get them in position but also because they have been extremely conservative in this operation."

The President asked whether there would be another offensive in May or June. General Goodpaster replied that it took 6 months for the enemy to get sufficiently built up to launch this one and infiltration is now down somewhat. This will probably result in a smaller offensive this May.

The President then asked why it would be so difficult to make our decision if this offensive has been so poor, "why won't we be able to pull the forces out?" General Goodpaster replied, "we want to look at the status of pacification, the improvement of RVN and you can't pull out troops in the midst of an offensive. Also, they could come across the DMZ."

Habib stated "if we look at the record, we can see that over the year, the Viet Cong have carefully geared their military operation to the conduct of their negotiations. The enemy is willing to accept casualties for purely negotiating reasons. He will conduct his ground operations for political objectives in Paris."

The President re-emphasized that the South Vietnamese must do more.

Ambassador Bunker said, "we must also remember that negotiations are themselves influenced primarily by what happens on the ground. They took terrible losses during the lull. Defectors were up, KIAs were high, the infrastructure was rolled up. They are already this year running close to last year's losses. That is why they are in Paris. They are suffering on the ground."

The President asked the Director of CIA to give his views and to capsulize conditions in North Vietnam.

Mr. Helms stated that morale is now a factor in North Vietnam.

The President interrupted and said, "did you say this a year ago?"

Mr. Helms said, "no" and continued emphasizing that the morale problem developed since the bombing halt. Conversely, the offensive has generated some new discipline in the North since they have expected retaliation and are "policing-up" attitudes. There are differences in the leadership in Hanoi. Some agree with negotiating a solution; others disagree. On balance, CIA believes they can go the route if the Soviets and Chinese continue to support them at current levels. Also, they can continue for extended periods with reduced military operations. We believe they can carry on with their current manpower resources.

The President told Mr. Kissinger to discuss the de-escalation point. Mr. Kissinger stated there are two problems for discussion. The first is the game plan and the second, the issue of mutual withdrawal. Looking first at the game plan, a judgment is needed on how to move after one or two more private meetings. We can stress mutual withdrawal initially, plus the DMZ issue and then swing into the political issue. In the game plan proposed for consideration there is one main disagreement

and that involves the issue of de-escalation. Whether or not we should do it is one aspect of the consideration and the other is if we decide to do it in principle, should we then be willing to negotiate it. On the issue itself, the alternatives are:

To consider it only in the context of mutual withdrawal. If we were to decide to negotiate it, we might get into endless discussion. We have a problem of defining it. If we were to adopt a policy of de-escalation, the enemy would lose much of the incentive for negotiating a settlement and the very act of talking about it is a time waster.

On the other side is the argument that de-escalation reduces casualties, strengthens our staying power. Perhaps these two sides are overdrawn but these are the diversions in the game plan.

The President then asked, "by de-escalation, does that mean our unilateral withdrawal." Mr. Kissinger replied, "no."

The President replied, "then it should be understood that this is not what we are talking about when we use the term de-escalation."

Secretary of Defense stated, "I think General McConnell can talk to the Chief's position."

Secretary of State interrupted, "I agree with the first point that de-escalation is not good but we cannot say this in public."

The President stated, "I am afraid if we get into the issue of de-escalation, they will really go for our B–52. Then, we are in a jam."

Mr. Habib stated, "from their standpoint they have been very general in talking about de-escalation. We would not have to propose this in any specific way. Most of the conversation on de-escalation is accusatory. I think we can afford not to raise it initially. But if they begin to move, we should listen."

The President stated, "you wouldn't volunteer."

Secretary Rogers replied, "yes, but we should not be negative on this subject of de-escalation."

Habib stated, "I think we should hold off as Mr. Kissinger has said."

The President stated, "no more talking about this. We are not going to give on this issue. On the other hand, if they raise it, what do you have in mind?"

Secretary Rogers stated, "I think we are in accord on this one."

General McConnell then stated, "I agree with Position 2 with this caveat, if discussion of de-escalation does not include any limitations on weaponry or pacification."

General Goodpaster added, "or Commander's tactics."

Mr. Habib stated, "they have raised all of this but we have never answered."

The President stated, "on the withdrawal issue, I think the question is a moot one. Whether all U.S. forces are withdrawn or not is actually intertwined with what the other side does, especially if we are talking about bargaining and guarantees. We can take all of our forces out if they abide with the conditions. If they don't and we can't, that is fine, but if we can make the American people feel better on this issue, that is also fine."

Mr. Kissinger stated, "there are actually two issues involved: (1) residual forces and (2) our public and private negotiating position. Here, the alternatives are, should we negotiate a requirement for residual forces or should we opt to the listing of a series of conditions which we know won't be met, while speaking as though all forces will be withdrawn?"

The President asked Ambassador Bunker what the South Vietnamese reaction would be on this issue.

Ambassador Bunker replied, we would like to leave this issue open. Thieu has already agreed to the six months provisions of the Manila formula but the key issue would be the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces completely out of Laos and Cambodia and the provision of guarantees which are binding.

The President stated, in my view we should agree to total withdrawal of U.S. forces but include very strong conditions which we know may not be met.

The Secretary of State affirmed the President's position, commenting that if we insist on leaving U.S. forces there, we are going to run into difficulty. It would be much easier to provide a cover set of circumstances which would permit us to do it without claiming it as an objective at the outset.

The President said there is no doubt that U.S. forces will be in Vietnam for some time, something like a large military assistance group, but our public posture must be another thing. The type conditions that we should insist be met are: (1) verification, (2) supervision, (3) total withdrawal from Laos and Cambodia, (4) guarantees or assurances that the above have been done.

Mr. Kissinger then discussed two problems with respect to negotiations. The first is the time that forces would be in Vietnam after a settlement. The second is the issue of how we would treat the six months' provision of the Manila formula. Secretary of State interrupted and stated that he could see no reason why the U.S. Government should stick to the Manila formula. He stated we should have mutual withdrawal which would be total but with strong conditions. Habib added that we have said total withdrawal with conditions and we should not change now. We have told the Soviets this and the South Vietnamese have agreed to it. In terms of the six months' provision, we did say six months at Manila. The South Vietnamese were quite upset and the

North Vietnamese were especially angry and we took the position that it would take us more time (six months) to get our forces out because of the nature of our problem.

The President stated we will not change our position on this issue. We will not outwardly back away from the Manila formula. At the same time, we will keep in mind that we can depart from it in a de facto way.

The President again emphasized that the conditions of withdrawal were the operative portions of any agreement. The President stated it will take a long time to withdraw U.S. forces completely and, frankly, I don't think it can be done within six months.

Habib added it should be understood that under the Manila formula, the withdrawal is phased. When we talk about six months, it means six months after the withdrawal by the North Vietnamese. This is what they understand. This is a sensible position and should pose no problem.

General Lincoln affirmed that this should be feasible.

The President said while we will not depart publicly from the Manila formula, we should not refer to it, simply let it fade away.

Rogers asked if the President meant we should not make any reference to the six months' provision.

The President replied, I want us to be hard in our negotiations but soft in our public stance. Habib said we have not touched on the six months' provisions recently.

The President said that is right, don't get all involved on this issue. If Thieu sees that they meet the conditions that we have established, then we should have no problems with the South Vietnamese. Actually, our negotiated positions to date have been much tougher than was the Manila formula.

Ambassador Bunker said that Manila has been a source of great confusion in South Vietnam and until recently, they thought we would not move at all until six months after the North Vietnamese were entirely out of South Vietnam. Now they understand our position. They understand that the withdrawal would be mutual and simultaneous but that we would have six months longer to complete our total withdrawal.

Again, the President emphasized that we should not get hung up on this issue and that we should emphasize to the South Vietnamese the conditions we will insist upon.

Habib stated that the North Vietnamese will be the ones that will raise this issue. The President replied then tell them we will be out when you meet the conditions that we have established. In other words, after you are gone and the conditions are met, then we will meet our end of the bargain.

General Goodpaster stated that he had three points he wished to make. First, that U.S. forces would need at least three months to get

ready to start any withdrawals. Second, that U.S. forces would need at least six months to get the people and equipment out, emphasizing that people are needed to move equipment and, third, that after all combat forces have been withdrawn that they will need an additional three months to roll up equipment.

The President agreed. Habib stated we will need just such a plan, i.e., a withdrawal plan carefully phased to work with in Paris when we see some progress in the negotiations. Secretary Rogers said it is time that the military realized the kind of problems we have. Why do the military always talk about how much time it will take to withdraw, why do they always rattle the saber in public? This is what has caused our problem with the young people.

General Goodpaster asked that the group consider the facts. He pointed out that the U.S. was now in Phase II of the Vietnamization Program, a program designed to get the VNAF ready to handle the war alone. By mid-year, he stated, we will be nearly completed Phase II. By FY 70, our shortfalls will only exist in helicopters and special forces units. However, it takes until FY 72 for them to get the helicopters and for certain naval forces it will be as late as FY 73.

General Goodpaster emphasized that these problems must be recognized and agreed to furnish Paris with this information. He concluded by pointing out that Phase III which involved the logistics and self-sustaining capability of the South Vietnamese, was programmed for completion at the end of FY 72. In effect, we are talking about two years for the Vietnamese to be ready to take over. It is essential, he said, that we do not place ourselves at a tactical disadvantage at any one point in the process.

The President strongly endorsed General Goodpaster's position.

Dr. Kissinger again took over the conduct of the discussion and asked the group to consider the issue of verification, and the phased withdrawal plan, mentioning the possibility of withdrawal in a de facto sense without negotiations or withdrawal, dependent upon formal negotiations.

The President interrupted and stated he would like to make one more point with the individual involved. He asked Ambassador Bunker if there was anything he had heard here so far which would make his job impossible. Ambassador Bunker replied no.

The President then said that he doesn't like the old style used by the previous Administration of referring always to understandings. He stated that he wanted these things known and formally agreed to, not just indirectly understood. He wants this considered very carefully and when we talk about withdrawal of our forces, we should consider the location to which they will be withdrawn. Are we talking about Okinawa, Hawaii or Thailand or perhaps CONUS?

The President said we need the answers to these questions. They are both political and practical. He said we should meet again in one or two months after these studies are completed. Habib said we need an agreement with the South Vietnamese on the nature of a withdrawal pattern and we will get to work on the issues of phased withdrawal and verification.

Bundy said it is easy to handle the phased withdrawal issue but verification becomes a problem. Who is gong to do it? Do we ask foreign governments to do it? We can prepare a plan but being sure it is complied with is another question.

Habib says we will need these papers shortly. We can only afford to have about two more private meetings before we are ready to talk turkey on withdrawal.

The President then asked Mr. Habib what the Administration could do in Washington to strengthen the U.S. Paris negotiating position. Habib replied, first and foremost, is to keep quiet. Not talking is the best solution. On the issue of de-escalation, there should be no discussion in the public forum.

Rogers interrupted and stated we have got to know what to say publicly. We are constantly being put into the position of commenting. We should probably refer to de-escalation in terms of withdrawal and restoration of the DMZ.

General McConnell stated that he would like to emphasize that when we consider withdrawals and certainly the military wants out as much as anyone, we should not put U.S. forces at a tactical disadvantage and, further, that the U.S. forces must have time to get the equipment out and to get the South Vietnamese ready to handle the problem.

The President reaffirmed General McConnell's position.

General Goodpaster added it should be understood that in practical terms we cannot de-escalate on the ground. We must understand this here at this table.

Habib then added, we must be equally mum on the issue of secret talks. We cannot talk about them publicly in Washington.

The President emphasized to all that this would be done.

Bundy stated that we now need a paper on political settlement, the elements of it, a paper on verification of withdrawal. Finally, we need an answer for the South Vietnamese on what type of guarantees would be provided. The latter is a very thorny area.

Secretary of State affirmed that there would be no talk about abandoning Manila.

The President thanked Ambassador Bunker and Mr. Habib for their contributions and the meeting was adjourned.

50. Talking Points for President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 31, 1969.

TALKING POINTS FOR MEETING WITH
AMBASSADOR LODGE AND MR. HABIB
2:00 P.M., MARCH 31, 1969

1. Express your appreciation to Ambassador Lodge for returning to the U.S. at this time for an exchange of views on the progress of negotiations in Paris. Compliment Lodge on the conduct of the negotiations to date and make the point that you wanted him back at this time so that he would have the first-hand benefit of the results of last Friday's National Security Council meeting on Vietnam prior to proceeding with the private talks.

2. Review the game plan for the private talks:

a. Visualize separate discussions between the US/DRV and the GVN/NLF, private talks including all participants not excluded but the initial focus should be on the US/DRV route.

b. Our posture on the pace of the talks should be ready but not eager. We want to avoid giving Hanoi the impression we are acting from weakness or under pressures.

c. We should maintain public posture of seeking progress without revealing content of private talks.

d. During the early stages we would:

(1) Stress mutual withdrawals. This subject is the foundation of any agreement, of concern to both sides, and our major source of leverage.
(2) Secondary but significant emphasis on restoring the DMZ.
(3) Keep after the question of prisoners.
(4) *De-escalation.* There was a split position in the bureaucracy on this subject prior to the NSC meeting. Some believe we should present and discuss proposals; others disagree. As a result of the NSC meeting on Friday, you have decided:[2]

(a) There will be no de-escalation except as an outgrowth of mutual troop withdrawal.
(b) The U.S. side will not initiate any de-escalation proposals in the Paris negotiations.
(c) If the DRV raise the issue of de-escalation, the U.S. side will listen but only discuss it in the context of mutual withdrawal.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 181, Paris Talks/Meetings, Memos and Miscellaneous, March–May 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive. No drafting information appears on the paper, but it was likely prepared by the White House Staff. Nixon and Kissinger met with Lodge and Habib from 2:05 to 2:55 p.m. on March 31. (Ibid., White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary)

[2] See Document 51.

e. In the broader phase of the negotiations, we would:

(1) Consider moving into a whole set of issues associated with the 62 and 54 Accords and try to get as many agreements as possible. Even in the early stages of talks, Laos, Cambodia and the withdrawal of NVN troops to the DRV must be emphasized. On the definition of U.S. forces subject to withdrawal and as a result of Friday's NSC meeting, you have decided that we should be prepared to state publicly that the U.S. would withdraw all combat forces from South Vietnam if Hanoi meets rigid conditions of a mutual withdrawal agreement. These conditions should include provisions for:

(a) Verification and supervision of withdrawal.
(b) The withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from Laos and Cambodia.
(c) Guarantees to maintain the agreement.

(2) On the issue of a timetable for completion of U.S. withdrawal, you have decided that there will be no public repudiation of the former U.S. position that we would complete our withdrawal within 6 months of the completion of Hanoi's withdrawal (Manila formula). This position, however, will be adopted with the recognition that, in practice, the U.S. will be in a position to control the timing of the completion of our withdrawal, since we can determine if Hanoi has fully met the conditions of the mutual withdrawal agreement. The key point will not be the timetable but rather getting Hanoi to comply with the conditions of the withdrawal.

(3) Concerning the political structure of the South, we should push forward South Vietnamese discussions of the internal political structure. At the same time, we should minimize our involvement in these questions, closely coordinate with the GVN, and urge them to develop negotiating positions.

(4) Concerning GVN, Allied and Soviet roles, we should strive at all times to keep our position fully coordinated with the GVN. We should give the Soviets every opportunity to exert influence in the direction of progress. We do not now envisage a major French role.

3. Inform Lodge that you recognize that the North Vietnamese have been quite successful in conducting their military operations in South Vietnam in such a way as to exert maximum influence on the Paris negotiations. At the same time, you believe we should avoid the de-escalation route at this time in order to preclude a Panmunjom stalemate at the outset. Indicate that you are willing for a time to "take the heat" on this issue.

4. Inform Lodge that you have instructed Ambassador Bunker and General Goodpaster to continue on a priority basis to improve the efficiency and capabilities of the South Vietnamese armed forces and that you anticipate some unilateral U.S. troop withdrawals commencing as early as July, providing there is no drastic change in the situation on the ground.

5. Ask Lodge to provide his appraisal of how the negotiations are proceeding.

51. National Security Decision Memorandum 9[1]

Washington, April 1, 1969.

TO

The Vice President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Director, Office of Emergency Preparedness

SUBJECT

Vietnam

As a result of the National Security Council meeting on March 28, 1969,[2] I have made the following decisions on the issues listed below:

The Issue of De-escalation

1. There will be no de-escalation except as an outgrowth of mutual troop withdrawal.

2. The U.S. side will not initiate any de-escalation proposals in the Paris negotiations.

3. If the DRV raise the issue of de-escalation, the U.S. side will listen but only discuss it in the context of mutual withdrawal.

The Issue of U.S. Forces Subject to Withdrawal

On the definition of U.S. Forces subject to withdrawal, I have decided that we should be prepared to withdraw all combat forces from South Vietnam if Hanoi meets specific conditions of a mutual withdrawal agreement. These conditions should include provisions for:

1. Verification and supervision of withdrawal.
2. The withdrawal of North Vietnamese Forces from Laos and Cambodia, as well as from South Vietnam.
3. Guarantees to maintain the agreement.

The Issue of a Timetable for Completion of U.S. Withdrawal

There will be no public repudiation of the former U.S. position that we would complete our withdrawal within six months of the completion of Hanoi's withdrawal. This position will be adopted with the recognition that, in practice, the U.S. will be in a position to control

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 363, Subject Files, NSDM. Top Secret; Sensitive. General Wheeler also received a copy. Nixon's initials appear at the end of the memorandum.

[2] See Document 49.

the timing of the completion of our withdrawal, since we can determine if Hanoi has fully met the conditions of the mutual withdrawal agreement. The key point will not be the timetable but rather getting Hanoi to comply with the conditions for withdrawal.

The draft papers considered by the National Security Council on March 28, 1969, are approved with modifications reflecting the above decisions.[3]

I have also directed that the following studies be undertaken for which appropriate NSSMs will be forthcoming:

1. Specific plan timetable for Vietnamizing the war.
2. Phased withdrawal under conditions of:

    a. Mutual withdrawal, or
    b. Vietnamizing the war.

3. Verification for mutual withdrawal.
4. Detailed political settlement for SVN.
5. International guarantees for above.

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[3] See footnote 3, Document 47.

52. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 3, 1969.

SUBJECT

Vietnam Problem

I. The Problem in Paris

In trying to settle the Vietnam war, we can follow two routes: (1) through the Paris talks, (2) through some extraordinary procedures. The Paris route is certainly the more convenient and presents fewer administration problems. However, to be successful, the following conditions must be met by the Paris route:

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1319, Unfiled Material, 1969, Box 3 of 19. Top Secret; Sensitive.

1. We must convince the American public that we are eager to settle the war, and Hanoi that we are not so anxious that it can afford to outwait us.

2. We must continue military pressures of a scope sufficient to deter Hanoi from turning the negotiations into another Panmunjom.

3. Our Government must be sufficiently disciplined so that all of its elements speak with the same voice.

4. Relations with the GVN must be maintained at a level of intimacy to deprive Hanoi of the expectation that they can use the negotiations to break the Saigon Government.

If we can meet all these conditions, we might wind the war up by next Spring. However, the prospects for meeting these conditions do not seem to me too bright for the following reasons:

1. The dominant view in the State Department favors measures whose practical consequences will be to relieve the pressures on Hanoi and thus encourage Hanoi to prolong the negotiations.

2. The Paris delegation is profoundly divided and at least its junior members are quite undisciplined. We will thus be under constant pressure of leaks from Paris. (I am attaching a report from a Colonel who has been in the Paris delegations for your information.)[2]

3. The split between the military command in Saigon and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department is so great that it will be very hard to present a coherent approach in Paris to avoid constant oscillation between extremes.

4. As our negotiators get more impatient and as public pressures start building up, there will be an increasing temptation to squeeze Saigon and to maneuver it into the position of being the chief obstacle to a settlement. If you compare our negotiating position a year ago with what it is today, this process of gradual chipping away becomes obvious. I would suspect that our minimum position today will be much stronger than our maximum position a year from now.

5. The tendency to make foreign policy by press-leaks or only partially considered statements deprives our policy of flexibility and coherence. To obtain discipline, on the other hand, might produce a bloody fight which would impair our diplomacy.

II. A Possible Solution

For all these reasons, I have concluded that our best course would be a bold move of trying to settle everything at once. Such a move should:

1. Attempt to involve the Soviet Union;

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[2] Not attached, but Nixon attached an extract of this report to an April 10 memorandum to Rogers; see Document 57.

2. Attempt to negotiate a package settlement in order to avoid endless delay.

3. Present a credible threat of serious consequence if no settlement is reached.

Soviet involvement is crucial; however, the Soviet problem is complicated. They cannot be eager to run major risks for Hanoi because a victory for Hanoi does not benefit the Soviet Union geopolitically and might hurt it ideologically by proving the validity of the Chinese interpretation of international affairs. But a humiliation for Hanoi is also not acceptable because it stakes Moscow's claim to leadership of the world communist movement. In these circumstances, Moscow tends to procrastinate; it does just enough to keep its claims as a major communist power but below the threshold of military confrontation with us. It helps tactically in Paris, but so far has not made a strategic move to end the war.

Moscow is likely to move off this course only on the basis of its own requirements, not of our needs. Secondly, it will require some event to galvanize Moscow into action or to give it an excuse for it.

This leads me to propose a program with the following components.

1. An approach to Dobrynin by me along these lines:

a. The President has reviewed the Vietnam situation carefully.

b. He will not be the first American President to lose a war, and he is not prepared to give in to public pressures which would have that practical consequence.

c. The President has therefore decided that he will make one more effort to achieve a reasonable settlement. If it fails, other measures will be invoked.

d. These measures could not help but involve wider risks. U.S.-Soviet relations are therefore at a crossroads.

e. The President is eager to move into an era of conciliation with the Soviet Union on a broad front. As a sign of this, he is willing to send a high-level delegation to Moscow to agree with the Soviet Union on principles of strategic arms limitations. He is also willing to consider other meetings at even higher levels.

f. The head of the delegation to discuss strategic arms limitations would be Cyrus Vance.[3] He would be empowered, while in Moscow,

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[3] Kissinger talked with Vance on March 18 to explore his willingness to undertake a mission to Moscow to link the opening of the SALT talks with an overall proposal for a settlement on Vietnam. Vance would meet secretly with a senior North Vietnamese representative in the Soviet capital, and be empowered to negotiate both issues. (*White House Years*, p. 266)

to meet with a North Vietnamese negotiator and agree with him on a military as well as a political settlement. Our offer to Hanoi will be generous and forthcoming in keeping with the sacrifices Hanoi has made and the courage with which it has fought.

g. The President will give this effort in Moscow 6 weeks to succeed.

h. The President will ask nothing of the Soviet Union inconsistent with its position as a senior communist power. He expects that nothing will be asked of the U.S. inconsistent with its worldwide obligations.

i. If this negotiation is successful, the President will conclude that the major danger to war is being removed and he would expect progress in many areas.

j. The President is prepared to repeat this proposition to a Soviet Ambassador personally if there is any interest in the Kremlin.

2. If Dobrynin agrees, a mission should be sent to Moscow headed by Vance for the purpose of discussing principles of strategic arms limitations. Vance should be empowered to discuss North Vietnamese issues.

3. The object of the Vietnam negotiations would be as follows:

a. *Definition of Objective:* To reach prompt agreement with the North Vietnamese on the general shape of a political-military settlement, specifically:

(1) *Military*—Agreement that there will be mutual withdrawal of all external forces, and a ceasefire based on a mutual withdrawal.

(2) *Political*—(i) Agreement that guarantees the NLF freedom from reprisals and the right to participate fully in the political and social life of the country in exchange for agreement by NLF and DRV to forego further attempts to achieve their political objectives by force and violence. (ii) Agreement that there will be a separate and independent SVN for at least 5 years.

(3) *Mechanism for supervising and verifying the carrying out of the settlement.* The agreement with the DRV should not attempt to spell out the manner in which the general principles agreed to will be implemented. That should be left for Paris.

4. If Vance can get an agreement in principle, the negotiations would shift back to Paris for final implementation. The whole process should be completed before the end of August.

III. Pros and Cons

This procedure would have the following advantages:

1. It would give the Soviet Union an excuse and a method for involving itself in the process.

2. It would prevent a Panmunjom of protracted negotiations while casualties mount.

3. It would give you control over the negotiations.

4. It is the only way to end the war quickly and the best way to conclude it honorably.

5. If it becomes known, it will be considered as an imaginative peace move.

6. The beginning of SALT negotiations will give you a little more maneuvering room domestically. Focusing the initial talks on "principles" keeps you from being pressured all the time.

The course outlined here has the following disadvantages:

1. It will get no cooperation from the bureaucracy and may even be sabotaged if they find out about it.

2. It may be used by Hanoi to undermine our position in Saigon. I think this risk would be minimal. Hanoi's fear of Peking will make it reluctant to publicize the talks.

3. It will be difficult to give Vance the dual negotiating role without the other members of the SALT delegation knowing about it.[4]

4. A related question is whether a high DRV official can come to Moscow at the same time the SALT talks are going on without suspicions being aroused.

5. Another question is whether the DRV can negotiate in Moscow in light of the current tensions between Moscow and Peking.

6. All these difficulties are surmountable. The real problem is that the approach outlined here should not be implemented unless you are prepared to take tough escalatory steps if Moscow rejects the overture (mining Haiphong, bombing Cambodia, etc.). To fail to do so would be to risk your credibility.

With this proviso, I believe the pros outweigh the cons. If you agree, I shall work out a more detailed scenario.[5]

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[4] This was a concern Vance raised to Kissinger. (Ibid.)

[5] Kissinger spoke to Nixon at Key Biscayne and the President was "dubious about the 'Vance ploy,' as he called it," but Nixon agreed to make a diplomatic approach to the Soviet Union. (Ibid., pp. 267–268) See Document 55.

53. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 3, 1969.

SUBJECT

Memorandum of Conversation with Ambassador Dobrynin, April 3, 1969

Dobrynin called me about 3:30 p.m. to ask whether he might come by for fifteen minutes this afternoon. I received him at 4:30 p.m. and he stayed for an hour.

[Omitted here is information unrelated to Vietnam.]

However, it soon became clear that the note was just a pretext. Dobrynin turned the conversation to Vietnam and asked me what I thought of developments. I said we were very relaxed, we knew what we were doing and would not be deflected by public protest. Dobrynin asked me whether we had "any intention of expanding the war." I replied that I had always told him that the President was determined to end the war one way or the other. He could be sure that I did not speak idly and that I hoped Hanoi kept Moscow fully informed of everything that was going on. Dobrynin said: "You know we do not have any advisers at the headquarters in South Vietnam." I replied: "Well, I hope they keep you informed of everything that goes on."

Dobrynin then asked how I visualized the relationship between a military and political settlement. I decided to play fairly tough and said that we would probably want to discuss military issues first. (I did this to preserve the option of the Vance mission and to have our willingness to discuss political matters within that framework serve as a concession.) I added that we could understand it, however, if after the military issues were settled, Hanoi would make their application dependent on progress towards a political settlement. Dobrynin pretended that this was a major concession and said it put a new complexion on things. He said we had to understand that the NLF was reluctant to risk itself in a forum with the GVN since it considered the GVN determined to destroy it. Dobrynin asked whether I saw any chance of replacing Thieu and Ky. I said no, but we were willing to consider safeguards for the NLF after a settlement. Dobrynin said this

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin–Kissinger, 1969, [Part 2]. Secret; Nodis. The memorandum was not initialed by Kissinger, but Document 55 makes it clear that Kissinger sent it to the President.

was all terribly complicated. The NLF did not insist on a coalition government. It would settle for a peace cabinet (without Thieu and Ky) which would safeguard its members.

Dobrynin then returned to the problem of escalation. I told him it would be too bad if we were driven in this direction because it was hard to think of a place where a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States made less sense. I added that it seemed to me our interests in Vietnam were quite compatible. Dobrynin replied: "Our interests in Vietnam are practically identical. We might want a slightly more neutral South Vietnam than you, but it is not an issue of consequence."

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

Comment:

Dobrynin seemed very insecure when speaking about Vietnam. All of this suggests to me that maybe the Vance mission is our best hope.

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54. Editorial Note

South Vietnamese Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky attended the State Funeral of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower in Washington on March 30, 1969. Ky and Ambassador Bui Diem met with President Nixon, Ambassador Bunker, and Presidential Assistant Henry Kissinger from 2:05 to 2:34 p.m. on April 1. This meeting was one of many President Nixon had that day with foreign leaders attending the funeral. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) No other record of the discussion between Ky and Nixon has been found. Ky also met with Under Secretary of State Elliot Richardson on April 1 and Secretary of State William Rogers on April 3 at 12:30 p.m. Records of these discussions are in memoranda of conversation of those dates (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 VIET S) Ky also met with Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird on April 2 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. (Memorandum of conversation, April 4; Washington National Records Center, OSD/ISA Files: FRC 330 72 A 6308, Vietnam #2, 1969, 000.1) Telegram 54546 to Saigon, April 9, provides an overall assessment of Ky's trip. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 VIET S)

On April 4 Ky met with Kissinger at the Vietnamese Chancery in Washington at 9:40 a.m. Ky assured Kissinger that relations between the Nixon administration and the South Vietnamese Government had improved greatly. Kissinger invited Ambassador Bui Diem, who was attending the meeting, to come and see him if he was confused about

the President's Vietnam policy. Kissinger told Ky to disregard a public statement by Laird about a possible coalition government with the National Liberation Front and assured Ky that the President would make Vietnam policy. Asked about the war effort, Ky stated that although the North Vietnamese were getting weaker, he realized that a political statement was "the only practical solution." Ky assured Kissinger that South Vietnam could live with a settlement as long as North Vietnamese troops withdrew from South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. When Kissinger raised the issue of elections, Ky assured him that his government could win elections at the local level and would accept supervision. Ky reported optimistically on "Vietnamizing the conflict." Kissinger concluded the discussion with promises of close cooperation, a special channel to Bui Diem if serious problems arose, and another assurance that only the President and the White House mattered on Vietnam policy. (Ibid.)

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55. Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

April 5, 1969, 9:45 a.m.

[Omitted here is discussion of Peru and the International Petroleum Corporate dispute.]

P: I was wondering, in view of the rather patent attempt of the North Vietnamese to try to indicate that there is no progress being made in the talks—and then also the statement that the Administration had attempted to reduce its casualties and they wouldn't let that happen[2]—I'm inclined to think that even without a reason, we ought to go ahead and crack them pretty hard on the North.

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 359, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File. No classification marking. Nixon was in Key Biscayne, Florida; Kissinger was in Washington.

[2] On April 3 North Vietnamese delegation officials in Paris denied that "secret talks" had started and that "some progress" was being made. On April 1 the NLF news agency stated that Abrams' defensive strategy of "avoiding losses and reducing expenses" had proved to be a "fiasco" by their post-Tet military offense. (Quoted from Stanley Millet, ed., *South Vietnam: U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia,* Vol. 4, 1969, pp. 35 and 40)

HAK: I know what you mean. I don't know whether you've had a chance to see a conversation I had with Dobrynin—it's in a package sent to you yesterday.[3] He came in with a pretext on European matters, but it was terribly transparent—he launched into a long talk on Vietnam. He said "we don't have any military observers with the Communist party in the south." I said "I hope they tell you what's going on." He kept coming back to this problem.

P: They don't have private talks next week?

HAK: No, it would be a good week for doing it. I've become convinced—and Dobrynin's conversation made it stronger—that we try the other route we have been discussing. The Soviets are getting edgy. I think if we gave them some way of getting themselves into it they might be ready to do it now.

I think domestically, and in Thieu government, it's going to be hard to hold it together. You have Laird's statements, for example—what he said about B–52's and private talks, etc.

P: Everybody has to get out and make it appear things are going well—they aren't used to playing a big game.

HAK: That's the problem.

P: They can't just stand there and (wait?), which is what you have to do.

HAK: Spend your assets at once, rather than piddle them away.

P: I agree we're going to have to change it. I'm not sure that will work. We may have to do something even more strong. I'm not sure the Vance ploy will work.

HAK: We don't have to tie ourselves to the Vance thing.

P: I'm concerned at the present time we're sort of piddling around and Walsh is jittering(?) around in Paris. The tone of the private talks has changed. I'm not so sure that they don't read what we're doing and that they're going to wait us out. It will worry them a little—that was the purpose of the other one, wasn't it?

HAK: That was the purpose, and we learned from it. We learned Hanoi was pretty eager, because they never would have come to private talks.

P: Let's assume the other side won't. We hit them again. I suppose they could then squeal that what we were doing—they might want to use this as a pretext.

HAK: They still have to get Sihanouk. They have no status for complaining. We have to play it cool.

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[3] See Document 53.

P: Particularly in that corner.

HAK: It's even more inaccessible where we hit it.

P: The Laotians are now asking for help.

HAK: I think if we could come to a decision on whether to shift the framework that then we ought to adhere to that, and then do it the week before we shift the framework so that word can get back to Moscow. One problem is Hanoi might not know how to translate it. Paris is cumbersome procedure even if you wanted to move fast.

P: Shifting of the framework poses a problem of what you do with Rogers, of course.

HAK: I think if we do it carefully, Rogers has to be brought along. It would take us about 3 weeks to set up, in my view. This is not something the Soviets would really have to think about.

P: My inclination is to crack this one, and crack another one—plenty of places to hit.

HAK: Say we crack them next week. Week after, we approach Dobrynin. But it would take him about two weeks to set up. When it is set up, we've got to bring Rogers in. By that time the talks in Paris might be stalemated and he might be eager to have a way out. The way everyone is talking in this country Hanoi is going to try to wait.

P: If they see everybody talking, that's going to make them wait. I can rectify it to an extent, by what I say next week at the press conference—that will hold the line.

HAK: Next week would be bad for a press conference, with NATO in town and a major speech. At any rate, whenever you have a p.c., you can rectify it. The NATO speech is on Thursday. Bill is going to have a p.c. on Monday[4]—he hasn't had one yet.

P: We may have to hit them one while we're here. The necessity for the North Vietnamese to know that there's still a lot of snap left in the old boys is very important. And I don't know any other way to do it.

HAK: I think that's needed. But also what is needed is a forum so they have a way out if they need it. I'd be in favor of doing it next week anyhow, even if we don't have change of venue, but if they could tie the two together—that's what made the other one so confusing to them.

P: OK, we'll see what happens. When do they expect the next private talk?

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[4] April 7; the text of Rogers' press conference is in Department of State *Bulletin,* April 28, 1969, pp. 357–363.

HAK: They will ask for it when Bunker is back in Saigon. In about a week.

P: I think we better get geared up to do this other one. So they're ready to hit that area. I won't tell anything to the Pentagon.

HAK: I'll hold it until Monday.

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56. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

The War in Laos and the Significance of the Fall of Na Khang

The war in Laos took a serious turn a month ago with the fall of the Na Khang guerrilla base in Northeastern Laos.

I attach a CIA study done at our request which concludes that the loss of Na Khang does not drastically alter the tactical situation, nor necessarily signal an intensification of the Communists' dry-season offensive.[2] The psychological damage to shake Government morale may be the most significant aspect of the event.

The study assumes that the RLG is likely to react to the fall of Na Khang with panicky withdrawals if other Government positions come under attack. In recent weeks, Souvanna Phouma has shown himself very seriously worried, but the Government forces have not panicked. They have made a series of probes to throw the Communists' timetable off. At Souvanna's request we have supplied the Lao troops with 4000 automatic rifles, widened the area of our air strikes and struck at Communist material supplies in the Plain of Jars. These actions have perhaps slowed the enemy, but it is still an open question whether he will

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 64, Memoranda to the President, February–April 1969. Top Secret. Drafted by Grant on April 8. Richard L. Sneider sent this memorandum to Kissinger under cover of an April 9 memorandum indicating that he had "recast" the study on Laos as a memorandum for the President at Kissinger's request. A handwritten note on the first page reads: "retd from P[resident], 4/15/69."

[2] Not attached; reference is to CIA's Intelligence Memorandum No. 0566/69, April 8, 1969, "The Current Communist Threat in Laos." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 545, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. 1, to 31 July 1969)

have advanced far enough fundamentally to affect the balance of forces in Laos, before the rains come in a few weeks and bring a halt to his advances.

The Two Struggles: There are two levels of conflict in Laos—the more limited conflict between the RLG and the Communists and the larger conflict relating to the Vietnam War. The smaller conflict is being fought in the shadow of the larger. The RLG would collapse without U.S. aid and FEOF. The Pathet Lao is dependent upon North Vietnam, which could take over Laos very quickly if it wished. The shaky equilibrium which has survived since 1962 has been at the sufferance of the outside powers, who have chosen to contain the Laos conflict rather than to attempt a fundamental shift in the balance of power within Laos.

The Communist Strategy: North Vietnam has been willing to tolerate the present balance because

—Its control of the "Ho Chi Minh trail" has not been threatened and it has been able to maintain generally effective control of the hill areas bordering North Vietnam.

—It has calculated that a move which put Communists in control of the Mekong plain or toppled the RLG would probably remove the restraints upon a more massive U.S. effort to interdict the Ho Chi Minh trail.

—It has probably calculated that, after a Communist victory in South Vietnam, Communist control of Laos could be brought about easily, and primarily through political means.

—To communize Laos would lose much third world sympathy for North Vietnam, would unalterably demonstrate that the Communists had chosen to tear up the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962, and might encounter resistance from the USSR, which probably favors the present situation as offering more leverage than it would have with a Communist Government in power.

The North Vietnam calculation may have shifted somewhat in recent months, since the balance of incentives and disincentives has been changed. Since the bombing halt in North Vietnam, the U.S. has spent much more effort on harassing the Ho Chi Minh trail, which may affect the Communist view of the usefulness of the present arrangement. At the same time, the Communists probably believe that the U.S. is less likely to escalate the war by massive intervention against the trail. Finally, North Vietnam may wish to institutionalize some arrangement which would give it continuing access to South Vietnam through Southern Laos in the event of an agreement in Paris.

The Communists, with Soviet help, seem presently to be orchestrating a major effort to restore the balance in their favor by forcing a halt in the U.S. bombing of Laos. Their point of pressure will be upon Souvanna Phouma, to whom they presumably have offered or will offer a combination of inducements (Communist participation in a revitalized

Government of National Union) and threats (Communist encroachments upon RLG-controlled territory) to persuade him to call for a halt in the bombing.

The Soviet and Chinese interests conflict, as usual. The Soviets probably have more leverage with Souvanna Phouma than they would with a Communist-dominated Government of Laos. The Chinese seek the establishment of a Communist Government responsive to the North Vietnamese and themselves. In this circumstance, we have a certain overlap of interest with the Soviets in maintaining the Souvanna administration.

The U.S. Strategy: We have tolerated the Laos equilibrium for these reasons:

—Control over the Mekong Valley, with its access to Thailand, has remained in friendly hands.

—We have been able, with Souvanna Phouma's agreement and support, to monitor movements along the Ho Chi Minh trail and to harass it by air and, to a lesser extent, on the ground.

—Most important, an effort to tip the Laos balance in our favor would require a major expansion of our war effort.

The "Little War": The internal balance has been remarkably stable since 1962–63 when the RLG effectively absorbed most of the Neutralists, and the Communists absorbed the remainder. We have defused threats from the Right by making clear that our support is for Souvanna Phouma, and he seems to face no immediate challenge for control of the RLG.

The two sides have tended to consolidate and expand their control in their own zones. However, Communist control of the uplands has been resisted by pro-RLG Meo guerrillas, which number some 40,000, which receive extensive CIA support, and which have also helped to man our roadwatch operations along the Ho Chi Minh trail. These guerrillas operate in Pathet Lao areas, and in some places have actually succeeded in winning and holding territory for the RLG.

On the other hand, the Communists have—within the strategic balance pictured above—regularly nibbled at RLG areas of control outside the Mekong plain. First, they took the Plain of Jars. In 1967–68 they took the Nam Bac Valley in Luang Prabang province and wiped out guerrilla bases in most of Houa Phan (Sam Neua) province in the Northeast. These gains have been achieved in dry-season skirmishes rather than a sustained campaign.

The Fall of Na Khang in the Strategic Perspectives: This incident is not vital to either level of conflict, but it may relate to both.

It certainly relates to the intra-Laotian struggle. The fall of the base and airstrip effectively seals off Sam Neua province (the Laotian "bulge" into North Vietnam) from all government operations. The commander of the guerrilla forces in the area, Vang Pao, is probably the ablest Laotian general. His Meo tribal forces have done more than

their part in preventing the Communists from consolidating control of this hill area, but they have suffered severe manpower attrition. The Government is talking of removing their dependents to the plains, which would remove the last incentive for them to fight in the hills. Vang Pao himself has had to recognize that he does not have the power to do more than harass the enemy and perhaps to hold off further offensives until the wet season stops the Communists.

A threat may now be more easily posed to the major "Neutralist" (friendly) base of Moung Soui. These forces are not distinguished fighters; and if they are dispersed, the Government's position will become shakier.

The RLG has suffered a psychological setback of serious proportions. The Pathet Lao hand will be strengthened if the Communists should elect to call for negotiations to reconstitute the three-way coalition envisaged by the Geneva Accords of 1962—a decision which would be a tactic to weaken and eventually destroy Souvanna rather than to help him.

The situation has become serious enough for Souvanna Phouma to have asked our Embassy that it extend our bombing to the Plain of Jars, and then to include the Communist administrative centers, a change of the ground rules which could lead to retaliation against Vientiane or other Communist responses. Our Embassy has complied, and a series of air strikes entitled "Operation Rain Dance" is being carried out to slow the enemy's momentum until the rainy season.

The incident could relate to the larger picture, and be part of the threat to Souvanna that he will lose more territory if he does not accede to pressures to call a halt to the American bombing.

Laos in the Paris Negotiations: The two levels of action point to the two principal problems which Laos will pose for us in the Paris negotiations. First will be the provision of adequate guarantees that lines of communication not be left open through Laos for the North Vietnamese to support continuing insurrection in the South, and for the Chinese and North Vietnamese to support the Communists in Thailand. Second, and related to this, will be the problem of arriving at some new balance in Laos itself which will protect Laos from being very quickly overrun by the North Vietnamese Communists with a facade of Pathet Lao participation. This will require international inspection and control of much greater weight and strength than the International Control Commission as structured in the 1962 Accords. Or it will require external forces to beef up the Laotians, or some threat of retaliation against stepped-up Vietnamese pressures sufficiently credible to persuade Hanoi to desist. None of these deterrents would be easily created.

57. Memorandum From President Nixon to Secretary of State Rogers[1]

Washington, April 10, 1969.

SUBJECT

Paris Negotiations

I have recently been given a very disturbing report by a member of the staff of our negotiating team in Paris, which came to me on a personal basis.

The report, an extract of which is attached, indicates that our negotiating team is fundamentally split on the issue of the conduct of U.S. negotiations and that there are members of the team who are actively involved in a disloyal campaign "to save the President from himself." Activities include the conduct of correspondence with elements in the United States who favor termination of the war under any conditions, informal and frequent discussions with the press and friendly and unfriendly embassies to which opinions and views contrary to official policy are expressed.

Allegedly this activity has been conducted for some time without the cognizance of the head of our negotiating team and in flagrant violation of my previously stated policy on the conduct of our negotiations.

As I have emphasized on several occasions, I expect and encourage the free exchange of conflicting views on any policy issue up until the time a decision is made. Following decision, however, viewpoints in conflict with stated policy should be silenced. I expect a complete adherence to this policy throughout the Department of State and our embassies abroad. Should deviations come to your attention, the individuals involved should be promptly replaced.

RN

Attachment

EXTRACT[2]

He told me in the strictest confidence that he wished to convey some views which, under ordinary circumstances, he would never voice but, in the light of his serious concern for conditions in Paris, he

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Richardson Papers, Under Secretary of State, William P. Rogers, Box CL 3. Secret; Personal; Eyes Only.

[2] Confidential; Eyes Only.

felt must be conveyed. With that introduction, he stated that he viewed the Paris negotiating team as in a complete state of disarray. It was split wide open on the issue of the U.S. conduct of negotiations and members of the negotiating team were actively involved in a disloyal campaign to "save the President from himself" by indulging in a "poison pen campaign" with elements in the United States who favor the termination of the war under "any" conditions. He stated that he was aware that correspondence was being carried on by members of the staff with elements in the United States which had already come out in direct opposition to President Nixon's policies. He also stated that many in the negotiating team were devoid of loyalty or discipline and that members of the staff were indulging in frequent and direct conversations with other embassies, with the other side, and with the press, and that these contacts were being conducted without the cognizance of the head of the U.S. negotiating team.

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58. National Security Study Memorandum 36[1]

Washington, April 10, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Vietnamizing the War

The President has directed the preparation of a specific timetable for Vietnamizing the war. He has asked that the Secretary of Defense be responsible for the overall planning and implementation of this process, in coordination with the Secretary of State and the Director of Central Intelligence.

The plan should cover all aspects of US military, para-military, and civilian involvement in Vietnam, including combat and combat support forces, advisory personnel, and all forms of equipment. The plan can draw on current studies, including those for T-Day planning and

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 365, Subject Files, NSSMs. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. Initialed by Haig. A copy was sent to General Wheeler.

RVNAF modernization and improvement. However, this timetable will be directed toward the progressive transfer to the South Vietnamese of the fighting effort with the US and other TCCs increasingly in support roles, assuming that the war continues and that North Vietnamese as well as Vietcong forces are in South Vietnam.

Assumptions for this timetable will include:

—a starting date of July 1, 1969;
—current North Vietnamese and Vietcong force levels, (i.e., we are not able to achieve mutual withdrawals); these levels should be continually adjusted in future months to ongoing intelligence estimates;
—current projections of RVNAF force levels;
—no deescalation in allied military efforts, except that resulting from phased withdrawals of US and other TCC forces which are not fully compensated for by the South Vietnamese;
—the highest national priorities for the equipping and training of South Vietnamese forces.

Based on these assumptions, timetables should be drawn up for the transfer of the combat role to the GVN and restriction of the US role to combat support and advisory missions only, with alternative completion dates of December 31, 1970, June 30, 1971, December 31, 1971, and December 31, 1972. For each alternative schedule the plan should identify the degradation in combat capability, if any, which would result, and the implications for the per cent of population under relatively secure GVN control. Each schedule should also estimate the budget and BOP implications.

Continual study, refinement and reevaluation of these problems will be necessary as the Vietnamization process proceeds. The President has requested by June 1 an initial overall report outline, as well as specific recommendations, with alternatives, for the first six months (July 1 to December 31, 1969), and a complete report by September 1. Further studies, recommendations, and progress reports will be requested subsequently.

Henry A. Kissinger

59. National Security Study Memorandum 37[1]

Washington, April 10, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Vietnam

As indicated in NSDM 9 of April 1, 1969,[2] the President has directed the preparation of certain studies on Vietnam. He has asked that the following papers be prepared by the interdepartmental Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam and submitted to the NSC Review Group by the dates indicated.

Phased Withdrawals

a. *Mutual Withdrawal*

This paper should examine the modalities of mutual withdrawal, whether agreed to publicly or privately by both sides, tacit, or de facto. It should cover timetables, phasing, types of personnel, regroupment, local cease fires and any other relevant subjects. Military, logistic, territorial and political factors and implications should be considered. (May 16, 1969)

b. *Vietnamizing the War*

This paper should examine the modalities of US withdrawals under conditions of our progressively turning over combat efforts to the South Vietnamese in the absence of reciprocal enemy withdrawals. It should cover timetables, phasing, types of personnel, regroupment, and substitution of South Vietnamese forces. Military, logistic, territorial, and political factors and implications should be considered.

This study should reflect the findings of the preliminary report of the Secretary of Defense on a specific timetable for Vietnamizing the war. (June 13, 1969) (See NSSM 36)[3]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–142, NSSM Files, NSSM 37. Top Secret; Sensitive. A copy was sent to General Wheeler.

[2] Document 51.

[3] Document 58.

Verification for Mutual Withdrawal

This paper should examine various means and mechanisms for verifying the process and completion of mutual withdrawals, whether agreed to publicly or privately by both sides, tacit, or de facto.[4] It should set forth the advantages and disadvantages of various types of verification machinery including joint belligerent commissions, reactivation of the ICC, and creation of new international groups (such as an Asian body). The paper should include a discussion of our unilateral capability to verify withdrawals drawing on all sources of information. It should consider how agreed arrangements can usefully supplement our unilateral capabilities. (May 16, 1969)

Political Settlement for South Vietnam

This study should explore various types of political settlement within South Vietnam and the possible US role concerning these questions. The paper should examine all feasible options, including elections at all levels, sharing of governmental power before and/or after elections, constitutional considerations, agreed or de facto territorial accommodations, decentralization of government power. The study should discuss the feasibility of each alternative and the likely attitudes of the GVN, the various segments of the South Vietnamese populace, the NLF, and Hanoi. It should evaluate the likely evolution within South Vietnam under alternative arrangements. Finally, the possible US role—in Vietnam as well as in the negotiations—in achieving a political settlement should be covered. (May 16, 1969)

International Guarantees

The paper should explore the subject of international guarantees for

—mutual withdrawal
—political settlement in South Vietnam
—the DMZ
—any other appropriate aspects of an overall Vietnam settlement.

In so doing, the study should be consistent with the separate papers on mutual withdrawal, verification for mutual withdrawal, political settlement for SVN, and our policy on the DMZ. This paper should

[4] In a May 1 memorandum to Rogers, Laird, and Helms, Kissinger amended NSSM 37 to read: "the specification for a paper on 'Verification for Mutual Withdrawal' should be amended by adding the following sentences after the first sentence: 'In addition, the paper should examine the requirements for verifying that there is no resumption of infiltration in the future, in a post-withdrawal situation. For both purposes, the means and mechanisms for verifying should include a careful discussion of manpower and logistic requirements. The paper should set forth. . .' " (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–142, NSSM Files, NSSM 37)

discuss the advantages and disadvantages of attempting to achieve international guarantees, and ways to negotiate them—e.g., at Paris, in a follow-on international conference, etc. (June 13, 1969)

Henry A. Kissinger

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60. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 15, 1969.

SUBJECT

Memorandum of Conversation with Dobrynin April 14, 1969

After an exchange of pleasantries and a somewhat lengthy discussion of the Middle East (reported separately),[2] the discussion turned to Vietnam. I asked Dobrynin whether he had had any reaction from Moscow to our last conversation. He said he had not, but that he was aware of a conversation Zorin had had with Lodge.

I then said that the President had wished me to convey his thoughts on Vietnam to Moscow. We had followed the discussions in Paris with great interest and considerable patience. As Lodge had already pointed out to Zorin, it was very difficult to negotiate when the other side constantly accused us of insincerity, when every private meeting so far had been initiated by us, and when every proposition was put forward on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The President had therefore decided to make one more direct approach on the highest level before drawing the conclusion that the war could only be ended by unilateral means. The President's personal word should be a guarantee of sincerity. After showing Dobrynin the talking points and the President's initials, I read them to him. He took copious notes, stopping every once in awhile to ask for an explanation. When I said we wanted to have the negotiations concluded within two months, Dobrynin said that if this proposal was feasible at all, we would be able to tell after the first week of negotiations whether they would lead anywhere. When I got through, Dobrynin asked whether I was saying that unless

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/HAK, 1969 [part 2]. Secret; Nodis. A handwritten note on the memorandum reads: "Back from President, 4/16/69."

[2] Attached but not printed.

the Vietnam war was settled, we would not continue our discussions on the Middle East and not enter the talks on strategic arms. I replied that we were prepared to continue talking but that we would take measures which might create a complicated situation.

Dobrynin said that whatever happens in Vietnam, the Soviet leaders were eager to continue talking. He then asked whether these new measures might involve Soviet ships. I replied that many measures were under intensive study. In dealing with the President, it was well to remember that he always did more than he threatened and that he never threatened idly.

Dobrynin then said he hoped we understand the limitations of Soviet influence in Hanoi. We had to understand that while the Soviet Union might recommend certain steps, it would never threaten to cut off supplies. He could tell me that the Soviet Union had been instrumental in helping to get the talks started. Moreover, Communist China was constantly accusing the Soviet Union of betraying Hanoi. The Soviet Union could not afford to appear at a Communist meeting and find itself accused of having undermined a fellow Socialist country. On the other hand, the Soviet Union had no strategic interest in Southeast Asia. The chief reasons for its support of North Vietnam have been the appeals of a fellow Socialist country. I could be sure that the President's proposal would be transmitted to Hanoi within 24 hours. Dobrynin added that often Soviet messages were never answered by Hanoi so he could not guarantee what the reply would be or indeed if there would be a reply.

Dobrynin then said that the North Vietnamese were using the following agreement with Moscow and he stressed that Moscow did not necessarily agree with it: The Saigon Government was composed of individuals committed to the destruction of the NLF. The NLF would not enter a political confrontation in which the administrative apparatus was in the hands of people who sought to destroy them. The NLF would not insist on participating in the Government but it would insist that the Government be broadened and that Thieu and Ky be removed. Dobrynin repeated that he was simply stating Hanoi's arguments, not endorsing them.

I replied that I was familiar with Hanoi's arguments since they were being made to us as well. Nevertheless, the best policy for the NLF would be to work out guarantees for its political participation *after* a settlement of the war. They would certainly find us forthcoming.

Dobrynin reiterated Moscow's desire to stay in negotiations with us whatever happened in Vietnam. He told me many anecdotes of Stalin as well as of Molotov. He added that the Soviet Union had intended to send Marshall Zhukov to Eisenhower's funeral but Zhukov had recently had two strokes and was partially paralyzed. He then

asked whether we understood that Communist China was attempting to produce a clash between the Soviet Union and the United States. If the war in Vietnam escalates, it would only service Communist China's interest. I replied that this was the precise point the President had tried to make to Kuznetsov on the occasion of the Eisenhower funeral. It was, therefore, incumbent on the Soviet Union to help us remove this danger. We felt that in this period, the great nuclear powers still have the possibility of making peace.

As he was preparing to leave, Dobrynin asked me whether he could read over the talking points once more. I handed them to him and he read them slowly and carefully. He departed saying "this has been a very important conversation."

Attachment

TALKING POINTS ON VIETNAM FOR DISCUSSION WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN

1. I plan to utilize the following points in discussing efforts to resolve the Vietnam conflict:

a. The President has just completed a thorough going review of the Vietnam situation in its fullest world-wide context.

b. He will not be the first American President to lose a war, and he is not prepared to give in to public pressures which would have that practical consequence.[3]

c. The President is convinced that it is in no one's interest to have an outcome that would encourage Mainland China's aggressive drive.

d. The President has therefore decided that he will make one more[4] effort to achieve a reasonable settlement. If it fails, other measures will be invoked.[5]

e. These measures could not help but involve wider risks. U.S.-Soviet relations are therefore at a crossroad.[6]

f. The President views this point in history with the utmost gravity, especially since he is eager to move into an era of conciliation with the Soviet Union on a broad front. He is willing to begin talks on strategic arms limitations. He has agreed not to threaten the status quo in Europe. He is willing to consider meetings at the highest levels.

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[3] Kissinger bracketed this paragraph.

[4] Kissinger bracketed the phrase "one more" and wrote above it "a major."

[5] Kissinger bracketed the final sentence of 1. d.

[6] Kissinger bracketed this paragraph.

g. However, the President believes that an acceptable settlement to the Vietnamese conflict is the key to everything. Therefore, concurrently, the President proposes to designate a high-level representative to meet with a North Vietnamese negotiator at any location, including Moscow, designated by the Soviet Union to seek agreement with a designated North Vietnamese negotiator on a military as well as a political settlement. The President visualizes that this negotiation would be conducted distinct from the existing Paris framework in order to avoid the sluggish and heretofore cumbersome mechanisms that have evolved in Paris.

h. The President will give this peace effort just six weeks to succeed.[7]

i. The President will ask nothing of the Soviet Union inconsistent with its position as a senior communist power. He expects that nothing will be asked of the U.S. inconsistent with its world-wide obligations.

j. If this negotiation is successful, the President will conclude that the major danger to war is being removed and he would expect progress in many areas.

k. The President is prepared to repeat this proposition to the Soviet Ambassador personally if there is any interest in the Kremlin.

1. Our proposal to Hanoi will be conciliatory embracing both political and military measures.[8]

2. The object of the Vietnam negotiations would be as follows:

a. *Definition of Objective:* To reach prompt agreement with the North Vietnamese on the general shape of a political-military settlement, specifically:

(1) *Military*—Agreement that there will be mutual withdrawal of all external forces, and a ceasefire based on a mutual withdrawal.

(2) *Political*—(a) Agreement that guarantees the NLF freedom from reprisals and the right to participate fully in the political and social life of the country in exchange for agreement by NLF and DRV to forego further attempts to achieve their political objectives by force and violence, and[9] (b) agreement that there will be a separate and independent SVN for at least five years.

(3) *Mechanism for supervising and verifying the carrying out of the settlement.* The agreement with the DRV should not attempt to spell out the manner in which the general principles agreed to will be implemented. That should be left for Paris.

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[7] Nixon added the following sentence by hand at this point: "perhaps 2 months is more realistic."

[8] Kissinger added the following phrase by hand at this point: "for ending hostilities."

[9] Nixon added the following phrase by hand at this point: "a date for new elections."

3. If the special U.S. and North Vietnamese negotiators can achieve an agreement in principle, the negotiations would shift back to Paris for final implementation. The whole process should be completed before the end of August. If the special talks prove unsuccessful, it is difficult to visualize the progress which we both seek and the outlook for improved U.S.-Soviet relations would be seriously jeopardized.

4. The President realizes that this proposal represents a most complex and difficult choice for all parties concerned, but because we are at a most significant crossroad, he is convinced that extraordinary measures are called for. Because they are extraordinary, he would anticipate that Ambassador Dobrynin would wish to discuss them in detail with his government[10] and is prepared to withhold critical decisions on future actions with respect to Vietnam until he receives the Soviet government's reply to this proposal.[11]

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[10] Kissinger bracketed the final phrase of point 4 beginning here.

[11] Nixon initialed the approve option. Attached was a half sheet of paper comprising three additional points. It reads: "1. The President wishes to reiterate his conviction that a just peace is achievable. 2. The President is willing to explore avenues other than the existing negotiating framework. For example, it might be desirable for American and North Vietnamese negotiators to meet separately from the Paris framework to discuss general principles of a settlement. If the special US and DRV negotiators can achieve an agreement in principle, the final technical negotiations can shift back to Paris. 3. The USG is convinced that all parties are at a crossroads and that extraordinary measures are called for to reverse the tide of war." Nixon prints these three points in *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon,* p. 391. He also states that Kissinger showed these three points to Dobrynin.

61. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 15, 1969.

SUBJECT

CIA Analysis of Hanoi's Outlook on Paris Negotiations

At my request, Dick Helms has had his people prepare an analysis of Hanoi's outlook on the Paris negotiations which I am forwarding to you as a matter of interest. The analysis concludes that Hanoi wishes to seriously explore the possibilities for a settlement, but is not yet prepared to accept one which does not, at a minimum, provide for withdrawal of all U.S. forces and guarantee the VC a fairly clear shot at political control in SVN. Other principal points in the analysis are as follows:

1. The determinants of Hanoi's negotiating position are its calculation of its military position in SVN, the GVN political situation there, and Hanoi's estimate of the political climate in the U.S.

2. Hanoi is probably satisfied that its forces are demonstrating an ability to maintain military pressure in South Vietnam over an extended period. It believes Communist military and political pressure can prevent the GVN from significantly improving its position in the near future.

3. It also calculates that the U.S. will soon be under mounting domestic pressure to get the Paris talks moving. Until there is some basic change in this assessment, Hanoi is not likely to be very forthcoming in Paris.

4. Signs of allied eagerness or haste in the negotiations will be read as indications that the political heat is mounting in Washington.[2]

5. Most distasteful to Hanoi would be signs that the U.S. was politically prepared for a long haul military and diplomatic involvement in Vietnam.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 182, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous/Memcons, Vol. III, 4/5–69. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. Sneider forwarded this memorandum to Kissinger on April 14 noting that it was "per your request" and recommending that he sign it. A note on the memorandum reads: "Pres has seen." Attached was an April 4 CIA memorandum entitled "Factors Influencing Hanoi's Behaviors at Paris Peace Negotiations." Helms sent it to Kissinger under a covering note of April 7, which states the paper was done at Kissinger's request and notes that, "we come down on the belief that Hanoi is influenced by strong positions on the United States side."

[2] Nixon highlighted paragraphs 3 and 4 and wrote: "H.K.—This shows urgency of getting out our peace plan—".

6. The DRV is nervous about any indication that the U.S. might be able to reduce its role in the war without cutting overall allied effectiveness. If the U.S. could do this successfully, Hanoi would probably feel impelled to work out a minimal settlement in Paris before the negotiations become irrelevant.

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62. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 22, 1969.

SUBJECT

B–52 Strikes Against Targets in Cambodia

At Tab A is the Joint Chiefs of Staff plan providing for the Cambodian B–52 strikes with specific targets in the Fish Hook area previously struck and two additional targets in the Tri-Border area with Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.[2] The plan would provide:

1. *Breakfast Bravo* 48 sorties against targets in the Fish Hook area with 12 cover sorties on South Vietnam. Time over target (TOT) between 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. on Thursday, April 24 Saigon time (1:00 p.m. Wednesday local time).
2. *Breakfast COCO* Restrike of Fish Hook with 20 sorties plus 4 cover sorties. TOT between 8:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., Thursday night, April 24 Saigon time (7:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m. Thursday April 24 local time).
3. *Operation Lunch* 32 sorties against targets in the Tri-Border area and 4 cover sorties. TOT between 2:00 a.m. and 4:15 a.m. Friday morning April 25 Saigon time (1:00 p.m. and 3:15 p.m. Thursday afternoon local time).

At Tab B is a summary of the intelligence on the target area which indicates that military considerations favor the Fish Hook target complex at being the higher priority.[3]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. 1, 8–69. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Drafted by Haig on April 22. The memorandum is not initialed, but handwritten notes on the first page indicate it was hand carried to the President and approved on April 22.

[2] Tab A, CM–4130-69, is a memorandum from Wheeler to Laird, entitled "B–52 Strikes Against Targets in Cambodia," April 21; attached but not printed.

[3] Tab B, CM–4101-69, is a memorandum from Wheeler to Laird, entitled "Authority for B–52 Strikes Against Targets in Cambodia," April 11; attached but not printed.

1. Post-strike analysis of the Fish Hook target area (COSVN) following the earlier strike indicates that there is a large North Vietnamese force in the area which has not moved.

2. Intelligence indicates that the two target complexes in the Tri-Border area contain elements of a major North Vietnamese logistics complex.

General Wheeler advises that the countermand order for authorizing all strikes should precede TOTs by eight hours; thus countermand for the operation should be prior to 5:00 a.m. Wednesday morning local time.

At Tab C is a draft instruction on the public affairs treatment of the plan.[4]

Pros and Cons of Plan

Pros	*Cons*
1. Strong military blow as manifestation of U.S. resolve to end conflict.	Could result in public outcry if strikes "blow."
2. Signals to Soviets and North Vietnam that EC–121 incident did not divert U.S. attention from Vietnam conflict.	Could prove counter-productive to on-going actions leading toward re-establishment of relations with Cambodia.
3. Timely and effective followup to Kissinger/Dobrynin conversation.	
4. Could complement Presidents' Peace Plan.	Could result in more North Vietnamese intransigence in Paris and even walkout.

On balance, I favor strike primarily because it represents a forceful U.S. action in wake of EC–121 incident and the message it conveys to the Soviets. It is probable that Laird and Wheeler will support plan on military grounds and that Rogers will oppose on political grounds.

[4] Tab C is an undated telegram from Wheeler to Abrams, McCain, and Holloway; attached but not printed.

63. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 25, 1969.

SUBJECT

History of Vietnam Negotiations

We have now completed a history of the Vietnam negotiations leading to the bombing halt (attached at Tab A).[2] We have also completed a special study on U.S.-Soviet negotiations relating to the bombing halt (attached at Tab B). We have underway a history of U.S.-North Vietnamese negotiations after November 1, 1968. These studies are not really what you are after since motives do not show up. However, this is the best we can do after an exhaustive review of all of the documents available.

Another possible study would deal with the internal U.S. Government consideration of the bombing halt decision. Such an internal history raises serious problems since it would probably require interviewing the key personalities involved and reopening the serious differences within the bureaucracy on the bombing halt decision. There is also a good chance that one or more of the personalities involved would leak to the press that your Administration was conducting this study.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 98, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam/U.S. Bombing Halt Understanding. Secret. Sent for action. A stamped note indicates the President saw the memorandum. Sneider sent this history to Kissinger on April 10, with two covering memoranda. In the first Sneider states: "Dean Moor has done an exhaustive history of the Vietnam negotiations leading to the bombing halt. . . . You requested an internal history of U.S. dealings after November 1, 1968. . . . I think you ought to seriously reconsider the request for the internal history. . . . It would raise immediate questions within the bureaucracy, which would get quickly to the press that the Administration is preparing a critical attack on LBJ's Vietnam policies. My judgment is that we have enough problems without this additional one." Kissinger indicated his desire for this internal history of U.S. and NVN dealings after November 1, 1968, by signing his initials next to the "approve" option. In the second covering memorandum, Sneider informed Kissinger that the attached draft narrative history covered "the bilateral talks between Washington and Hanoi, the US discussions with the GVN on the bombing halt, and the US discussions with the Soviet Union. . . . The draft makes use of all material presently available to the National Security Council staff." (Ibid.)

[2] Tabs A and B are attached but not printed.

Recommendation

That we not undertake an internal history of U.S. Government views.[3]

[3] Nixon initialed the approve option and wrote: "*But* I want all we trust who have recollections—(Wheeler, Goodpaster, Kissinger, etc.) to give me a memo (e.g., the anatomy of Clifford's turn around would be interesting—Frank Lenida's *plus* Wheeler's memos.) Also, Haldeman and Harlane should provide a memo of all we heard during campaign about bombing halt plans." Butterfield added the following note: "Henry: I have taken action on this request. Alex."

64. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 1, 1969.

SUBJECT

State Department Memorandum on Vietnam

The Department of State believes that Hanoi has adopted a more moderate tone in the recent plenary sessions in Paris. Following are some of the shifts which State detects:

1. The DRV spokesmen are dealing more readily with the actual issues raised by the U.S. and GVN.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 182, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous/Memcons, Vol. III, 4/5–69. Secret. Sent for information. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it. Attached but not printed was a retyped and undated INR Intelligence Note entitled, "Hanoi Adopts Moderate Tone in Paris." In an April 30 memorandum to Kissinger, Sneider informed him that Lodge wished to make a proposal using the DRV's Four Points of April 8, 1965, at the next private session in Paris as a means of getting a dialogue going. (Ibid., Box 181, Paris Talks/Meetings, Private Meetings, March–December 1969) In a second memorandum of the same date Kissinger informed the President that at the Paris Plenary session of April 30, despite a "comprehensive attack on U.S. policy in Vietnam," the DRV clearly wanted the United States to explore the NLF's offer made on March 20 to talk with "other parties," to address the DRV's Four Points, and hinted that they might be willing to work within the GVN's constitution if it was revised. Nixon saw this memorandum. (Ibid., Box 182, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous/Memcons, Vol. III, 4/5–69)

2. The DRV has had less to say about the necessity of a "peace cabinet" in South Vietnam in recent sessions. State concludes that they are beginning to recognize that they may eventually have to deal with the GVN in private negotiations.

3. In recent sessions, the DRV has focused on its four point position,[2] dwelling particularly on point three which asserts that the internal affairs in SVN must be settled in accordance with the NLF program. By elaborating on this point, State believes the DRV has been attempting to project a tone of moderation since it has been stressing the allegedly democratic, neutral, and peaceful nature of its proposition.

State concludes that the display of moderation has at least three purposes:

1. To make a favorable impression on U.S. public and political opinion.

2. To influence the South Vietnamese body politic, making sure that Thieu's recent statements do not go unchallenged.

3. To attempt to encourage U.S. political concessions during the current military "lull" in South Vietnam.

[2] For text of the DRV's Four Points, outlined by DRV Premier Pham Van Dong on April 8, 1965, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1965,* pp. 852–853.

65. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 1, 1969.

SUBJECT

Captured Document on Vietnamese Communist Strategy

At Tab A is a captured document[2] which you may find interesting. It appears to be a COSVN-level paper which assesses the successes

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 137, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. IV, 4/24/69–5/18/69. Confidential. Sent for information. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it.

[2] Attached was an undated and retyped captured document entitled, "Success of Spring Offensive."

of the recent Communist offensive and their goals in the upcoming summer campaign in a most candid and objective fashion. Following are some of the highlights from the document:

The Spring Offensive

—Communist military efforts in the cities and suburban areas were "not very successful." The guerrilla movement and the buildup of Communist manpower was poor and slow. More Americans were killed than in Tet 1968, however. (True)

—The most significant effect of the offensive, especially the death of U.S. troops, was to boost the anti-war movement in the U.S. Since the Communists did not conduct any offensive phase from September to February, President Nixon thought they had lost the initiative and that he could take a firm stance at the negotiations. The February offensive upset that plan.

—The internal situation of the U.S. is now critical and the Communists must seek victories through further campaigns to turn things decisively their way.[3]

The Summer Offensive

—The Communists must put a lot of subjective effort into the summer campaign and must avoid any tendency to relax or become demoralized.

[3] Nixon highlighted this paragraph and wrote the following note: "H.K. note—we may have to hit Breakfast on a regular basis."

66. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 3, 1969.

SUBJECT

Statement by Prince Sihanouk on U.S. Border Declaration

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. I, 8–69. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it.

Prince Sihanouk, at an April 30 press conference, has taken exception to the U.S. border declaration[2] as useless, valueless and deceptive, on the basis of interpretations of this declaration in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.[3] Secretary Rogers has sent you the attached memorandum (Tab A)[4] based on early versions of the Sihanouk statement. Later versions and a report from the Australian Ambassador in Phnom Penh (Tab B) would indicate that Sihanouk rejected our border declaration at the press conference.[5]

Sihanouk's basic complaint is that we have not accepted Cambodia's borders as defined by it in our border declaration. However, in explaining the U.S. border declaration to Sihanouk, the Australian Ambassador made clear that this was not our intention. Sihanouk has accepted border declarations by other countries on this basis.

The French Ambassador in Phnom Penh has also informed the Australian Ambassador that Sihanouk rejected the idea of resuming relations with the U.S. at the press conference. The French Ambassador, considered a shrewd judge of Sihanouk, has concluded that Sihanouk is using the border declaration as a pretext for not resuming diplomatic relations. He thinks that Sihanouk may have been influenced to change his mind on relations with the U.S. after seeing the extent of North Vietnamese control in the Northeast, in Ratanakiri[6] (see map at Tab C).[7] Sihanouk may have concluded that he was powerless to prevent North Vietnamese infiltration and the only course open to him was to seek

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[2] See footnote 3, Document 48.

[3] In a May 6 letter to Mansfield, Rogers informed him that Sihanouk was referring to an April 15 *New York Times* editorial that stated: "the message does not specify what frontiers are being recognized, and, therefore, does not depart from the long-standing United States policy of remaining noncommittal on Cambodia's border quarrels with South Vietnam and Thailand." Rogers also told Mansfield that Sihanouk had incorrectly cited *The Washington Post* for an offending editorial and that the correct source was an April 13 article in *The Evening Star* that reported on State Department Spokesperson Carl E. Bartch's press briefing given on April 12. The article reported: "U.S. officials insisted that this message does not in any way mean the United States is taking a position on the recurring boundary disputes, which Cambodia has with both Laos and South Vietnam. The message, they say, is essentially the same as Sihanouk has received from 40 other governments—but previously rejected from the United States." (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 32 CAMB)

[4] Tab A was an April 30 memorandum from Rogers to Nixon, attached but not printed.

[5] Attached but not printed.

[6] Nixon underlined this word and wrote: "Can we hit this area?"

[7] Attached but not printed.

an understanding with the Vietnamese Communists. Sihanouk had just returned on April 30 from a week's visit to the Northeast.[8]

[8] Nixon highlighted the last two sentences and wrote: "H.K. very significant" and "(pass to Mansfield?)". Kissinger called Mansfield to tell him he was sending the exchange of letters with Sihanouk and assured the Senator that "the President has gone out of his way to establish close relations." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) In a May 5 memorandum to Nixon, Rogers recommended no comments, explanation, or further action until Sihanouk's plans and motives became clear. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. I, 8–69) After further representations and considerations, Sihanouk accepted a revised U.S. statement that the United States would "respect Cambodia's independence and sovereignty with the present territorial boundaries." Diplomatic relations were restored on July 2. For additional information see ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 17 CAMB–US.

67. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 10, 1969.

SUBJECT

Analysis of the NLF's Ten Points

Attached at Tab A[2] is an excellent CIA analysis of the general implications and possible significance of the NLF 10-Point statement (text at Tab B).[3] This memorandum contains a point-by-point analysis and then lists the positive elements, the negative elements and the elements subject to negotiation.

The Ten Points

Point 1, calling for the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Vietnam, is standard NLF language and is acceptable to us.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 175, Paris Peace Talks, NLF 10-Points, May 1969, Folder 5. Secret; Sensitive. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it.

[2] Tab A, May 9, entitled "The Liberation Front's New Peace Proposal," is attached but not printed.

[3] Not attached. On May 8 at the session of the Paris Peace Talks, Tran Buu Kiem of the NLF put forward a 10-point peace plan for ending the war in Vietnam. The text of the proposal is printed in Council on Foreign Relations, Stebbins and Adam (eds.), *Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1968–1969,* pp. 249–252.

Point 2 calls for U.S. withdrawal, including all military personnel. This is standard and acceptable, except that we would, of course, insist upon the withdrawal as well of North Vietnamese forces.

Point 3 is new and states that "the Vietnamese people's right to defend their fatherland is inalienable. The problems of the Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam will be settled by the Vietnamese sides." The first sentence is a standard assertion to justify the right of the North Vietnamese forces to be in the south. The second sentence implies that the withdrawal should be settled among the Vietnamese including a South Vietnamese Government. If this government is meant to be an NLF-dominated coalition, this is, of course, totally unacceptable. If it is the GVN, it is a step forward in accepting negotiations on the North Vietnamese withdrawal with the US/GVN side. However, to ask the GVN to negotiate alone with Hanoi on withdrawals would put all the pressures on them and is unacceptable. We would not object to the GVN participating with us in negotiations about the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces.

Point 4 presents a plan for a political settlement involving elections, a constitutional assembly, a new constitution and then a coalition government. It needs to be read in conjunction with Point 5 which calls for an interim coalition government prior to the elections. With regard to Point 4, itself, if the point means that a coalition government must result from the elections, this is, of course, unacceptable. If it means that one possible result of an election is a coalition government, we would not object. We have not yet addressed the question of whether we are prepared to accept the need for a new constitution.

Point 5 deals with a period prior to an election. In stating that "no side is to force the South Vietnamese people to accept its political regime," it appears to imply that there is an interim period during which the GVN, the NLF and other groups in the south would negotiate about the setting up of a caretaker government. Hanoi's description of those who could participate in such a government appears to rule out the GVN, although the statement omits the NLF's usual assertion that the U.S. must remove the GVN government. Thus, the words, themselves, could permit GVN participation. They also could be read to exclude the NLF from the caretaker government, although this is almost certainly not the NLF's intention. Whatever arrangements are made, the actual political evolution in the south will depend on the actual balance of forces. The prevention of the NLF takeover will require an effective and functioning non-Communist political group.

Point 6 is a standard call for good relations with Laos and Cambodia and diplomatic relations with other countries. The only new point is the reference to the need to establish diplomatic and economic relations with the United States and the assertion that South Vietnam must be able to accept economic and technical assistance from any country. This point is acceptable to us.

Point 7 calls for a step-by-step move toward reunification on the basis of negotiation between the two zones and for normal relations between the zones in the interim. It accepts the military demarcation line but notes that it is only provisional in character and not a political border. Finally, it states that the two zones will decide on the status of the demilitarized zone and the measures for crossing the provisional demarcation line. Most of this language is standard and acceptable to us. The final sentence seems to call for a new agreement between the two zones about the DMZ. This is acceptable if it means negotiations between the GVN and Hanoi and if it leads to reestablishment of an effective demilitarized area.

Point 8 provides that prior to reunification, North and South Vietnam will not enter into military alliance and will not accept any foreign military personnel on their territory. This is standard language. We have not decided that we are prepared to agree to keeping no advisors in South Vietnam or to accept renunciation of the SEATO protocol by South Vietnam.

Point 9 deals with return of prisoners of war in more explicit terms than in the past. However, it also calls for reparations by the U.S. to both North and South Vietnam and implies a possible linkage between prisoner release and reparations. Reparations in either circumstance would be unacceptable to us.

Point 10 calls for all parties to agree on international supervision of the U.S. withdrawals. This is the first time Hanoi has proposed any international supervision. It could provide an opening for a discussion of international supervision for the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces as well.

Positive Elements

1. Acceptance by implication of the presence of North Vietnamese forces in the south and indication that this is negotiable even if only by the Vietnamese sides.

2. Presentation of a detailed plan for a political settlement with some new and potentially acceptable elements and without insisting explicitly that this government be in accordance with the program of the Front.

3. Implication that the GVN might participate in negotiations about a caretaker government and the absence of an explicit statement that the U.S. must remove the GVN.

4. Statement that there should be no retaliation against those who cooperated with either side.

5. Recognition of the DMZ as a provisional boundary and willingness to negotiate about it if only with the GVN.

6. Explicit reference to release of prisoners (although possibly linked to reparations).

7. Initial reference to international supervision, if only related to withdrawal of U.S. forces.

Negative Elements

1. Absence of an explicit statement of withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces.

2. Call for both an interim and permanent coalition government with refusal to accept the present constitutional structure of the GVN.

3. Language which implies that coalition government should be restricted to Communist or sympathetic elements.

4. Demand for U.S. reparations.

5. International supervision limited to U.S. withdrawals.

Elements Subject to Negotiation

1. Procedures for negotiating withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces and the relationship of this withdrawal to the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

2. Election procedures in South Vietnam.

3. Political arrangements prior to an election.

4. Status of the demilitarized zone.

5. Application of international supervision to North Vietnamese withdrawal.

If Hanoi and the NLF are now ready for serious, detailed discussion, there are many elements in the 10-Point Program which we could probe, perhaps finding the basis for agreement. If Hanoi has presented this on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, it is very far from being satisfactory.

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68. Editorial Note

On May 14, 1969, President Nixon made a television and radio address in which he outlined a major proposal for mutual withdrawal in Vietnam over a 12-month period. The text of the speech is printed in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pages 369–375. On April 24 Henry Kissinger sent Nixon a draft outline of the speech and a scenario of actions to be undertaken in relation to it. Nixon read and made notes on the proposal on May 8. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 285, Memoranda to the President, April 1969, Folder 2) Kissinger later recalled that on April 25, he urged the President to elaborate a clear cut position on a peace plan by mentioning North Vietnamese negotiator Xuan Thuy's remark that, "If the Nixon Administration has a great

peace program, as it makes believe, why doesn't it make it public." According to Kissinger's recollections, Nixon hesitated because he wanted to see the results of his proposal to the Soviet Union and because he was concerned about opposition to the peace plan from Secretary of State William Rogers and the Department of State. Nixon feared the Department of State would leak the plan and add so many concessions that the President would be viewed as a "hard-liner" if he turned them down. Kissinger states in his memoirs that Nixon waited until Rogers left for Vietnam on May 12 before asking Kissinger to prepare a major speech within the next 48 hours. (Kissinger, *White House Years,* page 270) Kissinger did send Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird a draft of the speech in a May 10 memorandum. (National Archives, RG 59, William P. Rogers Official Files and Papers: Lot 73 D 443, no folder title) Rogers telephoned Kissinger at 4 p.m. on May 12 on a non-secure telephone from Los Angeles (en route to Vietnam) to register "his very serious reservations." Kissinger promised to present Rogers' views to the President in detail. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) Laird responded to the draft in a May 11 memorandum to Nixon noting that his major concern was that the speech did not emphasize the previously cited three points for measuring progress in the war and U.S. troop withdrawals: 1) mutual withdrawals, 2) improvement in the military situation, and 3) improvement in South Vietnamese capabilities. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 76, Vietnam Subject Files, Speech Planning and Miscellaneous) Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge sent his comments on the speech in a background message from Paris, May 11, which stated "broadly speaking this is an excellent speech," but suggested multiple language changes. (Massachusetts Historical Society, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Reel 9) Bunker sent backchannel message 417 from Saigon, May 12, stating that a general cease-fire would be undesirable since it would be interpreted by the enemy and by U.S. friends alike as "throwing in the towel" and would favor the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong militarily. From a political point of view, a cease-fire in place implied a readiness to partition South Vietnam. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel)

In a telephone call to the President on May 13, at 7:30 p.m., Kissinger told the President that he had revised the speech on Laird's recommendation and "it was pretty tight now." The President stated that "Mel [Laird] thinks we are dong the right thing. What really pleases me is that Rogers thinks it is fine." Nixon asked why Rogers changed his mind and Kissinger responded that he had been given a role in the speech. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

The next day, May 15, from 10:08 to 11:44 a.m., President Nixon held a joint meeting of the National Security Council and Cabinet to brief his administration's leaders on the significance of the speech. According to the memorandum of meeting the briefing went as follows:

"[Kissinger] called it 'the most comprehensive statement made by an American President about Vietnam.' Kissinger said the principles, measures and details in the President's presentation could be summarized in two broad, basic principles. One: We will not collapse our effort; and two: We will be extremely flexible in trying to make a settlement.

"Discussing the new elements in the speech, Kissinger called it 'as forthcoming and comprehensive a proposition as the President could possibly have developed' and said that it went 'as far as we believe it was possible to go in testing the willingness of the other side to have serious negotiations.' Remarking on just one new element, Kissinger pointed out that 'we no longer will expect the North Vietnamese to admit that their troops are there so long as they stop being there.'

"One of the most significant points about the speech, the President remarked, was that the South Vietnamese government had agreed to its content. He said that no one would have predicted six months ago that President Thieu would approve the substance of that speech. The cooperation of the South Vietnamese is extremely important, the President added, because while 'some say it will be impossible to make a peace *with* them, it will surely be impossible to make a peace *without* them.'

"Commenting on the attitude of other nations in the area, the President pointed out that the reaction of Thailand is highly important. 'They are like rice in the wind,' the President said. 'If they think we are going to lose, they will go the other way.' And this suggests, the President added, that while some people scoff at the domino theory, the dominoes make it a reality because they seem to accept it as fact.

"Before the speech was in final form, it was necessary to get agreement among the various areas of the U.S. government that were involved as well as the agreement of the South Vietnamese. 'And if any of you think that writing your speeches is hard,' the President said with a grin, 'you should try to write one involving State, Defense and Henry Kissinger.'

"Under Secretary of State Elliot L. Richardson suggested that South Vietnam's President Thieu be added to the 'list of speech writers' since he was consulted, and made suggestions that were included. Richardson reported that the State Department had transmitted the basic elements of the speech through our Ambassadors to the governments of Australia, Thailand, New Zealand, South Korea and the Philippines. Such advance notice, he said, was most important in 'keeping our friends with us.'

"Defense Secretary Laird stressed the importance of the fact that 'there is nothing inconsistent in the mutual withdrawal plan in this speech and the Vietnamization of the war.' He noted that there was in the speech a veiled reference to reduction of U.S. forces. The question whether some of our forces will soon be withdrawn, said Laird, will be discussed when Secretary of State Rogers returns from Vietnam. To clarify the situation with regard to prospective withdrawal of some U.S. forces—the President explained that 'apart from any progress in Paris, we are considering withdrawals based upon the strengthening of the Vietnam forces.'"

The President asked Director of Central Intelligence Helms to gauge North Vietnamese reaction to the speech. Helms suggested it put them on notice that "we don't chicken out." Helms stated that Hanoi's strategy was based on the theory that U.S. domestic dissent would force a U.S. withdrawal. Helms concluded: "this speech tells them that we will stick to our principles and will not run out." Ambassador Lodge recalled that a week before the President's speech the North Vietnamese at Paris introduced a new package based on ten points without their usual rhetoric. Lodge saw the Nixon speech as a comprehensive answer to this proposal. He described the speech as "like manna from Heaven for me."

The briefing concluded with a summation by the President. He stated that the speech "provided the enemy a way out," but cautioned that North Vietnam was bent on conquest of the South so, "We need to threaten that if they don't talk they will suffer." The President then listed four principal factors in the U.S. position which he described as follows:

"One, we are for peace—we are reasonable. Two, we aim to convince the enemy that if there is no settlement, we have an option which is military action not only at the present level but at an expanded level. Three, we want to make clear that they can't win by sitting us out. Four, we want to convince them that they aren't going to get what they want by erosion of the will of the U.S. So, said the President, we have offered them a way out. We have tried to indicate that we will not tolerate a continuation of their fight-talk strategy. We have tried to convince them that the time is coming when South Vietnam will be strong enough to handle a major part of the load. Beyond all this, said the President, it was necessary to give the impression to the enemy that the people of the U.S. are going to support a sound peace proposal and not accept peace at any price. Then and only then will the enemy realize that the war must be ended.

"The President expressed the hope that Members of the Cabinet in their speeches and appearances will explain that the Administration has presented a sound, reasonable, coordinated plan for peace. How

the war will end, the President said, is not clear. It may not be by formal agreement, it may simply be by negotiations leading to gradual understanding.

"'What is on the line is more than South Vietnam,' the President said. 'It's a question of what happens to the balance of Asia and to the rest of the world. If we fail to end the war in a way that will not be an American defeat, and in a way that will deny the aggressor his goal, the hawks in Communist nations will push for even more and broader aggression. What concerns me more than anything else is what happens to the U.S. If a great power fails to meet its aims, it ceases to be a great power. When a great power looks inward, when it fails to live up to its commitment, then the greatness fades away. The road to peace will be difficult but we aim to get there.'

"When the Cabinet applauded his remarks, he said, 'I really didn't mean to make a speech to the Cabinet.'" (Memorandum of a meeting by Jim Keogh, May 15; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, Staff Member and Office Files, President's Office Files, Box 1, Memos for the President's File, 1969–1970, Beginning May 11, 1969)

The President called Kissinger at 10:50 p.m. on May 14 to ask him how he thought the speech had been received. Kissinger was very encouraged with the response. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 359, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) In a May 16 memorandum to the President, Kissinger sent a rundown of how the speech had been received internationally. Kissinger stated: "Throughout the Free World, your speech has been warmly praised as moderate, statesmanlike and a very constructive step toward peace." While there was no official reaction from the DRV or NLF, some of their spokespersons' initial comments on it were negative. Kissinger continued, "The response from the Soviet Bloc, although negative, has been relatively moderate and quite measured." Nixon saw this assessment. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 75, Vietnam Subject Files, Cables, Concerning Reactions to the Speech, All Posts) According to *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the White House*, page 58, the initial euphoria of the speech and its aftermath wore off as Nixon read the U.S. Sunday papers on May 18 and found that their response, unlike the foreign press, was either neutral or negative. Nixon told Haldeman that if John F. Kennedy had made the speech, the press would have been ecstatic.

69. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State[1]

Paris, May 18, 1969, 1535Z.

7234. Delto 1741.[2]

1. Now that we have introduced the President's proposal for peace formally into the plenary session, the negotiations between the two sides in Paris can be pursued in a rational way. In this cable, we outline our suggestions for the next moves designed to bring the other side to serious negotiations on the basic issues.

2. The 10 points introduced by the other side and our own proposals provide the logical framework for negotiation. The two sets of proposals provide issues which are subject to negotiation. A preliminary listing of these issues would contain at least the following:

A. Force withdrawal;
B. Political settlement?
C. DMZ;
D. Prisoners of war?
E. Respect for essential elements of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962;
F. Reunification;
G. International supervision and verification (in connection with force withdrawal, elections, ceasefire and other agreed purposes); and
H. Issues in the aftermath of the war—guarantees, bases, foreign military presence, alliances, neutrality, relations between North and South Viet-Nam, regional cooperation.

3. To define clearly the framework for negotiation—and to demonstrate again the reasonable and flexible nature of the President's proposals—we suggest that at the next plenary session we present a point-by-point review of the issues and positions taken on each side. We are submitting in a separate cable a draft statement along these lines—pointing up the extent of common ground—for the May 22 meeting.[2]

4. It would be helpful, at that point, if the GVN made clear its position, consistent with our own but with particular attention to the question of a political settlement, notable their willingness that free elections be held. This would complement our proposal and fill a gap. The GVN statement should be as large in scope as that of the NLF, and demonstrate willingness to negotiate. It need not give away negotiat-

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 176, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Meetings, May 6—State, Saigon, and Paris. Secret; Nodis; Paris Meetings; Plus.

[2] Not found.

ing positions, but it should be fully consistent with the general principles guilding self-determination set forth in the President's May 14 speech. We believe Embassy Saigon should be urging on the GVN the clear need for such a statement as soon as possible. In the event the GVN does not produce a new statement of sufficient scope, we should move on the basis of the President's proposals alone.

5. We would seek to engage the other side in negotiation in depth. We suggest that this is best done in private. But we must recognize that there are also ways to further this process in plenary sessions. There are a number of possible arrangements for us to consider. We suggest we keep an open mind, but with a preference toward privacy.

6. Thus we can consider a negotiation format that could include any of the following, or some combination of them:

A. Plenary sessions on an agreed restricted basis. There would be no public disclosure of the details of statements made on either side. The fact of the meetings and a mutually agreed description of their contents would be made public.

B. Plenary sessions would continue as they are, but restricted subcommittee meetings will be held to Lodge deal with specific issues. Rules of disclosure for subcommittees would be agreed as in (A) above.

C. Plenary sessions would continue as they are, but fully private, secret meetings would be held. These could be in any agreed combination of the parties present, only excluding the case where the US would meet with the NLF without the GVN present. We are inclined to believe that private meetings of all four reps will be necessary, but even if this is the case, we foresee holding supplementary bilateral US-DRV meetings as desired.

7. Before proceeding to one or a combination of the above arrangements, we believe it is necessary and desirable to resume our bilateral meetings with the DRV. These would have two immediate purposes: (a) to elaborate and debate our substantive position on specific issues in a more informal atmosphere; (b) to exchange views with the DRV on the best way to proceed in the negotiations, taking as an outline of possible arrangements the alternatives listed in para 6 above. For our purposes, it would be well to work out some mutually acceptable working arrangements for the future.

8. Immediately following the May 22 plenary meeting, we propose, therefore, to seek a private meeting with Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy. We will submit to the Dept, within the next few days, a suggested draft of our opening remarks at such a meeting.

9. If our plan of action is approved, it will require discussion with the GVN in Saigon and Paris. It is now becoming increasingly urgent for the GVN to be thinking more specifically of the negotiating position they will be taking in private sessions of one sort or the other.

From our experience to date, the GVN del in Paris does not have sufficient instructions to carry on the type of negotiations we envisage. In fact, Lam and Phong have embarrassedly pointed out to us that over the past week they have been suffering from a scarcity of guidance from Saigon. The thought expressed by Bui Diem to Green (State 79000)[3] that we have 4 to 6 weeks for GVN to formulate its position strikes us as much too long a time. We should be prepared to be in full-scale, detailed negotiations with the other side before then.

10. In such negotiations, we believe that it will be necessary to discuss military and political questions in tandem, if we are to seek a full understanding of what we can achieve. This will require a degree of GVN preparation beyond what we have had to date, with the burden of negotiation on political matters falling on them.

11. We would welcome comments and guidance.[4]

Lodge

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[3] Telegram 79000 to Saigon, May 17, contains an account of the discussion between Bui Diem and Green on reaction to Nixon's speech of May 14 and the future of the negotiations. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 176, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Meetings, May 6—State, Saigon, and Paris)

[4] In telegram 9878 from Saigon, May 20, Bunker stated: "While I completely support the objective of getting into serious negotiations . . . I feel I should sound a note of caution about trying to force the pace." Bunker noted that the Government of Vietnam had made progress in thinking about a political settlement, but they needed time to come to accept it. Furthermore, Bunker cautioned against seeming too eager for another private meeting. (Ibid.)

70. Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, May 21, 1969, 0933Z.

616. Ref: Saigon 605.[2]

1. I have given further thought to the President's consideration of desirability of announcing initial troop reduction after the Midway meeting, together with his expressed willingness to wait a few weeks longer. I have also discussed the message with General Abrams. As viewed from here my conclusion is that the more prudent course would be to wait, for the following reasons:

A. First, Thieu has set a date of June 30 for various goals. These goals include designated hamlets to be pacified, another round of village and hamlet elections in June, and the deployment of 68 newly trained regional force companies by June 30.

B. Despite the February and May attacks, steady and continued progress is being made in extending government control over the countryside. The high level of defectors under the Chieu Hoi program is being maintained in the 900–1100 range per week. The Phoenix program to eliminate the VC infrastructure is producing higher weekly returns despite the more stringent criteria—around 400 a week. Enemy killed are running between 3500 and 5000 a week.

C. In early July Thieu will have a good story to tell of progress made and goals achieved during the first half of this year. The evidence for this is not merely in the statistics but can be found in the increasing sense of confidence and recognition of progress among his military, civil and political leaders from the national level down to the village level, and among the people themselves in wider and wider areas of the country.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

[2] In backchannel message 605 from Saigon, May 20, Bunker provided Kissinger with an interim response to backchannel message WH90677, May 19, in which Kissinger informed Bunker that the President was considering making an initial troop withdrawal announcement at the end of the Midway Conference. Nixon thought that the announcement might give Thieu the initiative on the issue, but based on Bunker's advice he would be willing to postpone for several weeks if Bunker considered it necessary. Bunker wrote: "With regard to suggestion concerning desirability of making initial troop withdrawal announcement at conclusion of Midway Meeting, I can see both advantages and problems. Consequently, I should like to give the matter further thought and would prefer to delay my reply until tomorrow. I hope this will be satisfactory to you and the President." (Ibid.) Telegram 616 is Bunker's considered reply.

D. In this atmosphere, an announcement of a reduction of US forces sometime after July 1 could be taken in stride.

E. More important than the above, however, is the military situation. There are many indications that two more attack waves are brewing, with one possible in June and another in July. We expect these will follow the pattern of enemy's tactics this year, i.e. of short duration, with emphasis on indirect fire and limited ground attacks to economize losses, and aimed at US installations to increase US casualties. We have every confidence that these will be knocked back with heavy losses to the enemy. However, since General Abrams was in Washington there has been some increase in enemy deployments that could threaten I Corps, and General Abrams wishes to reserve on the order of withdrawal of the two increments until he can better assess the situation.

2. I think, and General Abrams concurs, that June 30 would be a good cut-off date for assessing situation, with the conclusions to be available in the second week in July, that is about one month after the Midway meeting. By then we would have the June record of enemy action in hand, and a clearer picture of their July and subsequent intentions. Unless there is a massive increase in the infiltration pipeline during May or June, for which we have no evidence as yet, the recent reduction in North Vietnamese infiltration groups moving South, along with the 2–3 months lag in arrivals in the South, suggest that the enemy offensive attacks will peak the first half of July.

3. This suggests that the announcement of the first troop reduction could be made sometime in July if our reading of the situation is correct. At Midway the communiqué might be able to say that sufficient progress is being made in pacification and the improved fighting capability of the military and para-military forces to warrant an initial reduction in US combat forces levels in the foreseeable future.

4. Since troop reductions will be on the agenda at Midway, I thought it desirable to obtain Thieu's view about an announcement at that time. When I saw him this morning (on various matters before my departure for Bangkok), without indicating my views I asked him if it would be desirable to announce the initial reduction, or replacement as Secretary Rogers preferred to call it, at Midway or wait a little longer, say until early July. There were advantages and disadvantages of an announcement on June 8. In any event the announcement would be in terms of his (Thieu's) initiative. I said he would probably want to think about it, but I would welcome his views at this time.

5. Thieu said a reduction in the US forces has now been a subject of open discussion for six months, the South Vietnamese people are accustomed to the idea, and it would not be a surprise if an announcement was made. It is accepted here that something like a reduction of

50,000 this year would be the figure, and both "the principle and a number of this size" would be understood here. A figure of 100,000 would not be understood. Essentially this problem was an American problem and if the President feels it is necessary in US terms, then there would be no objection to having an announcement of some kind made at Midway.

6. However, he went on, any announcement would have to be tied to one of the three conditions which the President has laid down, and this would probably be the improvement in the Vietnamese capacity to take over a greater share. He said "The timing and form of the announcement will need to be discussed and worked out, but the substance is understood and accepted here."

7. I interpret this to mean that he is prepared to agree to some reference at Midway to troop reductions, perhaps even some specific reference to numbers and dates.

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71. Backchannel Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)[1]

Washington, May 21, 1969, 2146Z.

WH90690. Reference your Saigon 616, DTG 210800Z, May 1969,[2] President believes we could meet Thieu's views by making announcement at conclusion of Midway meeting to the effect President Thieu has informed U.S. Government that the first ARVN division is ready to replace the Third U.S. Marine Division and that therefore the President has ordered the withdrawal of the Third Marine Division from South Vietnam commencing during the month of July.[3] President

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel. Top Secret; Sensitive.

[2] Document 70.

[3] Kissinger also informed Rogers, who was in Bangkok at the SEATO meeting, of this decision in WH90693, May 22. Kissinger wrote: "Thought you might like to know President is thinking of announcing withdrawal of third U.S. Marine division at conclusion of Midway Meeting June 9 (1st ARVN division would replace third U.S. Marine division (22,000 men) commencing in July). Bunker currently exploring this proposal with Thieu and has been cautioned on its extremely close nature. President considers it desirable that public speculation prior to meeting focus on U.S.–GVN efforts to coordinate respective positions on President's speech and associated Paris negotiating positions. From here your trip looks like great success. Best regards, Henry A. Kissinger." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel)

considers such an announcement would: (1) dampen growing speculation on troop withdrawals which if it continues much longer will deprive us of impact of troop withdrawal decision; (2) would greatly strengthen Thieu's image here (doves appear to be building case that Thieu and GVN are preparing to commence bickering campaign over political conditions for settlement with a view toward delaying progress); (3) would break the stride of those elements here who have been pressing for large and immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces.

In order to achieve maximum benefit from this tactic, President believes it essential that there be absolutely no leakage or discussion of troop withdrawal issue as a result of speculation which will surround preparation for meeting. Public attention on preparatory work in Saigon and Washington should be channeled toward preparations to: (1) finalize respective U.S.-GVN positions on negotiating strategy in Paris; (2) the formulation of details related to President's speech proposals.

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72. Memorandum From Dean Moor of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, May 22, 1969.

SUBJECT

Assessment of the 22 May Plenary Session on Vietnam

The Communist presentations at today's meeting in Paris appeared to represent a serious effort by the other side to engage in a substantive discourse on elements of the President's peace proposal. Although they uttered many of the routine propaganda bromides of the past weeks, the Communists had interesting and detailed things to say on the two central issues: withdrawal and a political settlement. They clearly appear to be interested and to be pressing for further elaborations or modifications of the U.S. stand.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 182, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous, Vol. III, 4/5–69. Secret; Nodis; Paris Negotiations; Plus. Sent for information. Sent through Sneider. Haig wrote on this memorandum: "HAK said good job." Kissinger had this memorandum reworked slightly and sent to the President, May 23. (Ibid.)

The DRV focused on the withdrawal question, while the NLF carried the main burden on a political solution. Following are the highlights:

Withdrawal: Xuan Thuy began by setting up the standard Communist argument for the necessity of an unconditional pullout of all U.S. troops. He pointedly tried to rule out the possibility that Hanoi might be interested in some formal, reciprocal arrangement involving a linking of the NLF Point 3 (the question of Vietnamese forces) and Point 10 (overseeing the withdrawal of U.S. forces).

However, his presentation was couched in a manner suggesting that Hanoi might be willing to undertake a tacit response to a U.S. pullout. Thuy did this in part by asserting that President Nixon's plan was the same as former President Johnson's in that the latter had called for reciprocal withdrawal before stopping the bombing. The implication was that another similar "understanding" might be possible.

The impression of DRV interest in President Nixon's proposal on withdrawal was strengthened by Thuy's remarks on the 12-month timetable. Thuy noted that this had been applied to only a partial and not to a complete U.S. withdrawal. He appeared to be asking by implication for the U.S. to set a time limit for a full-scale withdrawal. It seems possible that once such a timetable were set, the Communists might be willing to give us more assurances about the removal of NVA forces under point three of the NLF plan.

Ambassador Lodge picked up the interesting DRV comment on our 12-month time limit and, in the rebuttal period of the meeting, clarified our position. He noted that we were willing to discuss setting a time period for a full mutual withdrawal, if the other side would indicate its interest in negotiations on this subject.

A Political Settlement: The NLF handled this issue by a rather warped comparison of the President's proposal for general elections and its own proposition on elections and a coalition. Although expectedly one-sided, it at least amounted to a substantive discourse which definitely depicted interest in the U.S. proposal.

According to Tran Buu Kiem, the important question was how "political power is to be solved" in South Vietnam pending general elections. Kiem noted that the President had not spoken of this, but that it was clear he meant for the GVN to be paramount. This was unacceptable, he said. Kiem went on to explain what the Communists had in mind by their proposal that "neither party shall impose its political regime" during this period. This meant the formation of a "provisional administration" he said.

He then offered the NLF formula for the "peace-loving" forces in SVN to get together and set up a coalition. It was clear from his manner of presentation, however, that the Communists are definitely prepared to bargain on the details of the "provisional administration."

Interesting in this connection was Kiem's condemnation of the Saigon regime for wishing to "monopolize power" during this period—a kind of admission that the NLF is seeking only a share of the authority.

Kiem then introduced a new twist in the Communist strategy which could mark the beginning of a new campaign to undermine Saigon. He said that the NLF is now "ready to conduct talks with persons of goodwill who favor peace, independence and neutrality." This goes a little further than the standard NLF position that it is prepared to conduct talks with a "peace cabinet" which presumably has replaced the Saigon regime. Although Kiem called once again for the formation of a peace cabinet, he seemed to be suggesting that the Front is encouraging dissident groups to begin consultations with the NLF regardless of their political status and authority within South Vietnam. This could set the stage for a revival of the alliance.

POW's: Ambassador Lodge's demarche on the question of a POW list drew a completely negative response from the DRV. It seems clear that they are not prepared to give us any satisfaction on this score at this point, even though their hardline stand may cost them some propaganda points if carefully exploited by the U.S.

General Comment: We may be seeing an attempt by the Communists to sidestep private negotiations and to conduct an exploratory, probing type of negotiation at the plenary meetings. In any case, there would appear to be considerable room for the U.S. to tailor a response at the next plenary meeting to the specific points made today by the Communists in an effort to advance the process of movement by the other side.[2]

[2] At the end of the memorandum Sneider wrote: "I was also struck by the Thuy response to the 'essential elements' of the 10 pts—indicating greater flexibility."

73. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, May 25, 1969.

SUBJECT

The Possible Quarantine of North Vietnam

1. Per our conversation on Wednesday, 21 May, attached is a memorandum analyzing the impact that a quarantine of North Vietnam would have on that country's economy and logistic support capabilities.[2] This memorandum also outlines the probable reactions of various interested parties to the imposition of such a quarantine.

2. For reasons outlined in considerable detail in the attached memorandum, we are convinced that unless a quarantine of North Vietnam's seaborne commerce was accompanied by an interdiction of the land lines of communication (rail and road) to Communist China, the North Vietnamese could solve the problems such a quarantine would pose; i.e., Hanoi could make enough adjustments or alternate arrangements to ensure continuation of the level of external support necessary to permit Hanoi to continue present levels of North Vietnamese support to the Communist military campaign in South Vietnam.

Dick

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 207, Agency Files, CIA, Vol. I, January 1969–31 December 1969. Secret; Sensitive. According to an attached June 11 memorandum from Haig to Kissinger, Kissinger planned to discuss this memorandum with Helms that day.

[2] This 14-page paper with comments by Kissinger in the margins is attached but not printed.

74. Memorandum From Dean Moor of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, May 28, 1969.

SUBJECT

Status of the Phoenix and PRU Programs in Vietnam and the Thai Border Police

Currently, changes in management control are underway in all three forces. These changes will substantially reduce the CIA role. To a large extent, the shift will be to the U.S. military in Vietnam and to the U.S. operations mission in Thailand. In my judgment, the shifts are reasonably sound in concept and should not necessarily result in a drop in the effectiveness of the concerned forces. Following is the present status and the nature of the shifts proposed for each group:

The Phoenix Program[2]

This is the basic anti-VC infrastructure (VCI) program in Vietnam. It functions through a country-wide system of committees and centers down to the district level which supply the intelligence and direct anti-infrastructure operations by the police, the regional forces, the PRU, and the military security service. The TO and E of the Phoenix organization is around 6,000 with approximately 500 additional U.S. advisors.

In 1968, the Phoenix program accounted for between 10 and 20 percent of the VCI "neutralized". The bulk of the rest were accounted for in the course of regular military operations. The concept of the Phoenix program is considered sound, but its operation still leaves much to be desired. Problems are Vietnamese manpower shortages, lack of qualified Vietnamese, etc.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 69, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, The Phoenix Program. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information.

[2] Kissinger wrote the following note at the top of the first page: "Why the change?" and in the margin next to the Phoenix Program description: "What do they do? How do they neutralize them?" Moor answered these questions in a June 4 memorandum to Kissinger. Moor stated that CIA considered its role in starting up the programs was done and wanted to use its limited manpower in more productive work. He described how the anti-Viet Cong infrastructure program worked in Vietnam, and stated that the Phoenix committees tabulated what percentage of Viet Cong were killed or captured as a result of operations based on their intelligence (10 to 20 percent in 1968). The bulk of the Viet Cong killed or captured, however, were done so through regular military sweeps. (Ibid.)

Coming Changes in Phoenix

The CIA is currently in the course of withdrawing from the field management of the Phoenix program. The Agency considers its principal role fulfilled by the organization and start-up of the operation and believes its officers can be used more profitably elsewhere. MACV will take up the slack and the management role will be put under regular army personnel. MACV is slotting 450 personnel for this task. The switchover is already underway and will be largely completed by 1 July 1969. The top CORDS/Phoenix slot will continue to be held by a CIA man in Saigon.

Present Status of the Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU)

This is a covert program in which teams (companies) of 2 to 20 Vietnamese operate in the field to collect intelligence and as a quick reaction force to kill or capture specifically targeted VCI. Total force strength is over 5,000. The PRU is organized under joint MACV/GVN sponsorship [*1 line of source text not declassified*]. CIA province officers direct and supervise the targeting of the PRU. There is normally a U.S. NCO with each PRU element.

The PRUs have been effective in eliminating VCI. Each month, they account for about 10 to 20 percent of VCI neutralized. Since the VCI are individually targeted, they are often key enemy personnel.

Coming Changes in the PRU

The CIA is also divorcing itself of the management of the PRU and turning it over to the military, while urging the Vietnamese to increase their management cadre and directive role. In so far as the U.S. military are concerned, this will be largely a paper change, since the bulk of the advisory personnel are already military, while detailed to the CIA. The Vietnamese have agreed to take over more of the management duties, but this awaits the proper training of personnel. The Agency is pushing this now. Completion of the CIA/MACV switchover is set for 1 July 1969.

Status of the Thai Border Police

This is a 7,100 man force whose regular mission is border security, but which has also participated actively in the suppression of the Thai insurgents. Until about two years ago, its role in their latter operation was fairly extensive. Then, however, the Thai regular army moved in and the BPP role was considerably reduced.

The CIA at one time contributed over a million dollars a year to the BPP and was heavily involved in training and advising the force. Its contribution has been cut back during the past several years to the neighborhood of some $200,000 a year. The additional funds are largely still going to the BPP, but are funded through other elements of the

U.S. operations mission in Thailand. The Agency would like to further reduce its financial input as this is largely now the provision of equipment. The Agency believes that other U.S. elements can provide this. It is seeking to retain its present relatively small role in the training of elements of the BPP, mainly its para-military arm, the PARU. [*1½ lines of source text not declassified*]

So far as I can ascertain, the decisions on the CIA role with the BPP are not as fully set as are those in connection with the PRU and the Phoenix programs.

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75. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State[1]

Paris, June 1, 1969, 1620Z.

8138. Delto 1800.

1. The May 31 private meeting with Le Duc Tho was the most significant meeting we have had with the DRV since my arrival here in January.[2] It provided the first serious indication from them of what issues particularly interest them and of how they want to proceed.

2. Herewith we submit our views on the highlights of Tho's statement at the May 31 meeting and the alternative courses of action open to us.

Part 1—The May 31 Meeting

3. During the May 31 meeting we made clear to the DRV that our side was ready to negotiate in the "dual track" format, in a quadrilateral format or in some combination of the two approaches, but that the GVN had to participate in the discussions involving the internal affairs of South Vietnam. Tho countered by rejecting secret negotiations involving the GVN at least at this time, in either dual track or quadliteral formats. He appeared very firm.

4. Tho changed the DRV's earlier position that the US had to deal directly with the NLF. Now he was saying: the DRV will talk about

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 177, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Meetings, May–June 1969, State Nodis Cables/Habib Calls. Secret; Priority; Nodis; Paris Meetings; Plus. Repeated to Saigon.

[2] The full report of the private meeting of May 31 is in telegram 8112 from Paris/Delto 1793, May 31. (Ibid.)

any issue at any time with the USG. Tho made no bones about the fact that the DRV would negotiate on behalf of the NLF on all matters, including matters relating to the South.

5. Tho emphasized that he wanted not only to discuss military matters but all matters covered by the 10 points. He agreed that in such discussions either party could raise any matter it desired. The DRV thus wants to discuss with us all aspects of a settlement including the political future of South Viet-Nam. By this Tho does not necessarily mean that he wants to resolve all substantive issues with us but that he wants us to agree that certain matters, such as withdrawals of North Vietnamese forces and political settlement, should be resolved by the Vietnamese parties as envisioned in the NLF's ten points.

6. Tho also referred to the fact that the settlement of some questions involved two parties, some involved three parties, and others involved four parties. By this he recognizes that there are matters that concern the GVN and that some time later the GVN will have to be brought in to the discussions. But Tho said he means a reconstituted GVN and not the individuals presently holding high office in Saigon, whom he wishes us to remove.

7. During the meeting Tho in general restated the DRV's standard substantive positions in the framework of the 10 points. But he spoke of a cease-fire in what to me was a new way, saying that an agreement on a cease-fire would be signed after a paper had been signed on the matters covered in the 10 points.

8. Evidently the DRV strategy aims to isolate the present GVN and destroy it. For this reason, Hanoi and the NLF are refusing at this time to meet with the GVN in any form other than the existing meetings at the Majestic. They hope to force us into an unpalatable choice—either negotiating with the DRV and then imposing the resulting settlement on the GVN; or trying to change the nature and composition of the GVN in a manner satisfactory to them so that it becomes a "peace government". In any case, the DRV strategy seems designed to create U.S./GVN frictions and to increase Thieu's internal political problems. It also appears to be designed to appeal to U.S. public opinion and to bring growing domestic pressure on the USG.

9. Tho asked us a number of questions during the meeting, some of them rhetorical. They indicate clearly the direction of DRV will be taking in the future. He asked these questions: (a) Who would organize the elections? (he asked this several times); (b) Does the U.S. agree to the sequence that Tho had outlined, in which in reality the U.S. and the DRV work out a settlement of all problems mentioned in the 10 point program, an agreement is signed, and then an agreement is made for a cease-fire? (*Comment:* we do not think we should respond to Tho's suggestion regarding the form of eventual agreements until we have a

better idea of what the substance is likely to be); (c) Does the U.S. agree to get rid of the present GVN?

Part 2—Alternative Courses of Action

10. Herewith are some alternative courses of action:

11. First, we could reject the proposal made by the DRV in the May 31 meeting and delay any further initiative for private meetings for an indefinite period in an effort to induce them to change their position. We and the GVN could use the plenary meetings to begin laying out the details of our positions and to attempt to draw out the other side on its positions.

12. *Comment:* I oppose this alternative. I believe that productive negotiations with the other side can only occur in private sessions. I see nothing on the horizon which would make the DRV change its position for at least several months. We would, accordingly, simply be postponing coming to grips with the issues, thus making progress more difficult.

13. Second, we could continue private U.S./DRV bilaterals with the sole objective of trying to persuade the DRV to accept GVN participation in private talks. The private meetings would thus be solely procedural. We would sit tight and wait for the other side to change its position.

14. *Comment:* I see no advantage in this. I would rather discuss both matters of substance and matters of procedure. I believe we would thus have a better chance of bringing about a changed attitude towards the GVN.

15. Third, we could tell the DRV at the outset that we are willing to discuss privately with it all subjects of mutual concern but that we cannot discuss political matters in the absence of the GVN since these are questions for the South Vietnamese to decide. On that basis we could then start discussing with the DRV matters we consider to be of mutual interest: Principally mutual withdrawals, but also such matters as the DMZ, POW's international supervision, etc. The DRV, in turn, could be expected to continue to seek to engage us in a discussion of political questions and to persuade us to accept their manner of proceeding in the private U.S./DRV bilaterals.

16. *Comment:* By following this course of action, we will continue to be faced with the same problem that confronts us now. In our judgment, the DRV would not at this time engage in meaningful substantive discussions of military matters with us if we tried to restrict the scope of bilateral discussions at the outset. We would consequently delay productive negotiations for a considerable time.

17. This brings us to the fourth alternative. We could, without accepting Tho's proposal, simply continue to hold bilateral U.S./DRV discussions. We would not seek to impose any prior conditions on the subjects to be discussed. Either side could raise anything it wishes.

They will want to discuss their 10 points, and we will want to discuss President Nixon's proposals. In the private talks themselves, we would take no initiative to raise political matters. When the DRV raises such matters, we would respond initially at least with our position that the political settlement is for the South Vietnamese to work out.

18. *Comment:* This course of action would not close out the possibility of GVN participation in private talks later.

We would, of course, have to maintain the closest consultation with the GVN both before and after each U.S./DRV meeting: and the positions we take in each meeting would have to be coordinated beforehand with the GVN. We would report to the GVN what the DRV said about political settlement in any particular meeting, and the U.S. and GVN together could then decide on a case by case basis what response, if any, other than the standard one, would be desirable. By consulting with the GVN on our responses to the DRV, we would always have the choice of giving the DRV a joint response at the next private meeting or not replying to Hanoi at all on a given point. If Hanoi pushes us on a political point, we could, if Thieu agrees, always fall back on the statement, "We have informed the GVN". This is the course of action which we believe opens up the most possibilities at this time for early substantive discussions. Admittedly this proposes a change in procedure which could change the handling of the "political solution."

19. Fifth, we could accept Tho's proposal and engage in bilateral discussion of all substantive questions involved in a settlement, including political matters.

20. *Comment:* This course of action seems to us unjustifiable both in terms of sound negotiating tactics and in terms of our relations with the GVN.

Part 3—Analysis

21. The position which the other side has now taken, and the proposal the DRV put to us in the May 31 meeting, will undoubtedly create difficulties for the GVN. The GVN will see, as we have suggested above, that the DRV tactic is designed to isolate the GVN and to destroy it. And the GVN will be very sensitive to the suggestion that the U.S. should negotiate on its behalf, particularly on matters involving internal political settlement which we have agreed are primarily for the GVN to negotiate. In this connection, we recall Ambassador Lam's statement to us of his understanding of the GVN position, namely, that there were no matters which did not concern the GVN and that the U.S. should not negotiate any matters without GVN presence. (Paris 8012)[3]

[3] Dated May 30. (Ibid.)

22. At the same time, we also have the problem of how to move ahead with negotiations and with smoking out the other side's positions on the substantive questions. We believe this objective of getting on with early productive talks can be achieved in a way that protects the basic position of the GVN. We think that the fourth course of action outlined above offers the best opportunity for doing this.

23. Under the fourth alternative, our approach to the negotiations would be to place the principal emphasis on the question of mutual withdrawals. We would seek serious indications that the DRV was willing to move ahead on the question of withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese troops.

24. In following the fourth course of action, we would continue in the plenaries and in public statements to criticize the communist refusal to accept Thieu's March 25 offer to talk bilaterally with the NLF. We would continue our warm support of Thieu's offer, both publicly and privately, hoping thereby to bring pressure on the other side eventually to accept it. Once the GVN is talking bilaterally, trilaterally or quadrilaterally with the other side, Saigon would, of course, play the principal role in these discussions of internal South Vietnamese matters.

25. Finally, we should not refuse in advance to hear what the DRV has to say. Not only is it in our interests to hear them, but our refusal to do so would surely become known and we would be in an incomprehensible position.

Part 4—Conclusion

26. The next step should be concentrated consultations with the GVN. Before GVN/U.S. discussions take place, however, the U.S. Government should determine which course of action we prefer to follow. Our preference should then be explained to the GVN. Meanwhile, we do not believe we should request another private meeting with the DRV until after Midway. Our response to the DRV's May 31 proposals depends on what we and the GVN decide to do. We would, of course, agree to attend a private meeting if the DRV asks for one.

27. Since he will have already been briefed on what happened at the May 31 meeting, the question of where we go from here on negotiations will probably be on Thieu's mind when he comes to Midway.

Lodge

76. Backchannel Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)[1]

Washington, June 1, 1969, 1844Z.

WH90761. Exclusively Eyes Only for the Ambassador (hold for arrival in Saigon).

The President has asked that you convey to Thieu the importance that he places upon the forthcoming Midway meeting. He is aware that press speculation here has probably aroused some concern on the coalition government issue, and wishes Thieu to be assured that we are determined to hold the line on this. I gave this message to Bui Diem yesterday. However, it is essential that we retain tactical flexibility. Our major problem here is to gain time and to enable us to combat the growing public pressures. This is why troop withdrawal announcement is so crucial.

Press is speculating that Midway meeting was convened to remedy a growing divergence between Saigon and Washington. Therefore, it is most important that troop withdrawal announcement be made in context of Thieu initiative in order to maintain his image here. It will strengthen our ability to help him on political front.

At Midway, we currently visualize that President and Thieu will meet privately from 11:30 until 1:00 p.m., and then issue a very brief joint announcement on troop withdrawal along lines of my earlier message.[2] This will produce a maximum impact especially if it is unexpected. Following lunch, the entire group will meet, then at 5:00 p.m., a formal joint statement will be made on other matters dealt with at the conference.

Because of the psychological implications of the troop withdrawal statement, it is absolutely essential that there be no leaks beforehand that announcement is to be made. For this reason, this matter has been held strictly to the President, myself, and Secretaries Rogers and Laird. It is equally important that similar restrictions be retained on this information at your end. You will note that some references have been made to troop withdrawal and Vietnamization in regular State traffic concerned with the formal joint statement at the conclusion of the meeting and preparatory coordination of respective positions. These references have been made by drafters unaware of the decision to proceed

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

[2] See Document 70.

with a separate announcement at Midway and serve as an additional cover to maintain the necessary security.

Request your views on foregoing, as soon as possible.[3]

[3] In backchannel message 802 from Saigon, June 2, Bunker reported that he did not expect problems with Thieu on troop withdrawals and Thieu would be reassured by Nixon's assurances on a coalition government. Bunker also reported that Abrams hoped to maintain flexibility in withdrawals. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel)

77. Memorandum of a Joint Cabinet and National Security Council Meeting[1]

Washington, June 3, 1969.

SUBJECT

Cabinet Meeting, June 3, 1969

This was a joint meeting of the Cabinet and the National Security Council called to hear Secretary of State William Rogers' report on his around-the-world trip.[2]

The first point of interest naturally was Vietnam. Secretary Rogers said he had listened to the President's address on Vietnam while at the American Embassy in Saigon. "Contrary to what you might have read in the papers," the Secretary told other Cabinet Members, "there are no differences between the U.S. and South Vietnam about what the President said." South Vietnam's President Thieu went over the speech

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Office Files, Box 1, Memos for the President's File, 1969–1970, Beginning June 1, 1969. No classification marking. Drafted by Special Assistant to the President James Keogh. In attendance were members of the National Security Council, the Cabinet, and 26 sub-Cabinet and White House officials. The meeting lasted from 9:07 to 11:28 a.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

[2] Rogers departed Washington on May 12 and arrived in Saigon on May 14 for a 4-day visit. Rogers met with Foreign Minister Tran Chanh Thanh on May 15 and they discussed the general situation in South Vietnam, the upcoming Seven Nation Troop Contributing and SEATO meetings, and Nixon's speech of May 14. Memoranda of conversation of these discussions, treated as separate discussions, are ibid., NSC Files, Box 137, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. IV, 4/29/69–5/18/69. Telegraphic accounts of these meetings are in telegrams Secto 49 to 51/Bangkok 6494–6496, May 21; ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, ORG 7 S. Rogers also talked with Vietnamese Prime Minister Tran Van Huong. A brief account of their meeting is in telegram Secto 18/9444 from Saigon, May 15. (Ibid., POL 27–14 VIET) A fuller account of their discussion is in telegram Secto 44/6489 from Bangkok, May 21. (Ibid., ORG 7 S)

in advance, made some suggestions that were accepted, and approved the final draft, Rogers said.[3] Here the President interjected, "As a matter of fact you were there when he made some changes."

Rogers found Thieu to be mature and intelligent and the one man in the Saigon government who has potential for national leadership. The Secretary said that the South Vietnamese are ready to take over a major part of the burden of the war, although they are fearful that if their casualty rate increases substantially, they may be in difficulty. They fully realize the problems that the war is creating for the U.S., he said.

One thing that the South Vietnamese do not understand, said the Secretary, is freedom of the press. "They lock people up for printing something they don't want printed and then later think perhaps they made a mistake." This caused Postmaster General Blount to comment: "Maybe they've got a good idea there."

The American press, said Rogers, was quite wrong in its speculation that the President's trip was arranged in a hurry for a meeting demanded by Thieu. Rogers said the meeting was suggested by President Nixon and that he, Rogers, was the one who proposed the timing. Relations between the U.S. and South Vietnam are very good, the Secretary reported, although South Vietnamese leaders "had some questions" about the U.S. position on elections. They found it hard to understand that all the U.S. was suggesting was an election that would permit all of the people of South Vietnam to express their view. They agree that there should be such an election but are uncertain about how it should be conducted.

Rogers called U.S. Ambassador Bunker and Military Commander Abrams both superb men for their positions. In travelling through some combat areas with Abrams, he found that the General "knew all about the military and also had a lot of humanitarian instincts."

The critical political problem in South Vietnam, said Rogers, is that there is no cohesiveness, no real national interest even in such things as national sports or national radio programs. He thought it would be a good idea to have a couple of men in the U.S. Embassy who are ex-

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[3] Rogers met privately with President Nguyen Van Thieu and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky on May 16. Thieu told Rogers he would like to hold elections after the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam and after receiving guarantees from the Viet Cong about freedom of the electoral process. Thieu was prepared to accept establishment of a mixed electoral commission to run the elections and would amend the GVN constitution if necessary for an agreement. Thieu was confident he could use the military and civil servants to expand the Government's political support and successfully contest the elections. Ky told Rogers that South Vietnam would be ready for elections by May 1970. (Telegram 9541 from Saigon, May 16; ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 7, President's Daily Briefs) Rogers discussed other issues with Thieu on May 16, including land reform as reported in telegram Secto 63/6559 from Saigon, May 16. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, ORG 7 S) Rogers also met with Thieu's cabinet on May 16; an account of that discussion is in telegram 9723 from Saigon, May 19. (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S) Additional documentation on Rogers' visit to Vietnam is ibid., Conference Files, 1966–1972, CF 356–364.

perienced in politics and who would help Thieu to build a national image. President Nixon asked whether "Thieu would accept political advice from us." Rogers' reply: "He would if we didn't label the people involved as political advisors and if we could just attach them to the Embassy without publicity."

The President commented that criticism of South Vietnam with regard to the condition of its democracy has become terribly distorted. Complaints that the South Vietnamese have defective elections and a partially controlled press are made without regard to the fact that North Vietnam has *no* elections and a completely controlled press. Two very basic questions involved in the South Vietnamese situation, the President continued, are whether a country like South Vietnam is really ready for a democratic system, and whether it is possible to have freedom of the press in a country at full-scale war. "Look back to our own society," the President said. "Lincoln didn't allow much freedom of the press in the Civil War. And in both World War I and World War II, we had a very tight press situation."

Vice President Agnew raised the question whether statements in the U.S. attacking this country's role in Vietnam—such as those made by Senator Edward Kennedy—have an effect on the South Vietnamese. Rogers said there was no doubt that all such statements were followed closely and studied for their possible effects on U.S. policy.

Moving on to other countries he visited, the Secretary of State said that at a meeting of the SEATO alliance partners he found that representatives of the countries which are contributing troops to the Vietnamese war thought the U.S. should reduce its forces there and all indicated that their countries would not reduce their own troop strength if the U.S. did so.

[Omitted here is material unrelated to Vietnam and Southeast Asia.]

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78. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 4, 1969.

SUBJECT

US Negotiating Team in Paris

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 183, Paris Talks/Meetings, Memos and Miscellaneous, Vol. XIV, 1969. Secret; Nodis.

Attached is a memorandum handed to me by Mel Laird which offers some additional insights into the problems within our Paris negotiating team. This memorandum was prepared by a high ranking officer detailed to Paris (but not the source of the previous statements).

Attachment

Paper Given by Secretary of Defense Laird to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[2]

Washington, May 27, 1969.

SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING OUR PARIS PEACE TALKS DELEGATION

1. General Frederick Weyand and Col. Paul Gorman (and possibly Herbert Kaplan, the press spokesman) seem to be the only realists on the delegation. The State Department people, especially Richard Holbrooke and Carl Salans, are taking positions and attempting to formulate policies and démarches that are not in keeping with—and in fact contrary to—the President's publicly-stated commitment on Vietnam. (Witness the "Lodge-authored" suggested démarche for 31 May, re our withdrawal of troops on the basis of "understanding" rather than concrete conditions.[3] Also the earlier message (para 16) re our withdrawal if North Vietnam "is going to withdraw." Sullivan apparently concurred in the Lodge cable.)[4]

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[2] Secret; Nodis; Background Use Only.

[3] In telegram 7755 from Paris, May 26, Lodge suggested that he meet alone with Tho at the end of the meeting and state: "I quite understand that public discussion of such subjects as troop withdrawal might create problems. Such problems can be avoided. We could try to establish the circumstances in which troop withdrawal takes place. This could be done by prior understanding rather than by prior conditions. Is there some de facto way in which troops could be withdrawn from South Vietnam which would not appear to be a result of negotiations between us—something which would just apparently happen as part of the normal course of events." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 181, Paris Talks/Meetings, Private Paris Meetings, Memos/Codeword) In telegram 10617 from Saigon, May 28, Bunker expressed misgivings about such a statement and suggested substituting "perhaps this could be done by prior understanding" for "prior understanding rather than prior conditions." (Ibid.) Lodge was instructed to follow Nixon's statement in his speech of May 14: "If North Viet-Nam wants to insist that it has no forces in South Viet-Nam, we will no longer debate the point—provided that its forces cease to be there, and that we have reliable assurances that they will not return." (Memorandum from Sneider to Kissinger, May 27; ibid.)

[4] Not further identified.

2. Ambassador (Judge) Walsh seemed totally out of it, not at all forceful, and with no firm views. He is not kept informed by junior members of the staff.

3. Ambassador Lodge appeared to be an old man who had been encapsulated by the bright young State Department boys.[5] His staff meetings are unfocussed, disorganized, and with no central direction. Of the regulars, General Weyand seems to be the only realist in attendance.

4. The GVN delegation, especially Ambassador Lam and Colonel Nguyen-Hui-Loi, evince doubts regarding the firmness of our commitment, mainly based, it seems, on the analyses they read in the US press. The South Vietnamese have little or no contact with the US delegation, aside from General Weyand's military component.

5. A matter of first priority should be to establish White House control over the delegation.[5] A statement of policy should be imposed on the delegation, and the machinery should be regularized. There are too many cut-outs (e.g., General Weyand did not see the Lodge cable before Phil Habib hand-carried it to Washington).

6. In short, the State Department members of the delegation seem bound and determined to fly in the face of historical experience and, if left to their own devices, to secure a peace at almost any price.[5]

7. Another extremely disturbing factor is whether or not the "advocates" have thought through the ramifications—*out-of-country* as well as within Vietnam—of the proposed démarche. It would be interesting to task them (if such was possible) with preparing a contingency paper gaming out a post-Vietnam Southeast Asia as they see it. If honestly played, the game would be a nightmare, both for US credibility and for future US initiatives (given the assumable domestic public opinion that would obtain).

[5] Nixon underlined this sentence.

79. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 4, 1969.

SUBJECT

Your Meeting with President Thieu at Midway, June 8

I. Arrangements for the Midway Meeting

You will arrive at Midway at 11:00 a.m. President Thieu arrives at 11:30 a.m. After an official welcome and military honors (draft statement attached at Tab A),[2] you will meet privately with President Thieu for about an hour and a half. The remaining members of both delegations will meet in a separate conference room during this period. (Delegation lists are at Tab E.)

After a brief break, there will be a business luncheon attended by members of both delegations. (Points for a toast are at Tab B.) Secretary Laird departs after this luncheon.

Your final meeting with Thieu will begin at 3:15 p.m. after a half-hour break. Secretary Rogers and other senior advisors will sit in on this meeting at which you and President Thieu will review the draft joint statement. (Current draft is at Tab C.) At 5:00 p.m. there is to be a joint press conference at which time the joint statement will be issued. President Thieu is scheduled to leave about 5:45 p.m. (A draft departure statement is at Tab D.) You are scheduled to leave shortly thereafter.

II. The Setting for the Midway Meeting

The Midway meeting with President Thieu comes at a crucial time. It has been preceded by months of concerted and effective efforts on the part of your administration to dissipate misunderstanding between us and the South Vietnamese Government and to place our relations on a solid basis of both full consultation and mutual confidence. The meeting, furthermore, follows the enunciation of your peace program in the May 14 speech and the issuance of the NLF's ten points, providing a potential basis for negotiations at Paris. Finally, in recent months, Thieu has taken key actions reflecting his greater sense of self-confidence, his recognition of the political problems facing you at

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 71, Vietnam Subject Files, Midway Meeting with President Thieu, 6/8/69, Briefing Book, Vol. I. Secret. Sent for information.

[2] All Tabs are attached but not printed.

home, and his sense that the Vietnam war is probably entering the decisive negotiating stage. These actions include:

1. His full support for improvement and modernization of the Vietnamese forces.
2. His agreement to a withdrawal of some U.S. military units during 1969.
3. His March 25 statement of the six-point GVN peace program and other public indications of some flexibility on a political settlement.
4. His even greater flexibility, privately, on political arrangements affording the NLF a guaranteed post-war political role.
5. His formation of a political coalition of supporters, whatever its deficiencies, on May 25.

III. Thieu's main purposes in his talks with you will be

—To establish a personal relationship with you which will serve both as a bridge for future consultation and as a focal point for strengthening his leadership position in South Vietnam.

—To reassure himself that the United States will remain committed to South Vietnam both during and after the war; from Thieu's viewpoint the key areas of reassurance (which relate in part to the eight-point plan in your speech) will be:

(1) Withdrawal of U.S. forces, whether unilateral or mutual, will *not* be at a rate likely to increase the vulnerability of the GVN to Communist military action.
(2) The Vietnam settlement will include guarantees against a renewal of the North Vietnamese military intervention in South Vietnam.
(3) The U.S. plan, particularly those aspects dealing with disengagement and local ceasefires, would *not* result in a de facto partition for South Vietnam.
(4) The U.S. is not seeking to impose a provisional coalition government or scrapping of the present constitution in the pre-election period.

—To establish for public consumption a close identity of purpose and action with you, while establishing for his Saigon audience his stature as an equal.

IV. Your main purposes in the talks with Thieu will be

—To establish a personal relationship with Thieu which provides him with both a necessary sense of confidence in your commitments to South Vietnam and reinforces his own sense of self-confidence.

—To reassure Thieu on two fundamentals:

(1) We will not be a party to an agreement imposing either a coalition government in the pre- or post-election periods, or any other political arrangement against the will of the South Vietnamese.
(2) Withdrawal of U.S. forces, whether unilateral or mutual, will *not* be undertaken at the risk of the military security of either South Vietnam forces or the remaining U.S. forces.

—To encourage a sense of urgency, vigor and joint U.S.-GVN purpose in the Vietnamization program.[3]

—To prod Thieu gently to articulate in more specific terms a political program for discussion at the Paris negotiations which affords the Communists sufficient guarantees of free political completion without conceding to their demands for a coalition government.[4]

(Thieu has privately suggested this might be done through a combination of international supervision, mixed electorate commissions, and amendment—rather than scrapping—of the constitution.)

—To encourage Thieu to continue his efforts to unify the nationalists on the political front and to strengthen the local governmental apparatus, while hinting judiciously about the utility of dealing gently with opposition non-Communist forces.[5]

(*Note:* The political situation in South Vietnam is more fluid than appears on the surface; Thieu and his principal non-Communist rivals are already maneuvering for position in the post-war political structure, and each in all probability also has some lines out to elements in the NLF. Thieu, therefore, could be tempted or prodded by his supporters to bear down hard on his non-Communist rivals.)

—To assure Thieu that you will not accept any settlement that does not provide assurances of North Vietnamese withdrawal to North Vietnam and against their future military intervention in South Vietnam.

—To establish publicly an image of unity with the GVN and a joint determination to seek a very early settlement of the Vietnam conflict which does not compromise basic principles.

V. Danger Signals

While it will be important for you to encourage forward motion on Thieu's part both with respect to Vietnamization and the formulation of a political program, there are risks in pushing Thieu too far, too fast. Thieu has been bolder in charting future policy on both withdrawal of U.S. forces and a political settlement than his supporters or his political rivals. He faces the constant necessity of bringing these elements along to his more flexible posture. Therefore, it will be neither to his nor to your interest for Thieu to get too far out ahead of other nationalists in Saigon or to appear to be acting on Vietnamization and a political settlement strictly at our behest.[6] Thieu's pre-Midway visits

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[3] Nixon highlighted this sentence.

[4] Nixon highlighted this sentence.

[5] Nixon underlined the phrase: "utility of dealing gently with opposition non-Communist forces" in this sentence.

[6] Nixon underlined this sentence.

to Seoul and Taipei, in any event, will probably strengthen his determination to resist any appearance of American pressure.

VI. Specific Issues Likely to Arise (Talking Points at Tab F)

A. Thieu is likely to raise, or should be encouraged to raise:

1. His views on a program for a political settlement.
2. Progress in organizing political support among the non-Communists.
3. Modernization of the GVN forces.
4. Progress on the pacification front.
5. Land reform.

B. Issues you should raise:[7]

1. U.S. plans for a reduction of U.S. forces.
2. Reassurance on the U.S. position opposing either partition or the imposition of unsatisfactory provisional arrangements before the elections.
3. Our view on the current status and the prospects of the Paris negotiations.
4. Your overview on Asia, including the importance of a steadfast U.S. commitment to the non-Communist countries in the region.

VII. Thieu Personality

Thieu is a career military officer who has proved his political astuteness both by surviving successive coups and by demonstrating growing qualities of leadership since taking over as President in 1967. Cast in the traditional Vietnamese mold, Thieu is reserved in manner, moves cautiously, and keeps his own counsel. However, as he has gained greater self-confidence, he has increasingly shown himself to be more perceptive and sensitive to the needs of his country—and more flexible—than his potential rivals. He has worked in close harmony with Ambassador Bunker and has developed a real sensitivity toward the domestic problems faced in the United States. He accepts our advice, but at every crucial instance has made it clear that he is his own master. Unostentatious in manner, he is devoted to his wife and family. His single known "vice" is a passion for fishing.

VIII.

The State and Defense Departments have prepared a number of background papers, in the attached briefing book. A scope paper is attached at Tab G.

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[7] Nixon underlined issues 1 and 2.

80. Editorial Note

On June 7, 1969, President Nixon arrived in Honolulu in preparation for his meeting with President Thieu on Midway Island the next day. According to the President's Daily Diary, Nixon met with Secretary of State Rogers, Secretary of Defense Laird, Assistant to the President Kissinger, Generals Wheeler and Abrams, Admiral McCain, and Ambassador Bunker. The meeting was held in the conference room of the Kuala Hilton Hotel in Honolulu from approximately 2:15 to 6:15 p.m. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) Although not listed as a participant in the diary, Ambassador Lodge also attended. Kissinger's recollection of this meeting stresses that the military participants accepted the decision to withdraw 25,000 U.S. troops "with a heavy heart," but with resignation. (*White House Years,* pages 272–273) When Laird described this Hawaii gathering at his staff meeting on June 16, he called it a "really significant meeting," but provided no details. (Washington National Records Center, OSD Files, FRC 330 76–0028, Laird Chronological File, June–August 1969) Laird prepared a June 7 briefing for the President on Vietnamization. (Ibid., ISA Task Force Files, FRC 75–0013, Chron Action, Ltc Williams, June 6) Lodge was asked to brief the group on events in Paris. According to notes he made, Lodge gave an account of the May 31 private meeting with Le Duc Tho as follows:

"1. I was asked to report on the situation in Paris.

"2. I said that Le Duc Tho, on May 31, had made this proposal:

"a) The DRV would talk with us on all matters and on behalf of the NLF. In essence, he also advanced these ideas:

"b) Remove the present personnel of the GVN and destroy them;

"c) Seek a US–DRV agreement within the framework of the 10 points of the NLF, and another agreement on a cease-fire. In other words, the cease-fire was put at the very bottom of the list.

"3. I said that I did not think we could refuse to talk with the DRV. If political questions were brought up, we should be authorized to refer them to Thieu. I suggested that the President should seek to achieve such an understanding with Thieu at the Midway conference the next day." (Notes on the Midway Meetings by Lodge, Massachusetts Historical Society, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Reel 25)

On June 8 Nixon and the same group flew from Honolulu to Midway, from 7 to 10 a.m. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) According to H.R. Haldeman there were "Meetings all the way." No record of these discussions on the aircraft have been found. (*Haldeman Diaries,* page 64)

81. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Midway Island, June 8, 1969.

PRESENT

President Nixon
President Thieu
Henry Kissinger
Nguyen Phu Duc

President Nixon began the meeting by stressing that he preferred to have private talks. He assured President Thieu that what he would say would be in confidence. They could agree on that.

President Thieu said that speculation as to differences between them is untrue; that he was very glad to have this opportunity to talk with the President.

President Nixon stated that the press is trying to drive a wedge between the two Presidents with respect to reports about American pressure. Unless President Thieu heard something from him directly, he should disregard it. There is currently a lot of speculation regarding American pressures for a coalition government and it is entirely unfounded. (The President called on Henry Kissinger to confirm that fact.) The President gave a general appraisal of the situation, stating that the war in Vietnam concerns not only Vietnam but the entire Pacific. The people of South Vietnam, however, have the greatest stake. If the peace is inadequate, there will be repercussions all over Asia. There can be no reward for those engaged in aggression. At the same time, self-determination is not only in the Vietnamese interest, but in the American interest as well. It would improve the prospects of peace throughout the Pacific.

The President mentioned that we have a difficult political problem in the U.S. and that he appreciated Saigon's understanding for his domestic problems. At the same time, he understood President Thieu's problems. It is not our wish for President Thieu to get too far ahead and wind up with no country to lead. President Nixon described the Congressional situation and the importance of the 1970 elections. The U.S. domestic situation is a weapon in the war. (At this point the President asked Henry Kissinger to explain the Cambodian strikes.)

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Office Files, Box 1, Memos for the President's Files, 1969–1970, Beginning June 8, 1969. Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. Drafted on June 13. Kissinger prepared brief individual scenarios for Nixon meetings with Thieu in the morning and afternoon. (Memoranda from Kissinger to Nixon, June 4; NSC Files, Box 71, Vietnam Subject Files, Midway Meeting with President Thieu, 6/8/69, Briefing Book, Vol. I)

President Thieu felt that the intentions of the enemy are crucial; the issue is the spread of Communism. Any false peace will affect all of Asia. Both the Vietnamese people and the world need peace. He recognized the U.S. desire for peace. He knew that the U.S. had no desire to occupy Vietnam but that its sole objective was to achieve peace. The Vietnamese should be reasonable and must consider not only Vietnamese opinions but those of the U.S. as well. The war in Vietnam is not a military one and neither side can win militarily. Therefore, there must be a reasonable compromise. President Thieu understood the difficulties of the President with a large army abroad incurring constant casualties. He felt that his country must make progress in order to help us to withdraw.

Thieu stated that Hanoi deliberately creates a deadlock in Paris and attacks the GVN as the chief obstacle to peace. The Communists are weaker, but Hanoi can continue the war at a reduced rate of casualties for many years. Hence, a negotiated peace is essential. Thieu said he was trying to make progress in winning the political war. Even if Hanoi continues the war, the GVN will win the population.

The President next turned to the subject of troop replacements. Thieu stated that troop replacements, if not handled carefully, could be misunderstood by the North Vietnamese and their allies. He pointed out that we have kept saying the war is going better. We must now prove it; it is important for both U.S. and Vietnamese opinion. Even though the war is going on, we must use the troop replacement to fight Communist propaganda.

By July 15, Thieu said, it should be possible to phase out one-third of the Third Marine Division and six battalions from the Delta. At the same time, he wanted to emphasize a difference of opinion with General Abrams. His aim was to extend administrative control over 100% of the population next year. Therefore, the regional and popular forces are crucial. As they improve, they can replace mobile U.S. forces and ARVN combat divisions. The regional and popular forces can free regular forces to fight a mobile war. This was better than building up new combat divisions.

President Nixon said that we have confused the press by not denying any conflict between us. It would be obvious after today that no conflict existed. The two Presidents then discussed plans for the communiqué.

Turning to the negotiations, President Nixon asked how we should respond to Le Duc Tho's proposal for bilateral talks.

President Thieu misunderstood the President's question about the Tho proposal and said the GVN would object to any U.S. attempt to talk to the NLF. After Mr. Kissinger clarified the issue, President Thieu said that he agrees to bilateral talks unless the U.S. tries to settle directly with

the NLF. The United States should introduce the military subject and listen to the political projections of the other side. Before replying, the GVN would have to be fully consulted.

President Nixon asked several questions regarding Vietnamese political institutions, commenting that Thieu knew his people and required timing. He emphasized that there was no wedge between the U.S. and GVN nor between Thieu and his people.

Break for Lunch

Thieu asked about how we should respond to Communist strategy in Paris. President Nixon replied that we should not seem overanxious.

Thieu asked about military operations. President Nixon said he thought the Communists were suffering badly and intelligence indicated there was very little in the pipeline to the South from Hanoi. Thieu felt that the reason for the latest attacks was to maintain an impression of strength for the Communist world conference and to bring pressure on U.S. public opinion. The Communists faced a dilemma: they wanted to economize their human resources but also wished to maintain U.S. casualties. Thus they continue the tactics of pressure. The Communists pretend that the current deadlock is our fault. The only way to overcome this strategy is to set a deadline. Hanoi knows that delay is to their advantage. Thieu suggested we make our most conciliatory proposal and then establish a deadline for a response, so that time does not work for the other side.

President Nixon asked whether Thieu planned to go on in his political program from his March 25 speech.[2] Thieu replied that we must not be put into the position of always making new proposals. At some early point, we must state (a) that the U.S. and Saigon agree, and (b) that our proposals are as far as we can go. President Thieu stated that he did not want to be pushed from one position to another—as was the case with the shape-of-the-table issue. If he could have the assurance that we would back some set of Saigon proposals, he was certain that we could work out a common position. But he did not want to have an escalation of proposals. Hanoi tended to take 15 small concessions and parlay them into one major concession.

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[2] On March 25 President Thieu announced a six-point peace plan that he later reiterated on April 7 at a joint session of the two Houses of the South Vietnamese National Assembly. The points were: "1. North Vietnam must give up attempts to conquer South Vietnam by force, 2. all Communist forces must be withdrawn from South Vietnam, 3. Laos and Cambodia could not be used as bases for attacks on South Vietnam, 4. South Vietnam would adopt a policy of national reconciliation, 5. unification must be decided through a democratic process, and 6. international controls and guarantees against Communist aggression must be adopted." (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1969–1970,* p. 23554)

Thieu asked for assurances that we would not use every concession by the GVN as a signal for new demands. There must be an end to it. Mr. Kissinger asked, "But how do you play the political game?" Thieu replied that if there were a withdrawal of forces and an end of terrorism, the GVN could consider the NLF as another party in elections. If the NLF wants guarantees, the GVN was ready to discuss it with them in generous terms. Thieu said he was ready to accept an international body. It could not interfere in the GVN's area of sovereignty but it could organize and supervise elections. The GVN was willing to accept as many as 10,000 international inspectors and frontier guards. He was prepared to implement free choice and self-determination; in other words, a free vote and free candidature. Thieu felt that everyone was aware that political competition was inevitable.

President Nixon urged Thieu to do everything possible and asked if it would be any help to him if we provided a political organizer. The U.S. had done this with Magsaysay and it had been helpful. It is up to President Thieu if he wants this kind of assistance. Thieu responded that more support for cadres was necessary.

President Nixon mentioned that Hanoi has never had real elections and is thus employing a double standard. Thieu pointed out that 56% of those "elected" in North Vietnam were women. This shows the magnitude of their manpower problem. He reiterated that there would be elections after the withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces. Thieu was prepared for good international supervision—even without troops.

President Nixon wondered whether the GVN could siphon off the political forces in the center to weaken the Viet Cong. Thieu responded that when we have a common position on our side, we can have a united front. What made the middle ground in Saigon so uncertain was the fear that the U.S. would withdraw support. Hence, many politicians were holding themselves available for a coalition government with the NLF.

President Nixon asked why not a united front now; the GVN is going to win and that is a great asset. Thieu stated very frankly that there was a sagging of spirit in Saigon. Many still believe that the Viet Cong can have political concessions. The intellectuals are waiting for political concessions imposed on Saigon by the U.S. They were encouraged in this by loose statements from U.S. cabinet members. Mr. Duc interjected that the Saigon population was very worried.

President Thieu asked what had been meant by local elections in the early drafts of the President's May 14 speech. The President replied that he meant that elections could be held in provinces where ceasefires had been arranged. Thieu said that this was an interesting possibility.

President Nixon said that the fact that the people in Saigon were jittery worried him. Thieu returned to his view that territorial forces had to be strengthened. General Abrams wants to train divisions. Thieu wants to train 130,000 Regional Forces and Popular Forces. Abrams doubts the manpower resources are available. Thieu thinks it easier to form RF and PF than regular forces. If the GVN has more RF and PF, it can phase out combat divisions. Thieu wants the U.S. to reconsider his plan regarding the RF and PF, and for someone to talk to General Abrams.

President Nixon mentioned the stories in the press about the poor performance of the 5th and 18th Divisions. Thieu said it is a question of leadership. President Nixon recalled the story of when General Pershing's desire to attack was thwarted by a classmate who said the morale of his divisions was shot. Pershing replied, your morale is shot and fired him. There are no tired divisions, only tired commanders.[3]

[3] After their meeting on June 8, Nixon and Thieu released a previously agreed upon joint statement; see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 445–557.

82. Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Sullivan) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, June 10, 1969.

SUBJECT

Laos

[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 LAOS. Secret; Exdis. In a June 10 covering memorandum to Walsh, Sullivan stated that Kissinger asked for this memorandum "on a private basis." Sullivan told Walsh that his recommendations reflected his opposition to CINCPAC's and other military commanders' urgings for a major increase in U.S. military activity on Laos. Sullivan discerned from Nixon and Kissinger that the military hoped to assign a U.S. major general as military commander for all activities in Laos and take over at least part of the role that the U.S. Ambassador to Laos currently fulfilled. Sullivan stated that he had shown this memorandum to Godley and suggested that Rogers, Richardson, Johnson, and Green receive copies.

You asked for my opinion concerning the utility of additional United States military action in Laos.[2] As I told you previously, and as I told the President during the trip back from Midway to Honolulu, I consider that there is very little more we can do than we are currently doing. I also consider that the net result of additional effort would be marginal.

In reaching this assessment, I start from the premise that Laos, as a landlocked nation of less than three million people, can never be a military match for North Viet-Nam, a nation of nearly twenty million. I also assume that it is not in the United States interest to commit our own forces to a ground war in Laos. Therefore, the limits of perfectibility in the defense of Laos must be defined by the capabilities of Lao ground forces, aided by United States training and equipment, and augmented by United States air support. Additional United States assistance is given in the form of intelligence and clandestine operations.

Currently, we train and equip regular Lao armed forces of about 60,000 men. Additionally we train, pay and direct a tribal guerrilla force of about 40,000 men. We have furnished a small tactical air force of T–28 aircraft, which we attempt to keep at air operating level of 48 aircraft, with Lao pilots. Due to a shortage of Lao pilots, we pay for the services of about a dozen Thai "volunteer" pilots. Moreover, by contract with two U.S. operated companies (Air America and Continental Air Services) we provide airlift support for the Lao military and our own guerrilla forces.

About 60 USAF sorties per day are flown from Thailand in direct support of Lao military activity. U.S. Forward Air Controllers (about 10) also operate from Thailand and from strips in Laos. Communications are handled by U.S. military and civilian personnel to assure the efficiency of these operations.

To run the foregoing effort, there are less than 200 U.S. personnel in Laos who are "in violation" of the 1962 agreements. It has always been my policy to hold this number to a minimum and to position them in such a manner that they could be immediately extracted if political considerations dictated. It is important to note that the United

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[2] Kissinger sent a copy of this memorandum to Nixon on June 16, stating in the covering memorandum it was in response to Nixon's request "to look into the possibility of doing more to improve the military situation in Laos." Kissinger summarized Sullivan's view that there was little more that the United States could do, but added: "I believe the key factor in Laos is the enemy's ability to concentrate its forces there and overrun the remainder of the country at any time it would appear advantageous to do so. Additional U.S. assistance to Lao forces could not alter this fact, although it could make a difference in the current situation." Kissinger recommended that the Under Secretaries Committee look into the issue and Nixon approved on April 18. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 286, Memoranda to the President, June 1969, Folder 2)

States has accepted *no* commitments whatsoever in association with these military operations and that they could, in principle, be terminated unilaterally by us at any time.

In addition to these arrangements, but in no sense as a quid pro quo, the Lao government permits the U.S. to carry out bombing operations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, an area of Laos that has very little strategic interest to the Lao government itself, but which is directly related to our interests in South Viet-Nam. We fly about 400 tactical air sorties a day and about 20 or 30 B–52 sorties per day in this area. The only conditions attached to this permission are (a) that we should not publicly admit our bombing, and (b) that we avoid killing Lao civilians who may be haplessly in the same area as the North Vietnamese infiltrators who are targets of our bombing raids.

Without the permission of the Lao government, and in the light of Souvanna's advice to me that he would refuse such permission if we asked for it, we also conduct cross-border raids from South Viet-Nam into the Lao panhandle. These raids are run by platoon-sized units of South Vietnamese irregulars, encadred by U.S. Special Forces men.

This combination of effort has kept the military situation in Laos more or less stabilized for the past five years. The Lao have suffered relatively heavy casualties and have had nearly one quarter of their population displaced as refugees. But there has been *no* significant loss of terrain, and indeed, a net gain, over the situation which obtained in 1964.

When one is asked what more can be done, it is first necessary to consider what the objective is, where and how it is to be done, and who will do it. Let us start with the least desirable proposal—the introduction of U.S. ground forces overtly into the enemy sanctuary area in the Panhandle. These sanctuaries contain from a regiment to a division of enemy forces, depending on current deployments. Therefore, an operation against them would have to involve regiments or divisions.

Not only would such a venture be of dubious military success (it would probably at best be a second Khe Sanh), but it would raise major political considerations. If we asked the Lao for official permission, they could reasonably be expected to accede only if we made some explicit commitments to them. It is doubtful that we wish to extend our commitments at this time. If, on the other hand, we did it against the specific wishes of the Lao, we would face an uproar internationally and domestically. We do not wish that sort of reaction.

Assuming, then, that broader ground action is out of the question, we might consider additional air action. Again, the question is where and by whom. The air operation in the Panhandle is frankly already saturated. There is little more that can be done there except against populated areas. We could probably get Lao agreement to such attacks

if we agree to give the population adequate warning to leave the towns before we attack. Such warning would also result in the evacuation of military objectives and, hence, the value of the proposed attacks would be nil.

Similar considerations prevail for most other direct U.S. military efforts which might be proposed elsewhere in Laos. The only exception to this statement might be the possibility of augmenting the daily USAF effort allotted to direct support of Lao troops. This suggestion would have to be measured against the limited communications, forward air control, and targeting capabilities available to the Lao.

Hence, my only suggestions for augmenting our effort in Laos come down to a few proposals associated with improving the inherent capabilities of the Lao forces. These are as follows:

(a) Provide the Lao army with more M–16 rifles. (They currently have less than 6,000 and most of their opponents have AK–47 weapons. I would increase this total up to 20,000 rifles.)

(b) Provide the Lao air force with more AC–47 aircraft. (These planes, with side-firing guns, are excellent for the defense of small outposts. I believe there is now a program to convert four of the C–47 inventory to this configuration. I would convert others or supply new ones up to a total of ten—two to each military region.)

(c) Finally, I would provide the Lao air force with T–41 trainer aircraft to improve their pilot training program.

All of these proposals have either been made, or are being made, by our Country Team in Laos. If there is an indication from you that the President favors these rather modest suggestions, it would make a long story much shorter.

83. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 11, 1969.

SUBJECT

Paris Private Talks

At the May 31, private meeting with Ambassador Lodge, the Hanoi representative, Le Duc Tho, took a new tact proposing to negotiate bilaterally with us on all questions, political as well as military. Hanoi no longer insisted that we negotiate with the NLF, but refused flatly to talk privately to the GVN.

Tho also raised three questions of major substance:

1. Does the United States agree that it and the DRV should work out a settlement of all problems mentioned in the 10-points, that agreements should be signed, followed by an agreement for a ceasefire?
2. Does the United States agree to have the present GVN leadership replaced by a peace cabinet willing to conduct serious talks with the NLF?
3. Who is to organize elections after the restoration of peace?

Two principal issues are raised by Tho's proposals:

1. How do we proceed with the private talks?
2. If we move ahead with another round of private talks, how do we respond to Tho's three questions?

Ambassadors Lodge and Bunker, in commenting on our possible response to Tho, agree that the basic objective of Hanoi's strategy is to isolate the Thieu Government and produce strains between us and the GVN—as might result if we and the DRV negotiated seriously on a political settlement. Lodge, however, believes that Tho's approach merits further probing to determine if there is a basis for serious negotiation.[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1319, Unfiled Material, 3 of 19. Secret; Nodis. Sent for action. Originally dated June 7, then redated by hand June 11. Sneider sent this memorandum to Kissinger on June 2 with the recommendation that he sign and send it to the President. The second page was redone, apparently at Kissinger's request. A note on the first page presumably by Sneider reads: "President was shown this by HAK on trip to Honolulu, RS." This note is apparently in response to an attached note by Haig, June 11, that reads: "Dick Sneider, Dick—Pres did not see this [.] it's now OBE in some respects—should we update and refloat? Al."

[2] Lodge's comment and recommendations are in telegram 8366 from Paris/Delto 1805, June 4. (Ibid., Box 177, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Meetings, May–June 1969, State Nodis Cables/Habib Calls)

Bunker is essentially less optimistic.[3] Nevertheless, Bunker has not disputed Lodge's proposal that we request a further private meeting after Midway on a basis which would neither accept nor reject Tho's proposal for talks on political, as well as military, issues. Lodge would not initiate any discussion of political issues and would respond initially to the DRV that these should be discussed with the GVN. Bunker would prefer to take the offensive in the next round of private talks and is concerned about the GVN reaction if we are drawn into extended political talks with the DRV. Lodge shares this concern but thinks we can avoid this trap.

With respect to Tho's three questions, Lodge and Bunker are not far apart:

1. Both would rebuff, for the present, Tho's suggestion for discussing a draft agreement, and emphasize our interest in substance and not form.
2. Both would reject Tho's proposal to replace the GVN with a peace cabinet, but Bunker would take a tougher line.
3. Both would respond to the question on organizing the elections, by suggesting that elections can be organized without changing the GVN or jeopardizing the NLF and that the GVN and NLF work the problems out.
4. Finally, both would try to focus the discussions with the DRV on mutual withdrawal.

My own view is closer to Bunker's appreciation of the situation. I would go ahead with another round of private talks but with greater care to avoid any misunderstanding with the GVN about our undertaking political talks with the DRV. I believe Lodge will agree and intend to discuss this with Lodge and Bunker.

Lodge and Bunker have also suggested that you might review this problem of further private talks with Thieu during your morning meeting. You may prefer to leave those details to Bunker, and instead discuss the private talks in general terms with Thieu indicating our intention to probe the DRV position although we see as yet little ground for optimism.

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[3] Bunker's comments and recommendations are in telegram 11261 from Saigon, June 5. (Ibid., RG 59, Winston Lord Files: Lot 77 D 112, Box 338, Vietnam Private Talks)

84. Editorial Note

On June 11, 1969, Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin met with Henry Kissinger prior to returning to Moscow for consultations. The discussion on Vietnam follows:

"Dobrynin then turned to Vietnam. I told him that we were following a very careful policy. We had our moves for the next few months fully worked out. I reminded him of what the President had said when we gave him an advance copy of the Vietnam speech. He should not be confused by the many statements that he heard. We were not interfering with much that was being said. But the President reserved the final decision on essential items. Dobrynin replied that he had noticed that we moved on about the schedule we had given him a month ago.

"Dobrynin then asked about our ideas for settling the war in Vietnam. He inquired especially on our views on a coalition government. I said that he and I were both realists. He knew very well that in order to bring about a coalition government we would have to smash the present structure of the Saigon Government while the NLF remained intact. This would guarantee an NLF victory sooner or later. We would never accept that. We would agree to a fair political contest—not to what the President had called a disguised defeat.

"Dobrynin made no efforts to defend Hanoi's position. He replied that Hanoi was very difficult. He said I could be sure that the Soviet Union had transmitted our discussion of April and added a recommendation. However, Hanoi believed that they knew their own requirements better than the Soviet Union. I said, on the other hand, the Soviet Union supplied 85% of the military equipment. Dobrynin asked whether we wanted the Soviet Union to give Hanoi an ultimatum. I said it was not for me to tell the Soviet Union how to conduct its relations with its allies. I said that we were determined to have the war ended one way or another. Hanoi was attempting to break down the President's public support. It was too much to ask us to hold still for that. I added that what we needed was some strategic help, not just negotiating devices for settling particular problems as has been the case until now. Dobrynin, who was very subdued, said I could be sure that they are looking into the question.

"Dobrynin then asked me about US-Soviet relations in general. I said that while some gradual progress was possible even during the Vietnam war, a really massive change depended on the settlement of the Vietnam war. Dobrynin said we always seem to link things. I replied that as a student of Marxism he must believe in the importance of objective factors. It was an objective fact that Hanoi was trying to undermine the President. It was an objective fact that we had to look to every avenue for a solution. Dobrynin then said supposing the war were settled, how would you go about improving relations."

The end of the conversation follows:

"Dobrynin returned to the theme of US-Soviet relations and asked what he could tell his principals when he returned. I said that everything depended on the war in Vietnam. If the war were ended, he could say that there was no limit to what might be accomplished. You would like to be remembered as a President who ensured a permanent peace and a qualitative change in international relations." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/HAK, 1969 [Part 1]) The full record of this conversation, which Nixon saw, is in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, volume XII, Soviet Union, 1969–October 1970.

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85. Intelligence Memorandum[1]

No. 05730/69 Washington, June 12, 1969.

STRESSES IN NORTH VIETNAM

As the leaders of North Vietnam enter the eleventh year of their attempt to seize control of the South by force, they face a rising level of war-weariness among their people. In addition, as a result of the cessation of the bombing last year, the regime is having to combat a relaxation on the part of the North Vietnamese generally. Once the bombing stopped, many North Vietnamese, even in the armed services and in the vital areas of transportation, appear to have suffered an emotional letdown in[2] the belief that the war was over as far as they were concerned. Now, the regime is having difficulty convincing the people that they must continue to endure deprivations and that many must continue to go South to fight what by now must seem to them to

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 137, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. VI, 5/26/69–6/17/69. Secret; Spoke; No Foreign Dissem. Prepared in the Office of Current Intelligence of the Central Intelligence Agency and coordinated with the Office of Economic Research, the Office of National Estimates, and the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it. Nixon wrote on the title page: "K—What can we do to accelerate the morale decline?"

[2] Nixon underlined the previous portion of the sentence and drew an arrow to his handwritten comment: "K—what will effect on this morale be of our anticipated action?"

be an interminable war. Although these problems do not appear to be so grave as to impair significantly the regime's ability to prosecute the war, they are causing the politburo concern, and it is reacting.

[Omitted here is the 7-page body of the paper.]

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86. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 13, 1969.

SUBJECT

Study on Laos

You raised the question whether a full-scale study of Laos is not required, in view of newspaper reports of a deteriorating military situation.

State has been working for some time on a paper on Laos in the context of a Southeast Asian settlement. The study is nearing completion, and will be forwarded to the Review Group when completed. I think that this will meet our requirements.

The military situation in Laos is indeed cause for real concern, although major shifts in the strategic balance seem unlikely before next autumn.

As I stated in a memorandum in April,[2] the Communists have the military power on the scene to take Laos when they want. They refrain because of uncertainty about our reaction, and because Laos is only a part of larger concerns in the area.

The Communists' winter offensive created a very serious crisis of confidence in the RLG, though it did not take in so much new territory as the Communist gains of the year before. It slowed up in April,

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 545, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. I, to 31 July 1969. Secret. Drafted by Lindsey Grant and sent by Sneider to Kissinger under a June 10 covering memorandum in which Sneider recommended that Kissinger sign it and send it to the President. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it.

[2] Document 56.

probably in part because of our aerial reaction in "Operation Rain Dance," a spoiling operation. The Meo guerrillas counterattacked with considerable success, even occupying the Communist administrative center of Xieng Khouangville for a time.

The rains have come. If experience is a guide, pro-Government guerrillas will re-establish themselves in some contested areas during the rainy season. The enemy will attack again in the autumn dry season. Because of the attrition in forces and morale on the Government side over the years, this next dry season offensive may be dangerous to RLG stability.

The Communists are engaged in leisurely negotiations with Souvanna Phouma, and are probably dangling before him the prospect of a Laos political settlement and a reduction of military pressures, in exchange for some arrangement which will limit U.S. bombing and provide the Communists with continued access to South Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand through Laos.

These negotiations are not likely to progress far this summer, since Souvanna still plans to leave for Europe on June 20, returning only in August.

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87. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 23, 1969.

SUBJECT

Vietnamizing the War (NSSM 36)

Secretary Laird has forwarded to you the outline plan (Tab A) prepared by the Joint Chiefs for Vietnamizing the war.[2] This plan has been

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–142, NSSM Files, NSSM 36. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action. Sneider sent this memorandum to Kissinger under an attached June 19 covering memorandum recommending that Kissinger sign it and send it to the President.

[2] Tab A, attached but not printed, was an undated 57-page JCS report entitled, "Plans For Vietnamizing the War."

coordinated with the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency. The plan covers two areas:

1. Alternatives for U.S. force reductions during the period July 1, 1969–December 31, 1969;
2. An outline for the final report on longer-term Vietnamization which you are requested to approve.

Five options for 1969 redeployments are offered in NSSM 36, ranging from withdrawals of 50 to 100,000. The first increment has already been decided at Midway and Secretary Laird recommends in his report an additional increment, with a total up to 50,000 for 1969 depending upon evaluation of the reaction to the first withdrawal. In a separate memorandum, the Secretary of State expresses a preference for an alternative involving a total of 85,000, but again depending upon further consideration after the initial withdrawal.[3]

The longer-term plans on Vietnamization provide a series of alternatives for U.S. troop reductions with varying timetables from 18 months to 42 months, and varying ceilings for the residual American troops in South Vietnam ranging from 260,000 to 306,000. Secretary Laird feels that even a 42 month timetable with withdrawals up to 290,000 forces would probably result in interruption of pacification progress. A much faster withdrawal could result in more serious problems for pacification and allied military capabilities, as well as possible adverse effects on the GVN, in the absence of reciprocal North Vietnamese withdrawals.

The problem now facing us is a decision on procedures for consideration of Secretary Laird's report. There are two principal options open:

1. Circulating the paper as a normal NSC document for regular NSC consideration (which has not yet been done); this would involve increased risks of leakage.[4]
2. Treating the paper in a meeting of NSC principals only; in this case my staff would prepare an issues paper for consideration of the principals *only.*

Secretary Laird would prefer the paper be handled on a tight-hold basis and, therefore, would probably prefer the second option. I would concur.[5]

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[3] Attached but not printed was a June 2 memorandum from Under Secretary of State Richardson to Laird in which Richardson stated that Rogers favored this figure "for reasons of political impact in this country, in North Vietnam, and on the negotiations in Paris."

[4] Nixon wrote "No" next to this paragraph.

[5] Nixon wrote "Yes" next to this paragraph.

Recommendation:[6]

That NSSM 36 be considered at a meeting of NSC principals only

That NSSM 36 be circulated as a normal NSC document for regular NSC consideration

Other

Attachment

Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon

Washington, June 2, 1969.

SUBJECT

Vietnamizing the War (NSSM 36)

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have prepared an outline plan (enclosure 1)[7] for Vietnamizing the War, with specific recommendations and alternatives for the remainder of 1969. This plan has been coordinated with the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency. As I shall indicate below, I believe we can plan *tentatively* to withdraw 50,000 men in 1969, with the first increment of 20,000–25,000 men to start redeployment in July. For reasons I shall outline, I believe we must keep our planning *flexible* and not commit now beyond the 20,000–25,000. The State Department believes the withdrawal package for 1969 should consist of 85,000 men (Alternative C below).

I indicated in my report following my trip to South Vietnam that I was disappointed in the progress made by the South Vietnamese in assuming more of the burden of the war. Nonetheless, they are improving and with the right kind of help from us, continuing improvement can be expected. There are a number of unknowns, however, affecting the rate and absolute level of improvement in the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). These unknowns include, inter alia, the quality of leadership, the motivation of the armed forces, the psychological reaction of the South Vietnamese to US redeployments, and the ability of the South Vietnamese to find a stronger organizational structure. These unknowns, collectively, can be at least

[6] None of the options is checked.

[7] See footnote 2 above.

as important to the over-all situation in South Vietnam as the more tangible and measurable elements. With such unknowns, we must recognize the possibility that even with additional training, improved equipment, and increased combat support, the RVNAF will not be able soon to stand alone against the current North Vietnamese and Viet Cong force levels. Our timetable for withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam should take such conditions into account. We should strive for a sensitive balance between too much, too soon and too little, too late.

I believe this is best done by making an early announcement of the withdrawal of a modest number of troops (20,000–25,000) and then carefully weighing the situation, to include various reactions (NVN, SVN, US), before making the next move. If this announcement is made in early June, withdrawal of this initial increment could begin in July and be completed in August.

The reaction to such a move could be favorable to us in several ways:

—The North Vietnamese would be very hard pressed to counter it. Our military position would still be strong. Together with our allies, we would have high confidence of being able to put down an enemy offensive. Such a posture should produce a most desirable and widespread psychological impact.

—The South Vietnamese would have further opportunity to understand that we are indeed serious about Vietnamizing the war. At the same time, they would not be likely to feel that we were rejecting our commitment. A successful defense against an enemy offensive could help to condition them for succeeding incremental withdrawals.

—Those Americans who have been most vocal against the war probably would not be silenced by this action, but important elements of the US public would be encouraged.

If this assessment of initial reactions proves to be correct, you could then decide to withdraw a second increment later in the year. A decision in early August would permit redeployment to begin in September and, depending on size and composition, be completed in October or November. If conditions were favorable, a decision on a third increment could be made in October or November for additional withdrawals to begin before the end of the year and be completed in early 1970.

1969 Redeployments

There are several alternatives as to the over-all size and composition of the forces which might be withdrawn from South Vietnam this year. Five of the alternative packages that I consider feasible for implementation in 1969 are:

1969 REDEPLOYMENT ALTERNATIVES—SVN[a]
(Strength 000)

	Element	
Alternative A		
50,000 troops mainly combat	1 Marine Division, Aviation Units & Support	26.8
	1 Army Division and Support	19.6
2 divisions	Air Force Elements	1.3
	Navy Elements	2.3
		50.0
Alternative B		
50,000 troops	1 Marine Division, Aviation Units & Support	26.8
1 Div plus support slice	Support Elements, All Services	23.2
		50.0
Alternative B[1b]		
50,000 troops	Combat forces (2 Regiments/ Brigade from I Corps and 2 Brigades from III/IV Corps)	22.0
4 Rgmt/Brgd plus support	Support Elements, All Services	28.0
		50.0
Alternative C (Revised)		
85,000 troops	1 Marine Division	22.5
2 Divisions	1 US Army Division	18.7
plus support	Division Support Trains	25.0[c]
	1 Marine Air Group	1.5
	Hq & Logistics & Other Support Forces not Associated with Divisional Support	17.3
		85.0
Alternative D		
100,000 troops	1 Marine Division, Aviation Units & Support	27.7
2 Divisions	1 Army Division and Support	19.6[c]
and Support	Support Elements, All Services	52.7
		100.0

[a] Alternatives A, B and D correspond to those in the JCS plan. Alternative C (3⅓ Division) of the JCS plan is not recommended; a revised C has been substituted. Within each alternative the actual mix of units may vary somewhat in final implementation. [Footnote in the source text.]

[b] Alternative B[1] is in Appendix C of the JCS plan. [Footnote in the source text.]

[c] Support spaces have been removed from each Army support slice to provide support to RVNAF. [Footnote in the source text.]

The South Vietnamese are prepared for A, B, or B[1]. Alternative C (Revised) probably would be acceptable if adequately explained, although both it and D exceed their expectations in terms of quantitative reductions in US strength this year.

In the United States, Alternative D, closely followed C (Revised) probably would best mitigate pressures to curtail our involvement in the war. Alternatives A, B, or B[1] are probably about what the US public expect. It should be recognized that an enemy offensive which caused heavy American casualties during implementation of any alternative—particularly C or D—could result in seriously adverse public reaction.

Alternatives B, B[1], C (Revised) and D withdraw mixed packages of combat and support personnel. The JCS consider the support units should remain in Vietnam to support RVNAF and the subsequent withdrawal of additional US forces. However, in these more balanced packages, the support forces to be withdrawn will be carefully selected from among those which will have minimum impact on RVNAF effectiveness.

Longer Term Plans

The outline plan of enclosure 1 considers tentative timetables to Vietnamize the War during the period 1970–1972. They redeploy US forces over alternative periods of time and leave residual American troops in South Vietnam ranging from 260,000 to 306,000. Although it appears feasible mechanically to withdraw up to 290,000 US forces from South Vietnam by the end of 1972, even this 42 month timetable would probably result in an interruption in pacification progress. The interruption might range from only temporary reductions to a long-term degradation. To withdraw much faster (such as by the end of 1970), in the absence of some North Vietnamese withdrawals, could result in serious setbacks to the pacification program, a significant decline in allied military capability, and the possibility of a GVN collapse.

Recommendations

I believe we should stay as flexible as possible in our planning. I do not believe it is advisable to adopt a *firm* plan now to redeploy beyond the first increment of 20,000–25,000. Rather, I believe we should take the initial step [to] assess the situation fully, and then decide on the size and timing of the next step. In the meantime, and in concert with other agencies of the government, we will exert a major effort to expand, train, and modernize the RVNAF, and do whatever else may be required to transfer progressively to the South Vietnamese greatly increased responsibility for all aspects of the war. In summary:

—A first increment of about 20,000 to 25,000 troops should be withdrawn, starting in July 1969.

—The composition of the first increment should be determined by

the JCS in coordination with CINCPAC, MACV, the US Mission, and the GVN.

—The size, composition, and timing of a second increment in 1969 should be based on a careful evaluation of the reaction to the withdrawal of the first increment.

—Current planning should be based on not more than 50,000 troops being withdrawn in 1969, as recommended by the JCS, unless an early agreement is reached with North Vietnam on mutual withdrawals.

—Planning should stay as flexible as possible, so that rapid and appropriate additional responses can be made to further RVNAF improvement, the negotiations situation in Paris, and the military situation in Southeast Asia.

Melvin R. Laird

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88. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, June 25, 1969, 7–8:20 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Ambassador Bui Diem, Republic of Vietnam
Henry A. Kissinger
William A.K. Lake

Ambassador Diem called on Mr. Kissinger at the former's request. The major subjects discussed included the substance of the forthcoming proposal by the GVN on a political settlement in South Vietnam,[2] the timing of that proposal, our strategy for the period after the proposal is made, and the desire of the South Vietnamese for close consultation

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 268, Memoranda of Conversation, 1969 January–July. Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. The meeting was held in Kissinger's office. According to an attached July 2 memorandum, Kissinger sent this memorandum to Nixon for information. Also attached was a 2-page outline summary of the Kissinger–Diem discussion.

[2] On July 11 Thieu proposed that the NLF could take part in elections in South Vietnam to be held under international supervision. Thieu outlined the following principles: all political parties and groups could participate as long as they renounced violence and pledged to agree by the results of the elections; an electoral commission made up of all groups participating would conduct the elections and ensure that they were fair; there would be international supervision; the GVN would be willing to discuss the timetable and modalities for the election with the NLF; no reprisals or discrimination would follow the elections; and the GVN would abide by the results and it challenged "the other side" to declare the same. (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives,* 1969–1970, p. 23657)

with us on those subjects. The effect of the Midway meeting and Diem's personal feelings about the future course of events in Vietnam were also mentioned.

GVN Proposal

Ambassador Diem noted the necessity for President Thieu's achieving the greatest degree of unity possible among Vietnamese nationalists in support of his proposal. Mr. Kissinger expressed his appreciation of this fact. Ambassador Diem then discussed a number of different ideas which President Thieu and the GVN are considering with regard to the substance of the proposal. Their premises in considering these ideas are that the proposal would have to challenge the other side to participate in the elections, that it would have to be demonstrably realistic and forthcoming, and yet that it must not prejudice the basic interests of the Vietnamese people.

The Ambassador said that after careful consideration, "the people at home" were inclined to judge that there are more cons than pros with regard to amending the constitution in order to remove the obstacles posed by Article 4.[3] They therefore are studying ways of proposing elections that would get around this problem.

For example, a referendum might be held on the constitution (including Article 4) as a whole. Such a referendum would, however, pose real dangers, as some nationalists might vote against the constitution on grounds not directly concerned with the struggle against the Communists. DeGaulle's experience with his recent referendum provided a warning.[4] Mr. Kissinger expressed personal doubt about the value of a referendum on the whole constitution, rather than on Article 4. Ambassador Diem agreed, stating that such a referendum would not be practical.

Of the many other alternatives being studied, Diem said, one of the boldest proposals is that general elections be held for the Presidency, the Vice Presidency, Senate and lower House. Any general elections proposal would have to include the Presidency, or it would appear that Thieu wanted others in the GVN to take more risks than he. Thieu would therefore be willing to run against the Communists. Mr. Kissinger agreed that this would be the most spectacular proposal, especially if Thieu resigned before the election. He suggested that this offer could be made conditional—Thieu would not resign unless the

[3] Article 4 of the GVN Constitution prohibited citizens from being Communists or promoting communism.

[4] In April 1969 the French people rejected President Charles de Gaulle's referendum on regional autonomy and he resigned.

other side agreed to the elections. Ambassador Diem noted that a drawback of the idea of proposing general elections is that it could lead to a period of confusion. They were considering ways to avoid this problem.

Ambassador Diem noted that this was simply one of the ideas under consideration, and stated it should be part of a package including the withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces. Nor would it need include Thieu's resignation. Mr. Kissinger agreed that his resignation was not the key element.

Mr. Kissinger asked who would run these general elections. The Ambassador replied that the GVN could give all sorts of safeguards and agree to some sort of joint control over them.

In response to Mr. Kissinger's question, the Ambassador said he personally thought people in the countryside would vote for Thieu rather than NLF leader Tho. They would prefer the "grey" to the "black" choice.

Mr. Kissinger returned to the question of the withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces. Ambassador Dim said the presence of North Vietnamese troops in the south is the GVN's greatest concern. If the elections were held while they were still there, they could influence the voting and there would be a risk that they would never be withdrawn. Mr. Kissinger stated that we would still be there. Ambassador Diem said that if there were assurances of that, the possibility of elections while the North Vietnamese (and the U.S.) maintained forces in the country "could be debated." Mr. Kissinger confirmed that the Ambassador was saying that if we were to assure the GVN that we would not withdraw our forces until the North Vietnamese had withdrawn theirs, the GVN might be willing to hold general elections. Mr. Kissinger said that he would have to take this up with the President. We might be able to give such an assurance.

The Ambassador and Mr. Kissinger agreed that all the ideas they had discussed should be very closely held, and that it should be clear that they were only ideas.

Timing of the Proposal

Ambassador Diem said that Ambassador Bunker had suggested July 1 as a target date for announcement of the GVN proposal. Mr. Kissinger agreed with the Ambassador's remark that there is no reason why there must be one specific date. The Ambassador said that Secretary Rogers and Deputy Assistant Secretary Sullivan had suggested a target of July 10 because of the Paris meeting at that time and the Apollo flight soon thereafter. The latter would take public attention away from the proposal if they took place concurrently. Mr. Kissinger agreed that these were important factors. The proposal would

receive maximum publicity if it were announced before the 16th. If it were announced concurrently with the Apollo mission, it should be during the flight, rather than on the days of the take-off, moon landing, or splashdown. We would support the GVN's efforts to publicize it in every way possible. We would like then to make a catalog of concessions by the U.S. and the GVN, and use it in a publicity campaign calling on the other side to follow suit.

Mr. Kissinger stated that we would not wish, however, to give a deadline to the GVN. It would be better that they make a positive proposal that they had examined carefully and could believe in rather than something less meaningful. He asked what Ambassador Diem personally thought would be a realistic date. The Ambassador replied that, speaking personally, he wished there were more time to achieve a political regrouping—nationalist unity. This would take at least a month. How, the Ambassador asked, could they best line up political support for a proposal by July 10–16? The ideal would be to have gained the support of all nationalists. At the least, they should have prepared them for the proposal. They could then work on gaining their support after the proposal was made.

Mr. Kissinger asked if U.S. support for the proposal would help in this regard. Ambassador Diem said that he doubted it. Saigon politicians are not anti-American but they have lingering doubts about the U.S. which are difficult to define. They know that the U.S. will not withdraw completely. They recognize that 25,000 troops is a small withdrawal and they would accept even 75,000 to 100,000. However, there are rumors and a general feeling in Saigon that the U.S. has a fixed plan for maneuvering Thieu into a political settlement. Much could be done to dispel these rumors in the next three weeks.

Ambassador Diem had told Ambassador Bunker that the U.S. could help dispel these rumors if our people in Saigon could get in touch with the main political factions and discreetly spread the word that while the South Vietnamese should help themselves, they needn't worry about "black designs" by the U.S. Mr. Kissinger said that he would look into how we could offer such assistance discreetly, particularly if it were to lead to a next stage. We would have to consider how well such assistance might succeed.

Mr. Kissinger reiterated his statement that the announcement would have the best effect if it were made sooner rather than later, but that we understood their problems and were not putting pressure on them. It is a GVN decision.

Nor, Mr. Kissinger said, is it our intention to wreck the whole political system. President Nixon wants President Thieu to succeed. But we have to show U.S. public opinion that we are forthcoming.

Mr. Kissinger said that President Thieu had impressed President

Nixon when he said that every GVN concession should not lead to a further concession by the U.S. In the abstract, Mr. Kissinger said, there will be some point at which the GVN can with justice say that it has made all the concessions possible. Mr. Kissinger's personal view was that if the GVN proposed general elections and a mixed commission, it could not be asked to go farther. He would check this point with the President. Ambassador Diem then noted that the idea of general elections is only a tentative plan.

Strategy for Period After the Proposal

Ambassador Diem said that President Thieu is concerned about what we should do after he had made his proposal, which could represent the maximum possible concession. The proposal would have a good effect on public opinion, and the other side would be on the defensive. They would probably refuse the proposal, however, at least for a few months. What would be the attitude of the U.S. in that case? The GVN did not have specific recommendations for the U.S., the Ambassador continued, or ask too much. The South Vietnamese would fight on for their own survival. They would assume more of a burden through the Vietnamization program. But they would still need American help, if at reduced levels and different in kind. These are the lines along which Thieu is working.

In reply, Mr. Kissinger recalled the President's statement of May 14 that he was determined not to allow an endless negotiation and not to lose the war. What exactly we would do needn't be discussed now. He noted that if the GVN were to make a forthcoming, unconditional proposal, it would show that we had made all the concessions possible. This would make it easier to reappraise the situation in three months.

Consultations

Ambassador Diem said that President Thieu had asked him to stress Thieu's desire for coordinating our strategy both with regard to his forthcoming proposal and for the following period. We need better communication between us. Mr. Kissinger agreed, and supported the idea of close consultation between Ambassador Diem and Deputy Assistant Secretary Sullivan. He would also always be available himself should Ambassador Diem wish to discuss sensitive problems or messages from President Thieu to President Nixon. If Ambassador Diem ever felt that things were getting out of hand, Mr. Kissinger would always do what he could to help. Ambassador Diem said that Mr. Kissinger was a special friend, and that he had been instructed by President Thieu to discuss all possibilities fully with Mr. Kissinger. President Thieu had been impressed with Mr. Kissinger at Midway as being a serious and systematic man.

Effect of Midway Meeting

Mr. Kissinger asked for Ambassador Diem's personal appraisal of the effect of the Midway meeting. The Ambassador said that he frankly thought it was very useful, particularly as it helped Thieu to knock down rumors in Saigon about U.S. intentions. Mr. Kissinger recalled the President's statement at Midway that the GVN should believe only what the U.S. Government tells them, not what the press says. Ambassador Diem stated that the suspicions of Thieu himself were allayed by the Midway meeting. The Ambassador only regretted that the meeting was too short.

Ambassador Diem's Views on the Future

Speaking personally, the Ambassador expressed the opinion that international and U.S. public opinion might not allow enough time for the GVN to succeed in doing all it would have to do. He noted that the GVN had failed to accomplish some of the things that one might have hoped it would, but that it faced real problems also. He had realized the other day, standing on a beach at Nha Trang, how much would be lost if they failed to win the struggle. Without concurring in the Ambassador's implied pessimism, Mr. Kissinger emphasized his understanding for the problems the GVN faces, and his great sympathy for Ambassador Diem's emotions at Nha Trang. He regretted that the U.S. may sometimes unintentionally do things which might hurt the GVN. He had no patience with those Americans who proposed political actions by the GVN without regard for the complexities of the situation. We should not presume to tell the GVN what to do.

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89. Memorandum From Dean Moor of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, June 25, 1969.

SUBJECT

CIA Memorandum on GVN Manpower Shortages

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 138, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. VII, 6/17/69–6/30/69. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. Sent through Sneider. A note on the first page of the memorandum reads: "HAK saw."

11. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, January 29, 1969, 9:35 a.m.

SUBJECT

Actions Resulting from National Security Council Meeting of January 25, 1969[2]

Attached is a list of the actions indicated during the National Security Council meeting on Saturday, January 25, 1969 dealing with Vietnam. The list has been coordinated on an eyes only basis with the principals and has been agreed to by them.

With your approval, I will prepare appropriate implementing instructions where required.[3]

Attachment

LIST OF ACTIONS RESULTING FROM MEETING OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ON JANUARY 25, 1969

Vietnam in General

The President directed that CIA prepare an analysis of how each of the nations in S.E. Asia would view the Vietnam options outlined in the NSC paper considered on the January 25 NSC agenda.

The President asked to see the November NIE which contains an analysis of S.E. Asian reactions to various settlement options in Vietnam.

The Assistant to the President asked for an analysis of recent casualty statistics to reflect comparisons between friendly and enemy casualties, resulting from (a) friendly initiated actions and (b) enemy initiated actions.

The President requested an updating on the military situation in Vietnam focused on possible enemy initiatives during Tet so that he will be prepared to respond quickly to recommendations for appropriate U.S. responses.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–109, NSC Minutes, Originals, 1969. Secret.

[2] See Document 10.

[3] Nixon checked and initialed the approve option.

Associated with review of U.S. contingency actions in the event of an enemy Tet offensive, the President wishes to see the contingency plan which has already been prepared outlining the proposed U.S. response to an enemy attack on Saigon and/or other major South Vietnamese population centers.

The President requested that the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff provide him with a report on current plans and programs for the improvement of South Vietnam's internal security capabilities with emphasis on the development of indigenous police forces. The report should include information on the current U.S. organization for accomplishing this task, to include an analysis of the qualifications of our responsible officials at each level in the U.S. organization.

The President emphasized that he wants absolutely no public or private criticism of the GVN by U.S. officials.

The President registered his concern for insuring that the U.S. Government continue to apply pressure on the GVN to replace incompetent ARVN leadership, especially in the III Corps area of SVN.

Paris Negotiations

The President emphasized that he did not want the U.S. to initiate any discussions on ceasefire in the Paris negotiations. It was agreed, however, that a U.S. position on the issue must be developed should it be raised by the other side.

The President wishes that unilateral (U.S.) troop withdrawals not be proposed by the U.S. side in the Paris negotiations. The President approved continuation of U.S.–GVN discussions currently underway in Saigon involving possible selected U.S. troop reductions in conjunction with increasing GVN military capabilities but emphasized that they be held on a strictly close-hold basis. For the present, public discussion of U.S. withdrawals or troop reductions in Vietnam should be limited to mutual withdrawals in the context of Paris negotiations.

The President wishes the issue of de-escalation not be included on the list of U.S. negotiating items in Paris.

The President approved the inclusion of Prisoner Exchange in the initial U.S. Paris negotiating position.

World-Wide Issues

The President requested recommendations as to whether or not the U.S. should seek to reestablish relations with Cambodia to include whether or not the President might take such an initiative through a note to Sihanouk.

The President wishes to be advised at an early date on the possibility of a transition to an all volunteer Army.

The President requested that the Secretary of Defense provide him with his views on the Draft issue.

[Omitted here is a short paragraph on future contacts with the Soviet Union.]

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12. Memorandum of Meeting Between the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Secretary of Defense Laird, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler)[1]

Washington, January 30, 1969, 3 p.m.

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

The discussion turned to contingency plans for Vietnam. The Special Assistant asked what could be done in South Vietnam which could convey to the North that there is a new firm hand at the helm, adding we should investigate what lower level, in-country activities could be devised to signal this change.[2] General Wheeler replied that we have plans for operations in the DMZ and we have plans for offensive air action in the North. He stated that prior to November 1, U.S. forces were authorized to operate freely in the southern portion of the DMZ, and noted further that the North has violated the Northern portion of the DMZ by patrol action, stockpiling of supplies and by fire. On the other hand, the U.S. has abided by its word within the Southern portion. The Chairman suggested some offensive action in the Southern portion of the DMZ as a signal of change in U.S. leadership. General

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 955, Haig Chronological Files, February 1–15, 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive. Haig also attended this meeting, which was held in the Secretary of Defense's conference room at the Pentagon. Haig sent a copy of this memorandum to Kissinger on February 6, and to a February 6 covering memorandum, Haig attached a list of the specific actions agreed to at the meeting and a letter from Kissinger to Laird. This letter enclosed a copy of the above list for Laird's use in preparation for a meeting with Nixon on February 11. (Ibid.)

[2] On February 5 Haig sent Kissinger a February 3 memorandum from the Chairman of the JCS to Laird, CM–3903–69, outlining options for military responses to attacks on population centers in South Vietnam. In his covering memorandum, Haig suggested that although "flexible to the target selection, type of strike and duration of strike, they do not constitute an adequate response to what I believe you and the President are seeking." Haig believed contingency plans should constitute "a menu of actions within South Vietnam which could signal the U.S. intent to escalate while avoiding the type of public noise in the United States and in Paris which a strike north of the DMZ would generate." (Ibid., Box 136, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. I, Through 3/19/69)

Wheeler emphasized that U.S. forces in South Vietnam were fully committed and he could foresee no real hope of a significant step-up within the confines of South Vietnam proper. Secretary Laird pointed out that the pressures in the U.S. since the Paris negotiations were for deescalation. He added perhaps we could complain a little more about the enemy's DMZ violations at Paris. General Wheeler added we have had mortar attacks on two occasions from the DMZ on Marine units South of the DMZ, suggesting that we should start reporting these violations.

Dr. Kissinger inquired as to our capability of stepping up B–52 strikes. General Wheeler replied that we have been running at a rate of 60 sorties per day. If we were to go beyond that level, it would result in a loss of efficiency due to force fatigue. General Wheeler suggested that some operations in Laos might achieve the desired results.

The group then discussed the possibility of reconnaissance over China and Dr. Kissinger said that the 303 should recommend the reinitiation of reconnaissance by SR–71s and drones. The Chairman stated that he was dubious that the U–2 flights manned by ChiNats could be cranked up again due to their earlier loss rates. Mention was then made of the upcoming talks with the ChiComs in Warsaw. It was speculated that these talks would probably last about one day.

Dr. Kissinger stated that the Defense Department should prepare a menu of reconnaissance operations over China, based on actual requirements but initiated primarily for political objectives.

Dr. Kissinger then asked whether or not there was some type of planning activities that could be initiated which would signal to the North that we might be considering a step-up or escalation of operations.

The group suggested the following possibilities:

—Assembly of amphibious shipping at some Southern port.
—Increased aerial reconnaissance.
—Movement of carriers and naval fire support back to Yankee Station.
—The convening of high level commanders to planning conferences in Saigon.
—A possible high level visit to Taiwan.

General Wheeler again emphasized that perhaps some additional offensive operations in Laos or Cambodia would be appropriate. For example, we might deploy CS gas along the Laotian supply routes at specific choke points, pointing out that in the past this had proven quite effective and stating that since September the use of CS has been restricted outside of Vietnam except in aircraft rescue operations.

General Wheeler also suggested that a foray by ground forces into North Vietnamese base areas, sanctuaries or logistics installations might prove very effective. He said that a plan had been developed

recommending the authorization of hot pursuit into Cambodia which would include attack on base areas and last approximately 3 to 5 days. General Wheeler also suggested a U.S. attack across the Fish Hook west of Tay Ninh and Zone C, stating that he estimated such an attack could be completed in approximately one day. Secretary Laird cautioned that increased activity in Cambodia would represent a difficult political problem.

Dr. Kissinger then asked what will we do in the event of a major attack on Saigon? General Wheeler referred to the contingency plan which provided for 48-hour air and naval attacks between the 17th and 19th parallels, emphasizing that this plan might not be executed instantaneously after a violation but at a time when weather conditions were most appropriate. Dr. Kissinger emphasized that he would raise this point with the President to be sure that he understood that our reaction time in implementing this plan would be dependent upon the weather.

Discussions were then held on the possibility of covert attacks within Cambodia or the harassment of vessels enroute to Sihanoukville. Dr. Kissinger stated he would discuss stepped up Asian activity in Cambodia, specifically Sihanoukville, with the Director, CIA.

General Wheeler suggested that we step up our reconnaissance activities along the Cambodian roadnets. Discussion was then held on how a menu of pressure tactics could be presented to the President. It was agreed that when the options were developed, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman and Dr. Kissinger would arrange for an appointment with the President to discuss the menu. Concurrently, the group agreed that the SIOP briefing scheduled for the following Wednesday at the Council meeting should be cancelled since most of the principals will have heard it individually.

First, a general picture of Saigon's defenses should be presented. Secondly, the menu of in-country actions should be presented and, finally, actions against the North.

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

13. Memorandum From the Former Head of the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam (Harriman) to Secretary of State Rogers[1]

Washington, January 31, 1969.

SUBJECT

Viet-Nam Negotiations

It seems to me it's time to renew private talks with Le Duc Tho et al. Subject to Cy Vance's concurrence, I recommend that Lodge be authorized to get in touch with the North Vietnamese for a bilateral private talk of the type they agreed to. Of course, he would take Cy and Walsh with him.

The principal subject for discussion would be how to get serious talks for settlement going. I believe our side should explore ways and means to mutually deescalate the violence—military and terrorist. In our last talk with Le Duc Tho, he made it plain that if we attempted military action "to negotiate from strength," little progress would be made.[2]

In my judgment, we are in a better military position than we have ever been. We should accept this situation and get on with the negotiation for a peaceful settlement. Otherwise, my guess is there will be mutual escalation of the violence and no progress.

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Files of Richard Pedersen: Lot 75 D 229, Miscellaneous & Hold File–RFP. Personal and Secret. Harriman sent a copy of this memorandum to Kissinger under cover of a January 31 note. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 74, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam (General Files), January–August 1969)

[2] As reported in telegram 976 from Paris/Delto 1194, January 19. (Ibid., RG 59, Winston Lord Files: Lot 77 D 112, Box 338, Vietnam Private Talks)

14. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to Secretary of State Rogers[1]

Washington, January 31, 1969.

SUBJECT

Communication with Hanoi Prior to January 20

Prior to the inauguration, President Nixon was in communication with the North Vietnamese through a contact who is personally known to the top leaders in Hanoi.[2] The messages were sent by me to the contact who delivered them to Mai Van Bo (DRV representative to the Government of France) and vice versa.

The President initiated the exchange with his message of December 20 (Tab A), which told the North Vietnamese that his Administration was prepared to undertake serious talks. On December 31, Hanoi sent its reply (Tab B), which emphasizes that its point of primary concern is U.S. willingness to withdraw troops. The ball was kept in play by the President's response of January 2 (Tab C), which states inter alia that his Administration is ready to withdraw U.S. forces from South Vietnam as part of an honorable settlement which includes mutual troop withdrawal. The North Vietnamese replied on January 13 to the President's message (Tab D). The President has not replied to this latest message.

The President has asked that this be very closely held.

Tab A

Message From President-elect Nixon to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam[3]

Washington, December 20, 1968.

Message to the North Vietnamese

"1. The Nixon Administration is prepared to undertake serious talks.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 861, For the President's File, Vietnam Negotiations, Camp David Memoranda, 1969–1970. Secret; Nodis; Eyes Only. The memorandum is an uninitialed copy.

[2] Frenchman Jean Sainteny, former French Government official with extensive official experience in Indochina. Nixon describes and quotes from these messages in *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, pp. 349–350.

[3] Secret; Nodis.

"2. These talks are to be based on the self respect and sense of honor of all parties.

"3. The Nixon Administration is prepared for an honorable settlement but for nothing less.

"4. If Hanoi wants, the Nixon Administration would be willing to discuss ultimate objectives first.

"5. If Hanoi wishes to communicate some of their general ideas prior to January 20, they will be examined with a constructive attitude and in strictest confidence."

Tab B

Message From the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to President-elect Nixon[4]

December 31, 1968.

1. We have on several occasions clearly declared that we came to Paris with a serious attitude and full of goodwill. If the US sincerely desires to resolve the problem and reach an honorable solution, as it has often said, it also must have a serious attitude and goodwill.

2. In order to arrive at a peaceful solution to the problem of Vietnam our position is very clear. It is founded on the Four Points of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which were reaffirmed on November 2, 1968. We also approve the Five Points for a political solution of the problem of South Vietnam put forward by the National Liberation Front on November 3, 1968.

3. At the present time, if the conference of the four in Paris has not yet begun, it is because the Saigon Administration uses procedural issues to delay its opening, and because the representatives of the US support the absurd demands of the Saigon Administration. It is only after the opening of the conference that one will be able to discuss the deeper questions relating to a peaceful solution to the problem. However, if the US wishes, it may communicate its general ideas, and its

[4] Secret; Nodis. The text indicates it is an unofficial translation. On January 2 Kissinger sent the President-elect a memorandum suggesting that "the tone of the message [of December 31] is more conciliatory by far than is customary; there is the usual effort to drive a wedge between Saigon and Washington; [and] Hanoi, which always drafts very carefully, emphasizes that its point of primary concern is US willingness to withdraw troops (no reference to a ceasefire, de-escalation, etc.)." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 2, HAK Administrative and Staff Files, Memoranda to the President-Elect)

specific ideas for making more precise points that are already known, for our serious examination.

Mai Van Bo commentary: At the beginning, I believe that the question is to know if the US wants peace, if it really wishes to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam, or if it only talks of this to make it possible to do nothing. For the rest, evidence indicates that the Saigon Administration does not want peace. Instead it wishes that the US remain in Vietnam so that it can continue to make a living from the war. As the US already leans on that Administration, we seriously doubt its attitude. To be quite honest, as long as the Thieu–Ky–Huang clique remains at the head of that Administration, it will be difficult to settle any of these problems.

Tab C

Message From President-elect Nixon to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam[5]

January 2, 1969.

Message to the North Vietnamese

"We have noted with interest Mai Van Bo's communication.

"In reply to his question, the Nixon Administration is willing to negotiate seriously and in good faith.

"The Nixon Administration solemnly affirms its readiness to withdraw U.S. forces from South Vietnam as part of an honorable settlement, which includes mutual troop withdrawal.

"It is our belief that progress depends on concrete proposals to achieve an honorable peace.

"We reaffirm our readiness to examine Hanoi's ideas carefully, with goodwill and in strictest confidence."

[5] Secret; Nodis.

Tab D

Message From the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to President-elect Nixon[6]

Paris, January 13, 1969, 2100.

1. The Conference of Four comprising the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the US, and the Saigon Administration, of which the purpose is to search for a peaceful solution to the Vietnamese problem should have started on November 6, 1968; however as of today it has not opened. It is precisely because the Government of the US and the Saigon Administration deliberately seek to delay the opening of this conference. The appointment of certain American figures who have been deeply involved in the war of aggression in Vietnam to responsible posts in the negotiations casts greater doubt upon the attitude of the US.

2. The policy of aggression of President Lyndon Baines Johnson against Vietnam, based upon an erroneous evaluation of the determination of the Vietnamese people to fight against aggression, has failed.

The Vietnamese people ardently desire peace but it has to be a peace with independence and liberty! If the US wants to settle the Vietnamese problem, the Vietnamese people are ready to engage in serious conversations with them. If they pursue the war of aggression, the Vietnamese people have no other choice than to continue the resistance in order to recover, whatever it costs, independence, liberty, and a true peace.

3. If the US really desires to settle the Vietnamese problem it must end the war of aggression in Vietnam, withdraw in the shortest possible period all American and satellite troops from South Vietnam and leave the South Vietnamese population to settle itself its own affairs without foreign interference. The US must as soon as possible start without delay the Conference of Four to discuss these profound questions.

4. The general and concrete ideas concerning the peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese problem will be examined with care by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

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[6] No classification marking. The message is a: "Rough/Unofficial translation."

15. Memorandum From President Nixon to his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, February 1, 1969.

In reading the January 31 news report on the Paris negotiations, it seems vitally important to me at this time that we increase as much as we possibly can the military pressure on the enemy in South Vietnam. Will you convey this view to Wheeler and tell him I believe it is absolutely urgent if we are to make any kind of headway in Vietnam that we find new ways to increase the pressure militarily without going to the point that we break off negotiations. I do not like the suggestions that I see in virtually every news report that we anticipate a "Communist initiative in South Vietnam." I believe that if any initiative occurs it would be on our part and not theirs.[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 64, Vietnam Subject Files, 8F Reappraisal of Vietnam Commitment, Vol. I. No classification marking. The memorandum is unsigned.

[2] Kissinger sent this memorandum to Laird who responded to Kissinger in a memorandum of February 11 that, "I hope the President will be assured that everything possible is being done with our present military resources to apply military pressure on the enemy." Laird noted that U.S. killed in Vietnam had increased to 200 per week recently due to largely unsuccessful U.S. efforts to "gain contact with major enemy units." Laird suggested "we must be sensitive to the incremental and total costs involved in our operations as well as marginal benefits." Laird suggested that United States forces could not prevent large scale attacks in Vietnam, at best they could be ready to repulse them at large cost to the enemy. Laird concluded that maximum military pressure in Vietnam would not result in a change in the military situation over the short run. (Ibid.)

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16. Memorandum From President Nixon to his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, February 1, 1969.

In reading the news summaries, particularly the television coverage, the line is already developing that the negotiations in Paris are deadlocked. The next step we can anticipate is that the commentators

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 182, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Vol. I, 1–69, Memos and Miscellaneous. No classification marking. A note at the top of the page by Eagleburger reads: "Note to Ken Cole: HAK called Lodge 2/4/69. LSE." The memorandum is unsigned.

will begin to demand that we change our position in order to make headway. I think it is important that you keep in close touch with Lodge—probably by telephone—so that (1) he does not become discouraged by this type of coverage, and (2) in his backgrounders and other press statements he can knock down the idea that we should expect any kind of progress at this early date. In fact, I think it would be helpful if he indicated that several months usually are required before parties on such basic substantive disagreements begin to make progress, but use your judgment as to how to handle it. Incidentally, our observers here said that, "Lodge comes across so well on TV, it might not be a bad idea to encourage him to do more of it. He just looks like a model negotiator and certainly inspires more hope as a personality than Harriman did. His appearance counts for much and it may."

You might read this to Lodge when you talk to him on the phone and indicate to him that he should find every opportunity to say something on TV which reaches the United States—forget what the Europeans, particularly Parisians, may see or write. He should aim everything he says toward the United States indicating that the going is hard and that he does not hold out any false optimism, but that he is convinced that the negotiations will succeed, and that he is getting every possible encouragement from RN.

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17. Memorandum From President Nixon to his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, February 1, 1969.

I received the New German Ambassador[2] and he seems to be personally friendly as we might expect, but beyond that you might check his background and see if he might be a pretty good one to keep in contact with here in Washington. I knew him when he was the second man in the Embassy from 1956 to 1960, and I considered him to be reliable at that time.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 341, HAK/Presidential Memorandums, 1969–1970. No classification marking. The memorandum is unsigned.

[2] The President met with German Ambassador Rolf Friedmann Pauls to accept his credentials on January 31 from 3:46 to 5:53 p.m. Just prior to this brief meeting, Nixon accepted the credentials of the Singaporean Ambassador Ernest Steven Montiero. They met from 3:38 to 3:45 p.m. (President's Daily Diary; ibid., White House Central Files)

I also received the Ambassador from Singapore. He is an M.D.—Lee Kuan Yew's personal doctor. He had met me and Mrs. Nixon when we were in Singapore in 1953 and had been greatly impressed by the way Mrs. Nixon had visited hospitals and other charitable institutions, and the way that we both went out to meet people in the slum areas.

What is more important is that he has been Ambassador to Cambodia for four years and a close and intimate friend of Sihanouk. He said that Sihanouk had a very "warm feeling" toward RN based on the two times he had met him in 1953; once when he visited me as Vice President, and again when I made a state visit to Cambodia. He said that Sihanouk based a great number of his policies on purely personal attitudes. I asked him to convey to Sihanouk the next time he wrote him (which I can imagine would be almost immediately!) my warm regards and the hope that at some time in the future we would be able to communicate again.

I give you this background having in mind the fact that this might be the opportunity for me to write a note to Sihanouk. The State Department country desk man was there at the meeting. Check it out and give me a recommendation—preferably a personal letter to Sihanouk—if that does not cross wires with something else.

In the same connection, the Saudi Arabian, Jordanian, Moroccan, Libyan, Tunisian, and other Mid-East Ambassadors were exceedingly cordial at the Diplomatic Reception. It is quite obvious that we start with a lot of good will in this group. We should exploit it to the full at this time.

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18. Memorandum From Secretary of State Rogers to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 5, 1969.

SUBJECT

Diplomatic Course of Action with Respect to Cambodia

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 64, Memoranda to the President, 1969, February to April. Top Secret. Kissinger's staff prepared a summary of Rogers' recommendations and arguments which Kissinger sent to Nixon on February 12. Kissinger advised that the President approve Rogers' recommendations.

Recommendations:

1. That you authorize a diplomatic course of action that would envisage proceeding gradually—and with full control and possibility of reversal at all stages—to a resumption of diplomatic relations with Cambodia.

2. I see three possible means of initiating this course of action.[2]

(a) You personally could outline in a letter our willingness to issue a "border declaration" (described below) and to go further from there.

(b) We could say the same thing in a message from the U.S. Government to the Cambodian Government, delivered by the Australian Ambassador, representing U.S. interests in Cambodia. This way your personal intervention could be held in reserve.

(c) The third course, which I recommend, is that you send a *general* personal letter to Sihanouk (Tab A), to be followed shortly thereafter by a message through the Australians dealing specifically with a border declaration (Tab B).

Discussion

As Mr. Helms noted in the NSC briefing on Viet-Nam,[3] Sihanouk's behavior since mid-1963 has rested on a judgment that we would eventually lose in South Viet-Nam. A series of incidents and harassments in 1964 culminated in the suspension of diplomatic relations in May of 1965. Special missions by Ambassador Bonsal in December 1964, Ambassador Bowles in January, 1968, and Eugene Black last September have led to some improvement in understanding, but the basic question remains of what to do about our relations.

In the past few months, Sihanouk has, in our judgment, given a number of signals of a new desire for better relations with the U.S. As always, these have been interspersed with contrary indications and harsh public denunciations. However, we think they add up to something significant. The indications have included:

1. Approaches to the French, Australians, Indonesians, and, most recently, President Marcos of the Philippines, to express interest in better U.S.-Cambodian relations.

2. Release of the 12 American soldiers detained in Cambodia; although their release was long overdue, Sihanouk undoubtedly thought of it as a gracious gesture on his part.

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[2] According to a February 13 memorandum from Moose to Walsh, the President approved this recommendation. (Ibid.) In telegram 24758 to Bangkok, Saigon, and Vientiane, February 15, the Department informed these posts of the President's decision. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 1 CAMB–US) The text of the letter from Sihanouk to Nixon was transmitted in telegram 24759 to Bangkok, Saigon, and Vientiane, also February 15. (Ibid.)

[3] See Document 10.

3. Remarks in a press conference about the usefulness of a continuing U.S. presence in Southeast Asia, counterbalancing Chinese ambitions.

4. Dispatch of a Cambodian foreign service officer to Washington to work under the aegis of the French Embassy here as "custodian" of the Cambodian embassy building.

5. A noticeably more moderate reaction to recent border incidents, including a serious and embarrassing one in which a U.S. reconnaissance patrol destroyed a truck, killed eight Cambodian civilians, and captured a ninth.

6. Application for membership in the IMF and IBRD, and reactivation of Cambodian membership in the Asian Development Bank.

7. Expressions of desire for private foreign investment, with the governor of the Cambodian central bank visiting New York to promote investment by U.S. firms.

8. Grant of landing rights to Pan American Airways, after several years of sporadic negotiations.

On the other side of the coin, NVA/VC use of Cambodian territory has increased. Recent evidence suggests strongly that Cambodia is indeed a major source of military supplies for VC/NVA forces in South Viet-Nam and that the supply route has a high degree of cooperation and connivance at high levels in the Cambodian Government. We cannot ignore these facts but we believe that they reflect essentially Sihanouk's lack of power to control the situation and his constant need to appease Hanoi (and the NLF) as best he can.

On balance, we by no means read the indicators as suggesting that he has now decided we are going to win in SVN. However, he does seem to have concluded that it is time he trimmed ship and hedged his bets.

Basic Options on Diplomatic Courses of Action

A basic question right at the outset is whether it is to our net advantage visibly to improve relations with Cambodia and to move in the direction of a possible resumption of relations. It is my conclusion that—subject to our ironing out as many problems as we can—an eventual resumption of relations, and easing of the atmosphere in the meantime, is to our advantage.

To put the matter in terms of a resumption of relations, the major advantages and disadvantages are as follows:

Advantages

1. A resumption of relations, and to some extent any improvement of our relations, will be construed in the area as a clear sign that Sihanouk thinks we will come out on top. This could have significant

favorable consequences in view of his previous position, and is in my judgment the foremost advantage of moving in this direction.

2. Some form of diplomatic relations or U.S. representation would enable us to communicate more effectively than we can now do through the Australians (who represent our interests in Cambodia) or on occasion the French (who are helpful, but to whose skirts we would not wish to be attached).

3. Even a small U.S. representation would give us some intelligence and information gains. If it progressed to the point where we had good military attachés there, with freedom to travel, we might in the end learn a great deal more—while the fact that we were watching might operate to tone down the supply activities now taking place through Cambodia.

4. What I do *not* put forward as a significant advantage is any early hope that even the fullest resumption of diplomatic relations would basically change the military situation or Sihanouk's degree of complicity in the supply line. Nor do I believe that it would cause him, for example, to get behind an enlarged and effective International Control Commission in the face of Hanoi's clear and implacable opposition. These are bridges that he will cross only if he moves significantly farther in his estimate of the outcome in Viet-Nam, although the fact that we have resumed relations could at the eventual stage be a helpful additional factor. But I do not wish to claim that any diplomatic course of action can do much to change the military problem.

Disadvantages

1. Our visible pursuit of a diplomatic course of action directed at easing our relations must, to a significant degree, inhibit any *expansion* in the authority our forces now have to act along the borders. The views of the Department of Defense on such a course of action are attached (Tab C). They conclude that the full range of courses of action should be evaluated prior to any decision to undertake diplomatic action.

I have read the OSD/Joint Staff comments.[4] I do not think that a study of the full range of courses of action is necessary, because the

[4] Those comments were attached in an undated memorandum to the President from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for ISA and the Director of the Joint Staff of the JCS; not printed. In Kissinger's February 12 memorandum to the President, the OSD/ISA/Joint Staff objections were described as follows: "the Department of Defense and Joint Chiefs argue that before we take any diplomatic action, we should review all other possible actions—including increased military operations. (At the present time, U.S. forces are authorized to conduct only limited reconnaissance missions into Cambodia and—in emergency situations—to take necessary counteractions in the exercise of the right of self-defense. The Joint Chiefs are now studying additional possible military operations directed against North Vietnamese sanctuary in Cambodia.)"

proposed diplomatic course of action inhibits only major new military actions of a kind which I do not think we should take in any case. The suggestion in the OSD/Joint Staff memo for neutralization of the Cambodia/South Viet-Nam border is fraught with enormous practical difficulties which rule it out as a solution to the immediate problem even in the unlikely event that agreement of the many parties involved could be obtained.

2. Under almost any circumstances, U.S. diplomatic representatives in Cambodia will experience some indignities. The Prince is bound to denounce us from time to time, and might in fact do this a bit more as a smokescreen for practical moves in our direction. We will need steady nerves, and will have to be prepared to live with some degree of embarrassment.

3. Much more serious is the possibility of physical violence or a renewed break by Sihanouk. Despite the relatively calm view he has taken of several recent incidents, we simply cannot be sure that we can avoid some really major incident to which he would feel tempted to react. I believe we can partially guard against this possibility by quiet talks before we reach a decision on the resumption of relations. Sihanouk has already told the French Ambassador that he would not treat our representatives as "hostages," and would take a more understanding view of border incidents which might occur after a U.S. border declaration. But an element of risk in this direction would remain in any circumstances.

Net Judgment

From the foregoing, I conclude that it is to our net advantage to move in this direction and it *could* be to our advantage to go all the way to a full resumption of relations, if we have prepared the way properly.

If this basic judgment is accepted, it leads to the question of pace and timing. To move rapidly or impetuously is obviously unwise. To sit tight and do nothing is in my judgment a neglect of opportunity.

Thus, the option worth following seems to me to be a careful and step-by-step sequence of moves, keeping us in a good public position at all times and designed to lead eventually to a resumption of relations—but without early commitment and with the clear chance to review and change the course of action if it is not doing what we hope for.

Specific Mechanics

The first step would be a declaration of respect and recognition of the sovereignty, independence, neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia *within its present frontiers.* Sihanouk has repeatedly stated that such a statement, along lines issued by more than 40 countries, is the only pre-condition to improvement and resumption of relations.

This border declaration adds only the four underlined words to what we have consistently said. It commits us to nothing more than is already in the United Nations Charter. In particular, it does not commit us for or against any position in the minor disputes that exist vis-à-vis Thailand, South Viet-Nam, and Laos concerning the present location or basis of Cambodia's frontiers.

We could indicate our willingness to make a border declaration either by a letter from you or through diplomatic channels.

1. A letter from you, as compared to a message through diplomatic channels, has the following advantages:

(a) Sihanouk in recent months has many times made it clear that he attaches special value to communications from the President. In the case of the release of the LCU crew, the message from President Johnson undoubtedly helped the atmosphere immensely.

(b) At the outset of your Administration, it is in any event appropriate for you to lay down fundamental points of your policy toward Cambodia. You alone can convey these with no possibility that Sihanouk would think, as he has tended to do, that he is hearing from the State Department but that the Defense Department and the U.S. military in Viet-Nam have a different policy.

As with all else, there are arguments to the contrary. Sihanouk is notorious for making everything he gets public. If our judgment is wrong or the particular events of the moment are unfavorable, he will take it out on you personally—although I must say that he will do this sooner or later in any event if he is in the mood.

2. A second possibility is a sounding carried out by the Australians on our behalf. This would have less immediate impact than a letter from you, but it would have the advantage of reserving such a letter for use at some future stage when its value might be greater. It would not involve you personally in a course of action that could prove fruitless, and it would defer to a later stage any inhibitions on military operating authorities. Moreover, the conversations which the Australian Ambassador would have with Sihanouk at our instance might offer an opportunity to probe, a little more specifically than is possible in a correspondence between heads of state, on such points as his reaction to future border incidents occurring after the issue of a declaration.

3. I recommend a course which combines the advantages and avoids most of the disadvantages of both these tactics. It would begin with a letter from you in general terms, merely expressing polite regards and avoiding discussion of specific problems (Tab A). Such a letter would gratify Sihanouk and would improve the prospects for, without involving you in the specific mechanics of, a move toward resumption of relations. This would be followed by an approach by the Australian Ambassador along the lines of Tab B, which allows an extra degree of explicitness.

However, simultaneously with the despatch of your general letter and before we proceed with the specific approach through the Australians, we must put South Viet-Nam, Thailand, and Laos on clear notice of what we are doing. We would assure them privately that a border declaration does not commit us to any position on specific disputes over border demarcation. On issuing the declaration, we would say publicly only that it speaks for itself, and that we would make similar declarations with respect to Laos, Thailand, and the Republic of Viet-Nam if they so requested. (Any further public comment might lead Sihanouk to charge that we were hedging on our declaration.)

A year ago, such notice to Cambodia's neighbors might have been exceedingly difficult. However, the latest indications—even from Thai Foreign Minister Thanat—are that they will understand and accept what we are trying to do. I believe you have already established a basic posture of firmness in our Viet-Nam commitment, in Paris, and in relation to Southeast Asia generally—so that there is little chance that this move would be construed as "soft." But I think we have to go through the exercise carefully and hold our fire until we have the returns in hand.

Beyond these opening moves, I am much more tentative at this point. If Sihanouk responds that of course he is ready for a border declaration, then we would go ahead and issue it. It does not commit us to make any change in our present procedures, and would have a few positive advantages beyond improving US-Cambodian relations; for instance, it would bring us back into line with most of our allies, and might help lessen Sihanouk's extreme sensitivity about his frontiers. In issuing a declaration and in all contacts in whatever channel we would make clear that we had a lot to discuss before we ever came to the point of actually resuming relations, and that we would proceed carefully and slowly. For example, we might send in our first representatives attached to the embassy of our protecting power—as we are now doing in many of the Arab countries. We can test the water at every step, but I simply cannot now forecast the precise sequence of moves that would be indicated.

If of course the Prince ridicules your letter or otherwise displays a negative stance, then we stop in our tracks. I think our losses would be minor, and counterbalanced in many quarters by the visible evidence that we had tried.

William P. Rogers

19. Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Johnson)[1]

Saigon, February 7, 1969.

3940. Following are Ambassador Bunker's comments for Under Secretary Johnson as requested ref:[2]

1. Since its establishment in July 1968, National Alliance for Social Revolution (Lien Minh) has made gradual progress establishing itself as part of political landscape of Vietnam: It has set up headquarters and staffs; has acquired and trained cadre for operations in Saigon/Cholon; and achieved some success in social welfare projects in the capital. Thus far, however, has failed to command attention of public, let alone any widespread popular participation.

2. Prior creating Lien Minh, President Thieu outlined to me in series of conversations his ideas on how to achieve much needed unification of various political and social factions of South Vietnam. Defining his goal as political one, Thieu said he hoped draw leaders from most of significant elements of Vietnamese body politic into broadly based alliance capable of working with and for people to help them prepare for political struggle ahead. Cadres needed, Thieu said, to indoctrinate population concerning efforts which GVN must make to undermine and neutralize Communists' infrastructure. Thieu thought most of existing South Vietnamese political parties and leaders had lost respect of people; Lien Minh could overcome this popular suspicion and through good works and sincere concern for welfare of people, win back their confidence. Thus he envisaged Lien Minh helping nation achieve national unity, while assisting people in achievement their proper aspirations. To accomplish this Thieu hoped utilize cadres of other parties and groups which retain their identities while working together in Lien Minh on programs of common interest. Thieu stressed Lien Minh's mission be political one, and its good works programs would not compete with existing GVN activities such as revolutionary development. There was much in Thieu's outline which paralleled or echoed our thinking here and in Washington. In view of overriding need for GVN moves towards political unity, and in absence of available alternatives, I reacted sympathetically and told Thieu we stood ready to furnish support he said required.

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[1] Source: Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, 303/40 Committee Files, 303 Meetings, 2/16/68–1/20/70. Secret; Eyes Only. No time of transmission appears on the message.

[2] The reference is not identified.

3. Lien Minh has no counterpart in United States. It is not political party, but rather alliance of political forces—a front of fronts. This alliance composed of two political groups, National Salvation Front and Free Democratic Forces, plus Vietnam's largest labor federation, the CVT. National Salvation Front as Free Democratic Forces are without much political influence except what they derive respectively from their creators, Vice President Ky, and President Thieu. Third pillar, the CVT, is considerably stronger than other two—being mass organization with membership of some 300,000. Must be said, however, that while top leaders of CVT have contributed substantially to Lien Minh, mass membership of organization remains yet be involved. In addition these three groups, Lien Minh's avowed goal has been and is to attract other political groups under its umbrella in large coalition which would serve as effective counterforce to VC in political confrontation that lies ahead.

4. Thus far we have subsidized Lien Minh in amount of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]. In early December, following complete Embassy reassessment of Lien Minh, I discussed organization with President Thieu, giving him our analysis of organization's strengths and weaknesses and our conclusion that balance came out on positive side. I stressed, however, that Lien Minh needed greater expression of presidential interest if it to become powerful popular movement required to challenge NLF/VC apparatus in countryside. With due respect to Thieu's judgement that he avoid over identification with Lien Minh, I felt need for discreet but unmistakable Presidential moves which would stimulate all echelons of GVN into lending appropriate encouragement to Lien Minh, and which would encourage as well further support from private sector. At that time Thieu agreed with my view and explained had moved slowly supporting Lien Minh only to permit it more natural and genuine growth.

5. In relatively brief life span, Lien Minh achieved some measure of success. Its program, consisting largely of community development self-help social projects, enjoying some measure success in Saigon/Cholon where now has active projects in virtually all districts. Operations in provinces behind schedule; but Lien Minh committees thus far established in twenty provinces. Training Lien Minh's first batch of cadres for provinces turned out require more time than anticipated. As matters now stand, training of cadres from twenty provinces will begin late February at Can Tho, Vung Tau, Qui Nhon, and Danang.

6. Since writing Saigon 44649 (Exdis) on 11 December,[3] have not been able take up Lien Minh with President Thieu. Expect to do so

[3] Telegram 44649 from Saigon, December 11, 1968 (Saigon time), contained an account of Bunker's discussion that day with Thieu on the Lien Minh. (Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, Subject Files, Vietnam, 1968)

however within two or three days. At this meeting intend to review Lien Minh's progress thus far and also offer recommendations regarding its future. Specifically plan to note on plus side some modest but apparently genuine popular participation achieved through self-help projects particularly financed by money raised in neighborhoods concerned. Among Lien Minh's weaknesses and problems I intend to cite following:

A. Lien Minh's political base weak and narrow. National Salvation Front has no mass following. Free democratic force has cadre in various provinces, but cannot be heavily weighted as political force in country, urban or rural. CVT has made available few key officials and training facilities; but CVT as such not been activated behalf of Lien Minh.

B. There is endless bickering among three major organizations comprising Lien Minh—bickering over allocation of funds, and channels of command. Both National Salvation Front and CVT constantly on the verge of withdrawing.

C. These weaknesses linked to Lien Minh command structure, and especially to role played by President Thieu's Secretary-General, Nguyen Van Huong. Huong admittedly worked hard serve his President in this venture; but his efforts to run Lien Minh from behind scenes caused considerable friction, resulting in alienation many senior Lien Minh officials.

D. No political or religious leader joined or publicly endorsed Lien Minh since formation last July.

E. Lien Minh remains virtually unknown to public at large. Plans for aggressive publicity and intensive promotional campaign exist, but not yet executed.

F. Financing irregular and some December salaries still unpaid. Too many cadre on payroll and greater emphasis on volunteers appears necessary. Attempts solicit financial contributions from Vietnamese business community must be intensified.

G. Above all, uncertainty persists many quarters both in and outside GVN regarding Thieu's support of Lien Minh.

7. Regarding above points, I consider crux of matter Thieu's attitude toward Lien Minh: Does he truly endorse organization, and is he prepared give it personal leadership and attention? Or is he merely being polite in avowing support of Lien Minh because believes this is what we wish to hear? Consider therefore our first requirement be clarification of Thieu's attitude. All subsequent issues subordinate. President must decide once and for all whether he believes Lien Minh capable of contributing substantially to political challenge posed by VC, or whether sees other more promising alternatives. If Thieu continues endorse Lien Minh as his chosen instrument for countering VC and

organizing private political sector, he must exert personal and political leadership and pressure if it to have any hope of success.

8. If Thieu gives convincing evidence of intending put some presidential muscle behind this organization, I recommend continuation our financial support. However, feel time has come for President Thieu make contribution out of GVN funds, and intend to point out our subsidy, cannot be expected to cover total needs.

9. Recently Thieu has given some positive indications of increased interest by receiving on 28 January at palace some 40 Lien Minh provincial officials attending Lien Minh seminar in Saigon. This reception well publicized including TV coverage. While not completely identifying with Lien Minh, President spent hour with representatives and in his address consistently used word "we" talking about Lien Minh goals. I understand Thieu also contributed that day two million from own sources to Lien Minh to help tide it over present financial difficulties.

10. In view of above, until I meet with Thieu and have opportunity determine his attitude and intentions, am reluctant to arrive at final judgement and recommendation concerning our own posture. If results my talk clearly affirmative and Thieu's actions demonstrate genuine presidential commitment, I favor continuation our support. If Thieu should react negatively, plan to advise him we intend discontinue our assistance. If he remains ambivalent or is positive but fails follow through, plan to advise by end of March we plan discontinue financial help to Lien Minh but to remain open minded concerning other initiatives to same ends which we together may consider more productive.[4]

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[4] On February 11 the 303 Committee discussed this message and the program supporting the Lien Minh: "Mr. Nelson provided additional details in the course of the briefing. Mr. Packard expressed the view that this was a marginal activity with uncertain benefits to be derived therefrom and wondered if the risks of disclosure were worth it. Mr. Kissinger questioned if anyone in the United States really knows what a viable political structure in South Vietnam is. Messrs. Johnson and Helms had similar reservations but pointed out that development of a political structure is a long term process and that after two years or more of seeking for some kind of political structure in South Vietnam, President Thieu's Lien Minh proposal seemed the best bet. There was general agreement with Ambassador Bunker's analysis that President Thieu must actively support the Lien Minh in order for it to succeed." The Committee agreed to review the issue again after Bunker discussed it further with Thieu and asked Bunker for an assessment of the risks of disclosure. At Kissinger's request, the Committee also discussed covert harassment of large concentrations of North Vietnamese troops in their Cambodian sanctuaries along the border with South Vietnam. Nelson outlined long existing Operation Daniel Boone, but Helms noted that such a small scale operation would have little impact. Packard suggested that B–52 bombing would be the most effective means of attacking the concentration. Kissinger asked CIA to prepare a study of what could be done covertly. Nelson also briefed the Committee on the situation in Laos where U.S.-supported paramilitary forces were about to face "traditional dry season communist offensive." (Ibid., 303/40 Committee Meetings Files, 303 Meetings, 2/16/69–1/20/70)

20. Letter From the Head of the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam (Lodge) to President Nixon[1]

Paris, February 12, 1969.

Dear Mr. President:

This is in reply to Henry Kissinger's instruction to me yesterday raising certain questions in connection with your visit to the US Delegation to the Paris Talks on Sunday, March 2.

I suggest that we meet in the plexiglass "tank" here which is believed to be completely secure, and that those present be: The President, the Secretary of State, Henry, myself, Ambassador Walsh, Ambassador Green, and Mr. Habib.[2]

I suggest that Mr. Habib present the current situation here as regards the talks; that I then list the points of special interest to you, notably the decisions confronting you; and that then Ambassador Walsh and Ambassador Green be called on for comments. Undoubtedly you, the Secretary, and Henry will wish to ask questions. As you leave the "tank" I would like to present the other members of the Delegation, beginning with General Weyand, who has just arrived.

The decisions confronting you are, as I see them, as follows:

1. That I be authorized to request private talks with the other side. Private talks are the only way to move ahead. The public talks which we have had so far are used by the other side entirely for propaganda for the world press. Incidentally, I think your guidance here has been good and that we have done quite well in public. But I see no possibility that the other side will engage in substantive negotiations in public.

If the private talks are to achieve their purpose and lead to substantive negotiations, we must improve our negotiating posture.

I therefore further recommend:

2. That the President instruct General Wheeler and General Abrams to find ways drastically to reduce US military deaths in Viet-Nam as an essential measure to get the US into a strong negotiating position. We must assume that if, by about next August, US military deaths in Viet-Nam are still at the present figure of about 200 per week, public opinion may well become quite wild and erratic. At the least, there will be a strong demand to hurry. Undoubtedly the North Vietnamese think this too and are prepared to wait us out. To be in a

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[1] Source; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 182, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Vol. II, 2/3–69, Memos and Miscellaneous. Top Secret.

[2] See Document 27.

hurry when your opponent is not puts one in a very weak negotiating position.

Clearly this recommendation may, militarily speaking, entail a slowing of the pace and a lessening of the goals.

Drastic reduction in the number of US deaths is thus the first of two recommendations aimed at getting the US into a good negotiating position.

3. My other recommendation to improve our negotiating posture is that, in the negotiations, we follow a policy of great activity and be ready to make fresh proposals and contribute new ideas, initially in private meetings. Otherwise, the initiative will tend to pass to the other side here and, eventually, to the domestic critics at home. If the other side negotiates with us in good faith, so much the better. But if they turn everything down and make it clear that they have come here to win a victory rather than to negotiate, we will have strengthened our negotiating position and, by what we say in public, will have recreated justification for our presence in Viet-Nam.

Your tactics in the first three meetings in Paris have been a good beginning. We have been concrete and terse, and they have been abusive and verbose. The newspapermen think that we are ahead as far as the psychological battle is concerned. But this cannot last.

I think the North Vietnamese have twin hopes: That about next August our will will crumble because of American deaths and because the American public will see no justification for our being in Viet-Nam. They hope that the collapse of our will will bring about a corresponding collapse in the willpower of the South Vietnamese. Then we will be in really big trouble.

If you bring about a sweeping reduction in the American military deaths and provide evidence by your tactics here that we have the constructive ideas and that they are merely trying to use the talks to achieve victory, the entire situation here would change and would start moving in our favor.

4. The President will have to make a decision on withdrawal of troops, the Manila formula,[3] unilateral and mutual withdrawals, etc.

5. As we hold secret talks, we will face the problems of withdrawal of troops on the one hand and a political arrangement in Saigon on the other. The two would be linked, and there is no harm in linking them if the conditions are right.

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[3] Announced at the end of the Manila Conference on Vietnam, October 25, 1966, was the so-called "Manila Formula" whereby the United States and allied troops pledged to leave Vietnam 6 months after North Vietnamese troops withdrew, infiltration ceased, and the level of violence in South Vietnam subsided. (Text in *Public Papers: Johnson, 1966,* pp. 1262–1263.)

The President may thus eventually become involved in the question of how far our side will have to go in order to bring the Viet Cong into the political life of South Viet-Nam. You have already wisely stated that we would not try to impose a so-called "coalition government" on South Viet-Nam and that idea seems to be quite dead. There is a wide range of other ideas, some involving the eligibility of erstwhile members of the Viet Cong to vote and hold office, others involving arrangements whereby the present government would continue with some changes. Some proposals are all right; some are very dangerous.

6. The President should also authorize us to conduct negotiations with Hanoi on the exchange of prisoners of war.

This ends the list of decisions facing the President.

Other matters which could emerge during the negotiations in March and April would be:

—Discussion of an inspection and verification force. Having such a force coming entirely from Asia has interesting possibilities which I plan to discuss when you are here.

—An attractive possibility, to be used much later on in the negotiations, would be a treaty between North Viet-Nam and South Viet-Nam whereby the North Vietnamese would receive an assured amount of the rice produced in the Mekong Delta. Henry has a paper from me on this.[4] There are, of course, other interesting economic ideas.

—The apparent Soviet trend to be more openly in harmony with us in East Asia is worth following carefully.

I told Henry that I thought you should receive Vice President Ky if he is here and, if he is not here, that you should briefly receive Ambassador Lam, the head of the South Vietnamese Delegation.

I also advised that you should assume that your living quarters here will contain microphones and would not be a suitable place for your conversations. The offices which we have here are, I believe, secure and you will be well advised to have your conversations concerning Viet-Nam here.

With high and warm regards,

Respectfully yours,

Cabot L.

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[4] Not found.

21. Editorial Note

In accordance with his reorganization of the National Security Council as outlined in NSDM 2, January 2, 1969, (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 363, Subject Files, NSDMs 1–50) President Nixon directed the formulation of an interdepartmental Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam. The role of the Ad Hoc Group was formally outlined in NSSM 21, February 13. (Ibid., Box 365, NSSMs 1–42) The group was to be chaired by a representative of the Secretary of State, Ambassador William Sullivan, and included representatives of the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence. The group's stated functions were to prepare policy and contingency papers for consideration of the National Security Council and its Review Group. In addition the Ad Hoc Group was given authority to discuss and decide interdepartmental issues as deemed appropriate, such as coordination and planning of public information on Vietnam. In recommending the idea to the President in a February 13 memorandum, Kissinger stated that the "creation of the Ad Hoc Group should have an immediate beneficial impact in pulling together our political military contingency planning for U.S. reactions to a major new Communist offensive in South Vietnam." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–136, NSSM Files, NSSM 21) All documents cited above are in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, Volume II, Organization and Management of Foreign Policy, 1969–1972.

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22. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 19, 1969.

SUBJECT

Consideration of B–52 Options Against COSVN Headquarters

Background:

1. On February 9, 1969, COMUSMACV (General Abrams) recommended approval of a proposal to conduct B–52 raids against the re-

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 12, Geopolitical File, Cambodia Bombings, 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive.

ported location of COSVN Headquarters within Cambodian territory (map, Tab A),[2] the attack to be a contingency response in the event the enemy initiates a major attack in South Vietnam in the near future (Tab B).[3]

2. On February 12, 1969, Ambassador Bunker, in a message to Secretary of State, referred to the Abrams' message and concurred in the proposal to conduct the strike (Tab C).[4]

3. On February 14, 1969, at our request, Secretary of State advised Ambassador Bunker that the matter should be dropped in view of Presidential trip to Europe (Tab D).[5] Concurrently, a back channel, eyes only, message was sent to General Abrams advising him to continue planning for the strike strictly within military channels and to dispatch a briefing team to Washington cognizant of the details of the proposed operation.[6]

4. On February 18, 1969, Mr. H.A. Kissinger, Secretary of Defense Laird, Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Wheeler, and Colonels Pursley and Haig met in the Secretary of Defense's conference room and were briefed by a two-officer team from Saigon on the conduct of the proposed Arc Light strike against the reported location of COSVN Headquarters.[7] The intelligence on the target area appeared to be very accurate and the strike plans sound. There is every reason to believe there would be no Cambodians in the target area. More complete strike data is at Tab E.[8]

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[2] The map at Tab A was not attached.

[3] Tab B was apparently MACV telegram 1782 to Chairman of the JCS, February 9. It was not found attached, but is in JCS Files, OCJCS File Operation Breakfast, as cited in Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969–1970,* p. 221. See also *Hearings, Bombing in Cambodia,* Senate Committee on Armed Services, 93d Cong, 1st Sess., pp. 131–132.

[4] In telegram 2830 from Saigon, February 12 (Tab C), Bunker informed Rogers that he had seen a message from Abrams to Wheeler (Tab B) that showed the location of COSVN headquarters as just over the Cambodian border and which requested authority to use B–52's to attack it without hitting the nearby Cambodian villages or army outposts. Bunker added, "I realize fully the political implications of such a strike on Cambodian soil, but notwithstanding I support General Abrams in his request for authority to mount a strike. If Sihanouk complains, our rejoinder must be that COSVN is located on his territory and has been for years. He has done nothing about it although his forces in the area are fully aware of COSVN's presence. Preparations are being made for new attacks on South Vietnam and Saigon and we cannot permit these attacks to be planned and mounted from Cambodia; and finally that virtually no Cambodians live in immediate area." Tab C is attached but not printed.

[5] Tab D, telegram 023875 to Saigon, February 14, is attached but not printed.

[6] The backchannel message has not been found.

[7] No other record of this meeting has been found.

[8] Tab E has not been found.

Discussion:

Two attack options, with associated alternatives were discussed:

a. Option 1: An overtly deliberate strike.
b. Option 2: A covert strike officially categorized as a mistake.

Under both of these attack options, three alternatives were discussed:

a. An attack without provocation.
b. An attack in response to a strategic provocation—a large scale enemy attack against a major South Vietnamese population center not near the area of COSVN Headquarters.
c. An attack in response to a tactical provocation within the III Corps Tactical Zone in the vicinity of the Cambodian border.

The pros and cons of each attack option and their alternatives were discussed and a consensus arrived at with respect to each. The results of this consensus are summarized below:

Option 1, Alternative 1 (an overt deliberate strike initiated without provocation):

Pros

1. Complete honesty throughout the bureaucracy and with public, with no risk of creating credibility gap.
2. A strong indicator of the new Administration's willingness to escalate military operations to achieve a settlement.
3. Ease of planning and execution.

Cons

1. Major risks of exposing President to war expansion charges domestically and abroad.
2. Blatant overt escalation risks forcing Soviets to react strongly.
3. Major provocation against Sihanouk which could not be ignored by Cambodian Government, despite nature of target.

Option 1, Alternative 2 (an overt deliberate strike initiated in response to a strategic provocation):

Pros

1. Direct manifestation to Hanoi of new Administration's determination to retaliate sharply against violations of U.S.-NorthVietnamese understanding.

Cons

1. Risk of exposing President to war expansion charges, domestically and abroad.
2. Lacks precision and credible justification in that retaliation is focused on a third party rather than North Vietnam.

2. Strong signal to the Soviets of new Administration's determination to settle war, despite cost.
3. Direct demonstration to world at large of new Administration's determination.

3. Blatant overt escalation risks forcing Soviets to react strongly, but to a lesser degree than Alternative #1.
4. Major provocation against Sihanouk which could not be ignored by Cambodian Government, despite nature of target.

Option 1, Alternative 3 (an overt deliberate strike initiated in response to a local enemy attack):

Pros

1. Direct manifestation of new Administration's determination to retaliate against violations of U.S.-North Vietnamese understanding.
2. Strong signal to the Soviets of new Administration's determination to settle war, despite cost.
3. Could be justified as a measure taken to protect U.S. forces in immediate danger and be attributed to enemy initiative and utilization of Cambodian sanctuary.

Cons

1. Risk of exposing President to war expansion charges, domestically and abroad.
2. Lacks precision in that retaliation is focused on a third party rather than North Vietnam but to a lesser degree than Alternative 2, Option 1.
3. Blatant overt escalation risks forcing Soviets to react strongly, but to a lesser degree than Alternative 1.

Option 2, Alternative 1 (a covert strike officially categorized as a mistake and initiated without provocation):

Pros

1. Could minimize Soviet reaction by providing Soviets option of accepting U.S. explanation publicly.
2. Should lessen Cambodian and international unfavorable reaction.
3. Offers most reasonable and credible circumstances internationally for acceptance of U.S. cover story.

Cons

1. In view of exchange of messages between Ambassador Bunker and Secretary of State, creates high risk that State personnel will claim deception, thereby creating early credibility gap for new Administration.
2. High likelihood of reduced U.S. confidence in professional reliability of Strategic Air Forces.

3. Create demands for punishment of military scapegoat.
4. Major risk of interdepartmental loss of confidence with some long-term overtone and possible Congressional investigation.

Option 2, Alternative 2 (covert strike officially categorized as a mistake in retaliation for a large scale enemy attack against a major South Vietnam population center):

Pros

1. Could minimize Soviet reaction by providing Soviets option of accepting U.S. explanation publicly.
2. Would lessen Cambodian unfavorable action.
3. Improves likelihood that both Soviets and Cambodians will interpret action as indication of U.S. unwillingness to accept violations of Paris agreement or continued utilization of Cambodian sanctuary.
4. Could reduce somewhat Soviet reaction in that U.S. attack could be better justified as a retaliation against a North Vietnamese violation of U.S.-North Vietnamese understanding.

Cons

1. In view of exchange of messages between Ambassador Bunker and Secretary of State, creates some risk that State personnel will claim deception, thereby creating early credibility gap for new Administration (in view of local provocation this risk should be reduced in direct measure to the seriousness of the provocation).
2. High likelihood of reduced U.S. confidence in professional reliability of Strategic Air Forces.
3. Create demands for punishment of military scapegoat.
4. Major risk of interdepartmental loss of confidence with some long-term overtones and possible Congressional investigation.
5. Interdepartmental resentment should be ameliorated by the knowledge that attack was justified by enemy's violation of U.S.-North Vietnamese understanding.
6. Due to obvious enemy provocation, U.S. cover story would lose large measure of its credibility, both

domestically and abroad, thus intensifying claims at home that the new Administration has used a pretext to escalate and enlarge war in Vietnam.

Option 2, Alternative 3 (covert strike officially categorized as a mistake in retaliation for a tactical provocation):

Pros

1. Could minimize Soviet reaction by providing Soviets option of accepting U.S. explanation publicly.
2. Would lessen Cambodian and international unfavorable reaction.
3. Offers most reasonable and credible circumstances internationally for acceptance of U.S. cover story.
4. Improves likelihood that both Soviets and Cambodians will interpret action as indication of U.S. unwillingness to accept violations of Paris agreement or continued utilization of Cambodian sanctuary.

Cons

1. In view of exchange of messages between Ambassador Bunker and Secretary of State, creates high risk that State personnel will claim deception, thereby creating credibility gap.
2. Likelihood of reduced U.S. confidence in professional reliability of Strategic Air Forces.
3. Create demands for punishment of military scapegoat.
4. Major risk of interdepartmental loss of confidence with some long-term overterm overtones and possible Congressional investigation.

Conclusions:

1. The Bunker–Rogers exchange has deprived us of undertaking a covert "accidental" strike during the next few weeks without unacceptable risk of compromise.

2. A covert attack on COSVN Headquarters is not an acceptable course of action in retaliation for a large scale enemy attack against a major population center since it would risk charges of "unjustified escalation" against a third party not involved in the provocation. An overt attack against COSVN without provocation would be even more unacceptable.

3. A covert "accidental" strike against COSVN Headquarters has the advantage of showing the Soviets that we are serious about the war, without forcing them to take a public stance against our attack.

Recommendations:

1. In order to set the stage for a possible covert attack, and clear the books on this matter within the Bureaucracy, we should send a message to General Abrams authorizing him to bomb right up to the Cambodian border in the Fish-hook area of III Corps Tactical Zone.

2. General Abrams be authorized to continue planning for execution of the strike on a contingency basis.

3. If a suitable local action develops in the III Corps Tactical Zone in the vicinity of the Fish-hook, that with your approval at the time we use it as a pretext to strike COSVN Headquarters.

4. If no suitable local action develops, that we again consider the proposal toward the end of March.[9]

[9] Nixon initialed the approve option.

23. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to Secretary of Defense Laird[1]

Washington, February 22, 1969.

SUBJECT

COSVN Matter

The President has approved my memorandum of February 19 outlining the proposed course of action associated with a contingency B–52 strike against COSVN Headquarters in Cambodia.[2] Attached for your eyes only is an excerpt copy of the recommendations in this memorandum which has been approved by the President.[3] You will note that the scenario provides for two immediate steps:

1. The immediate dispatch of a message to General Abrams authorizing him to conduct B–52 strikes right up to the Cambodian border on the South Vietnamese side in the Fish-hook area of III Corps tactical zone.

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 12, Geopolitical File, Cambodia Bombings, 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. This memorandum was not initialed.

[2] Document 22.

[3] Attached but not printed; see Document 22.

2. Concurrently, a strictly military back channel, eyes only message for General Abrams should be dispatched advising General Abrams to continue planning for execution of the strike on a contingency basis. Specifically, General Abrams should be advised to maintain a continual appraisal of the tactical situation in the III Corps tactical zone with the view towards advising us as soon as the military situation might arise which would justify the contingency strike in accordance with paragraph 3 of the attached recommendations.

I contemplate that should a sizable enemy attack develop in the III Corps areas in the vicinity of the Fish-hook that highest authority will approve the COSVN strike based upon the recommendations of General Abrams and an overall assessment of the military situation elsewhere in Vietnam. In order to set the stage for this contingency, it is essential that you stand ready during the President's trip to Europe to execute this attack option with minimum prior notice.

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24. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam[1]

Washington, February 22, 1969, 2151Z.

28314. Todel 2196. For Ambassador and Gen Abrams. Ref: Saigon 3402.[2]

1. We have considered reftel carefully here and appreciate its timely analysis and recommendations. Contingency plans have been under urgent discussion here, and have laid out a wide variety of possible actions. These have taken account of the various comments from

[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Drafted by Bundy, cleared by Moor, and approved for transmission by Richardson. Repeated to Paris for Vietnam Mission and CINCPAC for POLAD.

[2] In telegram 3402, February 22, Bunker and Abrams informed the Department of State that MACV had concluded at 1025Z on February 21 and the CIA reached the same conclusion that evening that "widespread Communist attacks are expected to take place on February 22 or 23." Bunker and Abrams stated that "the main purpose of these attacks is to try to produce another shock in the US as took place last year at Tet." The enemy's motivation, according to Bunker and Abrams, was "to show how tough, determined and capable they are," to inflict heavy US casualties, and to alienate American support for the war. A second objective was to disrupt South Vietnam's pacification program, and to time the offensive during President Nixon's trip in the hopes that he would be too preoccupied to order retaliation. Bunker and Abrams asked for "decisions to be readied to retaliate." (Ibid.)

both Paris and Saigon on the DRV and GVN interpretations of the pre-October communications. However, because of the great difficulty in identifying any possible situation with precision, we cannot at this time specify exactly what we might do if there is offensive action.

2. This planning includes the question of any statement or statements to the American public. Insofar as there is a need to alert the public to the current indications, we believe this has been met by wise backgrounding which is resulting in stories here that stop short of crying wolf but make clear we are very much on the alert. In the event of attack, on whatever scale, we would need to consult urgently on how to characterize it. However, our experience last year in the Tet offensive leaves us in considerable doubt that it would be wise at the outset to proclaim that what was taking place was or was sure to be a Communist defeat. We are inclined to think statements to this effect, before the real outcome was apparent, did us little good last year, and that it is on the whole preferable to await events speaking for themselves.

3. This leaves the question of an urgent message to the Soviet Union. By telecon, we have instructed Paris to see Zorin, or if he is not available, Oberemko, as soon as possible to convey the following:

a. We are concerned on the basis of cumulative indications that a substantial step-up in offensive action may be under way on orders from Hanoi;

b. If this occurs it could affect the understanding which made possible our bombing halt. We believe the North Vietnamese clearly understand that indiscriminate attacks on major population centers such as Saigon, Danang, and Hue, would create a situation which could affect the continuation of serious negotiations and the maintenance of the bombing cessation. Thus, if there were to be such attacks, we could only conclude that Hanoi was acting deliberately and had decided to ignore the consequences.[3]

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[3] On February 23 the Director of Central Intelligence's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs, George A. Carver, Jr., sent Rogers a memorandum stating that "at approximately 0100 hours on Sunday, February 23 (Vietnam local time), the Communist initiated an obviously coordinated series of over 160 attacks against province capitals, district towns, allied military bases and lines of communication throughout South Vietnam." Carver estimated that "the Communist effort will almost certainly continue over the next 48 to 72 hours," but warned that "the full range of Communist objectives cannot be discerned until we see the full scope of their intended offensive." (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 63, Vietnam Subject Files, 2–C, General Military Activity) In telegram MAC 2372 to Wheeler and McCain, February 23, Abrams wrote: "I consider it imperative that we launch convincing attacks on the enemy in NVN." He added, "a failure to reply positively merely invites further provocation as enemy probes to ascertain what the traffic will bear." Abrams specifically requested permission to launch a 96-hour air and naval bombardment campaign between the DMZ and 19th parallel and Arc Light strikes against the DMZ and 17 degrees, 10 minutes, north latitude. (Ibid.)

c. We are communicating this to Ambassador Zorin because he and his government were helpful in bringing about the negotiations and bombing halt understanding in the first place.

We have chosen deliver this message in Paris in order to relate any attacks, in the most direct possible way, to the Paris talks. In addition, however, Secretary spoke to Dobrynin at about noon today, pointing out potentially serious consequences of indiscriminate attacks on the cities. Dobrynin said he would inform his government immediately.

Rogers

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25. Message From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 25, 1969.

I have been informed by Henry Kissinger and his staff that you have approved the course of action associated with enemy positions in the vicinity of the Fish-hook in the III Corps Tactical Zone.[2] Planning for B–52 strikes is proceeding. I have discussed the matter in detail with General Wheeler, and, following those discussions, I have some observations to make.

Military Execution. There is no doubt in my mind, nor in General Wheeler's mind, that the proposed strikes can be executed effectively. In accordance with the instructions provided to me by Henry Kissinger, I have asked General Wheeler to put the operational machinery in motion that is necessary if the mission is to be carried out on the currently outlined schedule. This operational planning carries minimal security risks. The order can be countermanded at any time up to 1200 GMT, Thursday, 27 February.

Political Considerations. There are some facets of the matter which continue to bother me, however. This is that a number of people in other departments and agencies are aware of the possibility of this mission, simply by virtue of Ambassador Bunker's February 12 message

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 12, Geopolitical File, Cambodia Bombings, 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive. Laird's handwritten signature appears as the "releaser" and apparently he was also the "drafter." This message was apparently sent to Nixon who was in London.

[2] Reference is to Nixon's decision on February 23 (en route from Washington to Brussels) to bomb Cambodian sanctuaries; see Kissinger, *White House Years,* p. 243.

(Saigon 2830).[3] It is reasonable to assume some of the people who saw the Bunker message would not look with favor upon this mission. It is also reasonable to believe they would then create, or attempt to create, difficulty for you and for all of us through contacts in the Congress and in the press who would likewise look with disfavor on this proposed action. By virtue of the presumed widespread knowledge of this possible mission, it would be difficult to claim, and make credible, an operational error. Equally difficult, in view of the moderate scale thus far and the currently diminishing level of enemy activity, would be the forthright approach of admitting an attack against an alleged enemy headquarters in a neutral nation.

Alternative. As you can see, I have reservations about conducting the mission under current circumstances. General Wheeler shares my concern. I believe it would be better to hold this attack for a period in which the scope, intensity, and duration of enemy-initiated activity are at more pronounced levels.[4] If the enemy were to commit his main force units in major ground attacks in III Corps, that might present the backdrop behind which we could execute the mission and not be confronted with such marked risks vis-à-vis Congress and the press. While I submit this alternative for your consideration, I want to assure you we are proceeding as instructed previously and will continue to do so through execution unless informed otherwise.

All best wishes.

Melvin R. Laird

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[3] See footnote 4, Document 22.

[4] Nixon cancelled the order and postponed the operation; see Kissinger, *White House Years,* p. 244.

26. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom[1]

Washington, February 25, 1969, 0324Z.

28475/Tosec 32. For Secretary from Acting Secretary. Deliver earliest in morning after normal waking hour.

Ref: A. Saigon 3429;[2] B. Saigon 3508.[3]

Subject: Actions in Response to Current Enemy Offensive.

1. We appreciate factors which led to Saigon's recommendation contained ref A that we take military action in NVN in response to the current coordinated attacks throughout South Viet-Nam. There are, however, obvious considerations which lead us to defer consideration any such response for the time being. A US military response would, in our view, have to be based on a degree of seriousness of the enemy attacks on population centers such as to require the conclusion that the understandings which preceded the October 31 bombing halt should be invoked. Any such military response would have to be defended on this basis before public opinion both here and abroad. Events thus far have not produced unequivocal evidence we would need.[4]

2. Since military action seems inadvisable at the present moment, it is all the more important that we make some diplomatic response

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Repeated Immediate to Paris for Lodge. Drafted by John R. Burke (EA/VN) February 24, cleared by Archibald Calhoun (EA) and Bundy, and approved by Richardson. Rogers and Nixon were in London for meetings with British Prime Minister Wilson.

[2] In telegram 3429 from Saigon, February 23, Bunker informed Rogers that, "I have just concurred in Gen. Abrams' request for authority to mount a 96-hour retaliatory air and naval strike against the north between the DMZ and the 19th parallel." Bunker suggested that, "the Communists are probing to see whether we retaliate or not. If we fail to do so promptly, they will be emboldened to continue these attacks, some of which are clear violations of the understanding with Hanoi." Bunker then suggested that, "I think it highly important to get the message to Hanoi that while we are ready to reach reasonable agreements in Paris, there should be no doubt that we will react firmly and speedily to this kind of attack." (Ibid.)

[3] In telegram 3508 from Saigon, February 24, Bunker responded to a request from Acting Secretary Richardson for additional information on the attacks so that Rogers and Nixon, en route to Brussels on Air Force One, could make a decision about retaliation. (Ibid.) The request from Richardson was transmitted in telegram 28343 to Saigon, February 23. (Ibid.)

[4] In telegram 2732 from Paris/Delto 1382, February 25, Lodge agreed with the conclusions in paragraph 1. As for the diplomatic protest, Lodge preferred not to make it. He considered that the U.S. position had already been made clear to the DRV, it was more important to remain flexible, and Lau would reject the protest anyway on the grounds that the NLF was the proper interlocutor. (Ibid., POL 27–14 VIET)

beyond what we have already done with the Soviets. We did, after all, protest the Hue attack to the DRV delegation on February 5. Present attacks are so much more important and destructive, failure on our part to protest privately to Lau in Paris might well suggest to Hanoi that our threshold of pain is considerably higher than even they estimated. I recommend therefore that we authorize Walsh to seek an early appointment with Lau (certainly before Thursday),[5] in order to clearly warn DRV that present shellings are, in our view, indiscriminate and that their continuation would call into question DRV's sincere desire to seek peace through the Paris talks. We should of course inform GVN both in Saigon and Paris that we are taking this action. We should also keep open whether we should publicize this démarche prior to Thursday meeting in Paris.

3. We should also follow up démarche to Lau with an opening statement at Thursday's plenary session protesting these new attacks, laying emphasis on the heavy civilian casualties they have already caused. (We should by that time have a fairly accurate record of the number of dead and wounded civilians these attacks have caused as well as a rough over-all figure of the damage to civilian property.)

4. Our failure to do at least this much at this stage could accelerate incipient doubts within GVN and Vietnamese public regarding the strength of our commitment. One of the goals of the present series of attacks seems to be to drive an entering wedge between ourselves and the Vietnamese. Hanoi may be bent on sustaining these attacks at a level which is low enough to inhibit the execution of a military retaliation or stronger diplomatic response but high enough to cause the Vietnamese serious suffering and thus to generate US/GVN misunderstandings.

5. If you agree with foregoing action, we will instruct Paris and Saigon accordingly. It seems to me that there is a significant timing factor involved, and that we should make every effort to act Wednesday. If we hold back on raising this issue until Thursday's meeting, we run a major risk that the other side will immediately take the position that the NLF is the true party in interest—and the setting at the Majestic will make it very difficult for us to get away from a degree of appearance that we accept this. If, however, the majestic meeting takes place against the backdrop of our having seen the DRV separately—and perhaps letting this be known publicly—then we stand a much better chance of maintaining our position of DRV responsibility and of avoiding any step that could cause concern in the GVN.[6]

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[5] February 27.

[6] Printed from an unsigned copy.

27. Notes by President Nixon of a Meeting[1]

Paris, March 2, 1969.

1. Same tough talk in return.

Habib:

1. 6 meetings
2. N.V.Nam addresses remarks to US
3. Major themes:

   a. Political & military matters must be settled together
   b. 5 points [of NLF?]

1.) U.S. get out unconditional
2.) G.V.N. must go
3.) Support Geneva Accords

Vicious language—Make clear—Prevent talk NL Front—"other side handful of traitors."

1. De-escalation theme.

G.V.N.

1. Restrained language
2. "You denigrate the image of Vnamese"
3. N.V. Nam—image = better & better than N.L.F.—completely under the thumb of N.V.N.—

Delegation (except for Ky under thumb of Saigon) GVN-maturity on bombing halt.

Very reasonable—

Some heavy going ahead:

Vance (Lao)

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Personal File, Box 57, Security Classified (3), Speech File, February–March 1969, RN Notes–European Trip. No classification marking. These are handwritten notes by Nixon apparently on the meeting with the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. At 8:38 a.m. on March 2 the President met privately with Lodge for 15 minutes at the American Embassy in Paris. They were then joined by Rogers, Kissinger, Walsh, Green, and Habib. The meeting with the U.S. Delegation was followed by a 15-minute private meeting with Ky and then a longer meeting with Ky and the Chief Republic of Vietnam negotiator, Pham Dang Lam, as well as most of the U.S. officials from the earlier meeting. The four sessions lasted until 12:39 p.m. (Ibid., White House Central Files, Daily Diary) An account of the meeting with Ky is in Document 28. According to Marshall Green, the initial meeting between Nixon and the U.S. Delegation lasted for 2½ hours and was held in the Embassy's special security room. (Marshall Green, *Indonesia: Crisis and Transformation, 1965–1968* (Compass Press: Washington, 1990), p. 144)

What are our objectives?
U.S. must deal with N.L.F.
Take 5 points of N.L.F. & negotiate changes

Russ[ians] tell us:

1. Ed Walsh-Oberemko—as bombing
2. Zorin called on Lodge—Wednesday

Also asks what is RN's position[?] He says—"We have been of help in the past—we are in constant touch with other side."

Believe Preamble Phase is open [over?]

Walsh:

1. We have no illusion we can get them to [negotiate?]
2. Must convince them & American people we have an earnest desire to end the war—

a. Must not give impression we go through a sham—Filibuster during private talks—

Private Talks:

1. Gives an added momentum—
2. May take weeks to get talks with N.L.F.—

Reaching Conclusion in June & July. Delayed?

Don't need refined instruction—

1. because so many balls in the air—we can go one direction—rather than the other—

Must keep moving—(not static)

Talks:

Can improve [lines?] of [communication?].
Can better insights.

1. Harriman at ready to jump on us.
2. The other side is skilled at such attack.

1. V.C. are hurting (because B–52's hurting [them])
2. N.L.F. said [raid?] cities
3. Deepen concern over deAmericanization

a. Builds up ARVN
b. Gives continuity to them—

People waiting for RN's visit—Build a record of conviction

[?]

1. Difference in opinion in Hanoi on whether
2. Be business like & discuss peace
3. Question of Style—don't look too eager

They think we may be delaying because of military pressure—Vitriol get worse as you get closer to settlement,—

Russ useful on guarantees

If they [North Vietnam] attack cities—

1. This puts us on the spot—

a. Do we start bombing North—
b. Cause problem with G.V.N. if we *don't*—& with American public if we *do*

Habib—

3 deadlines—Dem convention—election—Inauguration
They work against us—They know when we have one. Before election Russ trying to help Humphrey. Ky tried to delay [?] this. But on Jan. 20 helped because Russ wanted to get in before RN got in

Lodge Instructions:

1. Must give us some authority

a. Bill [Rogers?]—"Don't need blueprint completely worked out."
b. RN keep S V Nam built up—

1. Redefine military policy for best background for our statement

1.) Will. March straight [strength?]
2.) If casualties fall—it would impress them
3.) They would prefer a helter skelter withdrawal—

Most effective use of military for other side is to convince the "we" can hold out—

(Lincoln appointed Grant and Sherman (in early 40's))
We need a man of this war—(Abrams and Westmoreland = WWII)

Walsh: Reduction of force—essential for U.S.

Westmoreland failed to understand—Divisional

French=1. Peace cabinet—to overthrow gov't No—add to it—maybe

If we deal alone with V.C. we lose war immediately.

28. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State[1]

Paris, March 2, 1969, 1550Z.

3027/Delto 1412. Following is an uncleared memorandum of conversation subject to review by the President and the Secretary. When cleared, we suggest it be repeated to AmEmbassy Saigon.

1. Meeting in Lodge's office with the following present: The President, Vice President Ky, Ambassador Lam, the Secretary of State, Ambassador Lodge, Ambassador Walsh and Dr. Kissinger.

2. The conversation was cordial. The President drew out Vice President Ky as to the relationships between the Government of Viet-Nam and the United States in connection with the Viet-Nam negotiations, and also requested his evaluation as to the training and supplying of the South Vietnamese armed forces by the US, South Vietnamese morale, North Vietnamese morale, and the impact of the recent Tet offensive as it compared with the 1968 Tet offensive.

3. Vice President Ky responded that the GVN had confidence in the US approach to the Vietnamese negotiations. He also thought there was a greater comprehension by each government of the aims and plans of the other.

4. He also felt that the people of South Viet-Nam, as a result of the improved relationships, had a greater confidence not only in the United States but in the Government of Viet-Nam as well. The calm response to the Tet offensive increased this confidence.

5. With respect to the training and equipping of the ARVN so that it would ultimately take over full responsibility for the protection of South Viet-Nam, he felt that the United States had been slow in providing this training and equipment.

For example, it was only last year that the ARVN was given M–16 rifles. He felt there was still a great deal to be accomplished in this regard. As an illustration, he said that the GVN had authorized an increase in its air force from 11,000 to 40,000, but that it would be many months and even years before it could raise the money and train the necessary personnel.

6. As to North Vietnamese morale, he felt that although Ho Chi Minh claimed that they would be able to fight for 20 years, that he felt

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, EAP/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 47. Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Paris Meetings; Plus. A stamped notation reads: "Mr. Bundy has seen"; a handwritten note reads: "3/4 W[illiam]PB[undy] had repeated to Saigon with revision in septel."

they really were being hurt badly and that they could not absorb this degree of punishment indefinitely. He said that they were not only out-matched as to fire power, but that the GVN could now out-match them as regards mobility.

7. In comparing the Tet offensive of 1969 to that of 1968, he felt that both sides were better prepared this year. Because of the enemy's better preparation, his casualties were considerably less than in 1968, but that, on the other hand, due to the better preparation of the GVN and its allies, the actual ground attacks on the cities did not occur. He felt that in the case of both Tet offensives, it was the GVN and allies who scored clear military victories, but that the enemy did score a psychological victory in 1968 because it so surprised the GVN and the friendly forces, and he indicated it may have even scored another psychological victory this year outside of South Viet-Nam.

8. After [garble] minutes, Kissinger made the move to go so that the President and Ky could talk alone, with Lodge taking the notes. The conversation was as follows:

9. The President said that the negotiations would be long and hard, and that there must be mutual trust between the Americans and the South Vietnamese. He asked Ky to tell Thieu that Thieu could trust the President. The Vietnamese should realize that American public opinion is very difficult and that many did not understand the war. The President said, however, that he was one who knew why we had gone to war in Viet-Nam, that he admired the great sacrifices which had been made and that he understood why there could not be a so-called "coalition."

10. "The Ambassador and I think alike," the President said. He added that he hoped Ky could convince his colleagues that we can be trusted. "We are not," he said, "going to double-cross you."

11. The President then said he wished to bring up another subject: He said he thought it would be "very clever" if Ky could make an offer to talk to the Viet Cong. "We Americans," he said, "must never talk with them except in the presence of the South Vietnamese. But if you make the offer and they say no, we score a point." And, he added, "if they were to say yes," Ky would know how to talk and what to say. The President asked Lodge for his opinion and Lodge said this would be the most positive single step which our side can take at this time. The President said it would be really a "smart move."

12. In reply, Ky said, "I have twice said that I am ready. I have sent private people as recently as during last week, but in view of the President's expression of interest, I will try again."

13. The President said there must be no doubt that Ky had made the move. Ky estimated that the Viet Cong would refuse to talk to the GVN.

14. In reply to a query from the President, Lodge and Ky explained that the Viet Cong constantly talk to the French, believing that they can reach the Americans by talking to the French and then have the French talk to the Americans. This was one reason. Undoubtedly there were others. As long as they think such things, they will not feel like talking with the South Vietnamese. Finally, the President urged Vice President Ky to make his move "in a clear-cut way."

15. The President then asked Ky for his views on military strategy. Ky said that our side must continue our military pressure, and that the Americans can reduce the number of troops without there being a big change. He said we could pull out some United States troops and replace them by Vietnamese and all would be the same. It was, he thought, important to continue the present military pressure.

16. The President asked why Ky thought about the argument[2] that we must convince them that we want to de-escalate. Ky thought this was not necessary.

17. When the time came to go, the President spoke of his "deep affection" for the Vietnamese people. He added, "we honestly are your friends." He added that we must bring this war to an end, and that he didn't want the United States, as regards Viet-Nam, to go the way of the French.

18. Ky stressed the need for a "lasting settlement"—not a cease-fire in which "the killing will continue." "The enemy," he said, "are convinced they cannot win. They are ready to negotiate, but a delay of five to six to eight months is possible."

19. While the President met Vice President Ky alone (see above), Ambassador Lam asked Secretary Rogers whether General de Gaulle has passed on any private message for the US from the other side. The Secretary said that he knew of no such message but that if one came to us this way, we would certainly inform the GVN. The Secretary added that the French believed that the US and the NLF should have bilateral meetings. The Secretary assured Ambassador Lam that the USG would never meet with the NLF without the GVN being present. Ambassador Lam said that the Secretary's responses satisfied and reassured him.

Lodge

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[2] At this point in the sentence, the following handwritten addition was added: "made by some that negotiations would move along faster if we". The revised sentence as sent to Saigon reads: "The President asked what Ky thought about the argument made by some that negotiations would move along faster if we convince them that we want to de-escalate."

29. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 6, 1969.

INTELLIGENCE ITEMS

—*Vietnamese Developments Yesterday:* Ambassador Bunker has provided a very interesting analysis of Hanoi's current and probable future military and political strategy.

Bunker believes the Communists have concluded that time is now working against them on the military side in South Vietnam. They are thus counting almost exclusively on American disenchantment with the war and with the U.S. casualty rates to produce a strong domestic anti-war reaction sometime before the end of 1970.

The enemy anticipates, in Bunker's view, that we will so tire of the war by that time that we will bring increasing pressure on the Thieu government to make more and more concessions to the Communists so that the U.S. can disengage. This pressure in turn will weaken the GVN and open the way to its dissolution and the subsequent formation of a "peace cabinet" or coalition.

Bunker believes we will see a lot more interest by the Communists in Paris in starting substantive negotiations on both military and political issues. This, he thinks, is not mainly an indication of softness in their position, but of a desire to get a process started which they believe will greatly increase friction between the U.S. and South Vietnam.

Bunker looks for the Communists to try and maintain an intensified level of fighting over a long period in South Vietnam to back up their negotiating stance. He expects this to be sprinkled with occasional "dramatic military demonstrations." All of it will be designed to impress the U.S. and South Vietnamese public with continuing Communist strength while avoiding crippling casualties for enemy forces.

Bunker recommends that we redouble our efforts to show our solidarity with the GVN and that we push to get GVN–NLF contacts going. At the same time we should be prepared to move ahead with discussions on both military and political issues at the talks in order to increase the chances and decrease the time needed to arrange a settlement which the Communists will accept.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 3, President's Daily Briefs. Top Secret; Sensitive.

All in all, I find Ambassador Bunker's views on enemy strategy well in accord with my own. (Tab A)[2]

[Omitted here are Kissinger's response that an estimated 11 rounds of 122 mm rocket hit Saigon the previous evening, evidence that the Vietnamese Communists planned new attacks during Laird's visit to South Vietnam to demonstrate their "authority," and additional information unrelated to Vietnam.]

[2] Tab A was telegram 4166 from Saigon, March 5. (Ibid., RG 59, EAP/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 47, EA–WPB)

30. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam[1]

Washington, March 7, 1969.

35449/Todel 2289. For Bunker and Lodge from the Secretary.

1. We have reviewed with great care the thoughtful and well argued recommendations in Saigon 4320 and Paris 3229.[2] We agree, of course, that the latest rocketings make the problem significantly more acute.

2. At the same time, we have concluded that we should not authorize a retaliatory strike against the North at this time.[3] We recognize the arguments for such action in terms of the danger of adverse South Vietnamese reactions if we do not strike back at some point, and

[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, East Asia Bureau, Office of Asian Communist Affairs Files: Lot 70 D 47. Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Paris Meetings; Plus. Also sent to Paris. Drafted by Bundy on March 6, cleared by Kissinger and Walsh, and approved by Rogers.

[2] Both dated March 6. (Ibid., EAP/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 28, March 1–6, 1969)

[3] In MACV telegram 2836 from Abrams to Wheeler, March 6, Abrams recommended a "1–2 punch" against North Vietnam to signal U.S. resolve to stand on the understandings of the bombing halt, but to strike a strategic blow against the North. The first phase of the retaliation included resumption of air and naval gunfire up to the 19th parallel against the ports, key passes, and storage areas, and other strategic areas. The second phase consisted of air and artillery attacks against Cambodian and Lao sanctuaries followed by pursuit of the enemy forces in Cambodia and Laos. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 67, Vietnam Subject Files, Retaliation for Attacks on Saigon) In a memorandum to Kissinger, March 6, Sneider of the Operations Staff of the NSC argued against retaliation on the grounds that it would have little effect on North Vietnam.

in terms of bringing home to the North that the understandings must be observed and that there are limits to what we will tolerate. Plainly, we shall need to have the most careful and continuing readings of the South Vietnamese temperature.

3. At the same time, the negative factors seem to us for the time being to have greater weight. Specifically:

a. US public reactions are simply not at the point where we could strike back without a significant agitating effect that might tend to shorten the period of full public support of the whole war effort. At least to this point—and even in the face of the latest action—we may be gaining somewhat by our moderation, in these terms, and we believe that an immediate response would throw large and significant segments of public and congressional opinion into a critical and impatient posture that would make our whole play of the hand, both militarily and in Paris, more difficult. On the other hand, if we appear to be going "the last mile," we would hope to gain additional support in US public opinion for whatever action is eventually deemed to be required.

b. We believe we must accept that any retaliatory action, at any time, stands only a fair chance of operating to deter at least further rockets, on the scale of these last three occurrences, against Saigon or the other key cities. We of course agree that any retaliation should be against a military target, and we accept that its actual military importance is secondary to the demonstrative effect. What we must weigh carefully is the possibility that the other side would simply continue some form of rocketing—even though its capabilities may not extend to any substantial increase in number or scale—and that we would move into the position of a sterile set of exchanges which to many here would appear to be significant escalation and in any event to be unproductive.

c. Although we would not have in mind that we or the GVN should pull out of the Paris talks as we conducted retaliatory action, we must weigh the possibility that the other side might suspend the talks and appear to many elements here and abroad to have some justification for doing so.

4. Nonetheless, we fully recognize the force of both Saigon's and Paris' arguments that if action of this type continues we shall have to weigh a military response at some point, and the weight of the factors could then have shifted. Moreover, we are entirely persuaded by the argument that we should now make a direct and private approach to the DRV in Paris—and indeed should supplement this by my having another firm discussion with Dobrynin. We believe that a Lodge/Xuan Thuy meeting should be sought by Paris at once, aiming at tomorrow night Paris time. This would give us the opportunity for Bunker to see

Thieu on March 7 Saigon time and to inform him that we are taking these two steps—getting such advice as he may wish to add to what we might say. I leave it to Bunker how far he should go in explaining to Thieu, at the same time, our present views on the wisdom of actually conducting a retaliatory strike. It does seem to me clear that we should acknowledge to him that the making of a direct private protest to the DRV does carry us one notch further toward a military reply if there is another action—even though of course the President's very firm remarks of Tuesday[4] night have already laid out our position clearly, and to a large extent done this in a public sense.

5. We believe that Lodge's conversation with Xuan Thuy should be verbal, since any written message of the type contained in paragraph 3 of Paris 3229 both commits us categorically, and will be most likely to be made public. As to the elements of our oral presentation, we believe that it should include the following:

a. Since this is Lodge's first personal meeting, it should start with a careful review of the exact exchanges that preceded the stopping of the bombing. Material for this purpose is well summarized in State 16522,[5] and Paris has more detailed files on which it can draw as desired to prepare a talking paper.

b. Lodge must be totally firm in insisting on North Vietnamese responsibility, and in rejecting any argument that this is the business of the NLF or that we should discuss it with the NLF.

c. Lodge should review public statements we have made, leading up to the key point that these actions are in clear violation of our stated understanding, and that any continuation of them must call forth appropriate response of which the President has spoken. As we have repeatedly said, such consequences will be entirely the responsibility of the DRV.

d. Lodge should of course be prepared to meet the argument that these actions are a justified response to our own military pressures in recent months, and perhaps—it would be argued—particularly since January 20. Here the line should be to state frankly that what we cannot accept, and made clear in October that we would not accept, are violations of the DMZ and indiscriminate attacks against the major cities. And there can be no question that the attacks now at issue have

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[4] Reference is to comments made by the President on March 4 at the White House where he discussed, among other subjects, the overall situation regarding the Vietnam war, the recent Communist offensive in Vietnam, probable U.S. responses to the offensive, possible new approaches to the Vietnam conflict, and the withdrawal of American troops. (*Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 179–194)

[5] Telegram 16522 to Paris, January 31, summarized what the United States had previously told North Vietnam about the consequences of major attacks on South Vietnamese cities. (National Archives, RG 59, A/IM Files: Lot 93 D 82, Paris Meetings, Outgoing, Jan. 1969)

been precisely the kind of attacks which we discussed with the DRV at great length in the period from July through October.

e. In addition, Lodge might say frankly that Xuan Thuy must be aware that a continuation of the shelling will make it very difficult to consider private talks.

f. As suggested in paragraph 5 of Paris 3268,[6] the reaction of American public opinion should certainly be brought to bear as fully as possible in support of the key element in the message.

g. Finally, Lodge should make clear that we do not intend to make the fact of the meeting public, nor do we intend to characterize the message that we have given.

6. Based on these guidelines, we would appreciate a full script from Paris as soon as possible tomorrow, for final review here. If any of the above presents difficulty, please let us know frankly and fully.

7. For purposes of Bunker's talk with Thieu, he may indicate that we are well aware of the possibility Thieu has raised in paragraph 2.B. of Saigon 4328[7]—that the other side may be seeking to exact a new quid pro quo from our side. You may assure him that we have no intention of moving in this direction. You may make clear that we fully appreciate the statesmanship with which Thieu has been approaching this whole issue. You should continue to present the matter in such a way as to discourage any official GVN request that would force our hand. Bunker should of course share this cable fully with Secretary Laird, and we would welcome additional comments.[8]

Rogers

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[6] In paragraph 5 of telegram 3268 from Paris, March 6, Lodge suggested that a private meeting with Xuan Thuy "might also give me the chance to explain that American public opinion, though anxious for peace, is outraged by these indiscriminate shellings of population centers in defiance of the understanding which brought about the total cessation of bombing of the North." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 187, Paris Cables, Vol. III, Paris Meetings/Nodis and Nodis/Plus, April–May 1969)

[7] Not found.

[8] In a telephone conversation on March 8 at 10:10 a.m., Kissinger told Haldeman that "Packard went thru the roof" when he learned that morning that retaliation had been cancelled. Kissinger told Haldeman that "Packard feels very strongly that we are making Laird the fall guy; that we are looking terribly weak; that it is not such a big thing to do; that after the next attack it will be too little." Although "the Pres has heard all the arguments," Kissinger admitted that the President should know how Packard felt. He asked Haldeman to tell Nixon. Haldeman asked Kissinger, "Does the President know how the sides are drawn? In other words, the only opposition is Rogers—the rest of you are in agreement to go ahead?" Kissinger stated: "I can see some merit in Rogers' argument," but what was really important was "would the war be wound up in 15 months?" Kissinger concluded by stating that "My feeling is we ought to consider where we will be a year from now, rather than next week. In terms of immediate reaction, there is no question that Rogers is right, but we can let it slip for a week." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 359, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

31. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State[1]

Paris, March 8, 1969, 1920Z.

3381/Delto 1449. *Saigon:* Deliver at opening of business.

Subject: Summary Report—Meeting with Xuan Thuy, March 8.[2]

1. Accompanied by Ambassador Walsh, I met for two hours afternoon March 8 with Xuan Thuy at DRV house in Choisy. With Thuy were Lau, Vy and three staffers. Habib, Negroponte and Engel were also present.

2. I opened by reading the prepared statement as revised in accordance with Department's instructions.[3] Thuy began his response with a brief description of the origins of the war in Vietnam in accordance with usual DRV line, going back to the 1954 Accords, US support of Diem, expansion of US military presence in South Vietnam, and US responsibility for aggression.

3. He said that following total cessation of bombing of North Vietnam, US moved to try to settle the Vietnam problem from a position of strength. It wanted to de-Americanize the war, it strengthened the South Vietnamese Army, increased the number of US and Allied troops, it expanded its sweeps in Vietnam, and used B–52's to bomb indiscriminately in South Vietnam.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 187, Paris Cables, Vol. III. Secret; Flash; Nodis; Paris Meetings; Plus. Repeated to Saigon.

[2] In a March 8 memorandum to Kissinger, Haig summarized the Lodge–Thuy meeting and relayed the following observation by Lodge: "1. The meeting had been extremely useful in that the NVN did accept the U.S. protest. 2. At the end, Lodge spoke informally to Thuy using language, which reflected his concern that the war was continuing, and that it applied punishment on the Vietnamese people. Lodge stated Thuy nodded in full agreement. 3. Lodge believes that we should wait and see whether we are to get a reply to our complaint, whether it be with words or rockets over the weekend, or if there will be no reaction." (Ibid., Box 182, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous, Vol. II, 2/3–69)

[3] In telegram 3300 from Paris, March 7, Lodge outlined his plan to review with Xuan Thuy previous discussions from June of 1968 to the present between North Vietnamese and U.S. representatives in Paris on requirements for serious and productive negotiations for a peaceful settlement and the maintenance of the cessation of the bombing. In telegram 036359 to Paris, March 8, the Department and White House concurred with Lodge's proposed presentation with revisions. (Both ibid., President's Trip Files, Box 489, Dobrynin/HAK 1969 [Part 2]) An undated memorandum entitled, "Background on Lodge/Thuy Meeting of March 8" characterized the revisions as "centered on State's desire to commit us *now* to private talks and to make other major changes in our negotiating strategy." According to the memorandum, the White House wished "to enter into private talks by stating that private talks cannot take place if the shellings continue. Other changes were suggested both by the White House and State to make clear we were not prepared for early open-ended private talks, particularly on political issues and mutual de-escalation." (Ibid.)

4. He then said the US also continued to infringe on the sovereignty and security of the DRV after the cessation of bombing. He mentioned reconnaissance missions over North Vietnam, bombing in North Vietnam, and shelling by warships.

5. He referred to US statements about tacit understandings on the cessation of bombing and repeated, in standard terms, DRV position that cessation of bombing was unconditional, citing official statements by Hanoi spokesmen in November and his own statements since then. He claimed that US had violated its own pledges on the cessation of bombing by its actions in the North.

6. Thuy then, in general terms, referred to statements that he had made at the plenary sessions. He spoke in derogatory terms of what he called the "warlike Saigon administration" which he said stood in the way of a peaceful settlement. He said that the way to settle the Vietnamese problem had been laid out in the DRV's four points[4] and the NLF's five points.[5] He wished today to emphasize three points: a) the US must withdraw unconditionally from South Vietnam; b) the US should cease sustaining the present administration of Saigon, because no settlement will be possible as long as that administration was in power; c) if the US is really interested in settling the Vietnam problem, it would have to speak seriously with the NLF, without which there could not be a solution in Vietnam.

7. Thuy summed up by referring again to his general statements in the plenary sessions and said that he wanted to repeat that the DRV had goodwill and serious intent. They really want to come to a peaceful settlement, but peace must be associated with Vietnamese independence and freedom. He closed with a usual peroration about the importance of goodwill and serious intent on both sides.

8. In rebuttal I said that I did not accept his views of the past history and origins of the war. Our views on the question of aggression and on the question of the legality of the Government of Vietnam were well known. They are a matter of record, and I had not come today for

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[4] On April 8, 1965, Pham Van Dong, Premier of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, addressed the United National Assembly in Hanoi and stated the readiness of the North Vietnamese to negotiate a Vietnam settlement based on the recognition of four points. For these points, see *Foreign Relations,* 1964–1968, vol. II, Document 245; or *American Foreign Policy, Current Documents, 1965,* pp. 852–853.

[5] On March 22 the Chairman of the Central Committee of the NLF (Nguyen Huu Tho) issued at a news conference a 5-point statement dedicating the NLF to driving the United States out of Vietnam as a preliminary to the liberation of the South and reunification of the country. (Ibid., p. 852) The NLF called for the U.S. to: 1) cease their aggression; 2) withdraw from South Vietnam; 3) stop their attacks against the DRV; 4) respect and implement the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam; and 5) allow the Vietnamese people to solve their own problems without any foreign intervention. (*United States-Vietnam Relations 1945–1967 (Pentagon Papers),* Book 12 of 12, p. 101)

that purpose. I then commented on some of the specific points that he had raised by reading each of the rebuttal statements which had been prepared in advance. They were all applicable.

9. I repeated our views on the necessity for observing the understandings with respect to the DMZ and the indiscriminate shelling of cities. I requested that Thuy consider my remarks carefully and report them to his government. I closed by suggesting, in accordance with my instructions, that the fact and content of these meetings not be made public.

10. Thuy made a brief statement, repeating basically what he had said previously. Thuy agreed to consider my statements and report them to his government and asked me to do the same with his remarks. He agreed that this meeting would not be made known publicly.

11. We adjourned and had a cup of tea, during which conversation was totally non-substantive.

12. I would characterize this first meeting with Thuy as businesslike with a correct atmosphere. It was apparent that Thuy wished to use this occasion for a brief but nevertheless comprehensive exposition of standard DRV positions on the negotiations. He clearly left the door open for further meetings between us.

13. Full report follows.[6]

Lodge

[6] The full report of this meeting is in telegram 3384 from Paris, March 9. (National Archives, RG 59, East Asia Bureau, Office of Asian Communist Affairs Files: Lot 70 D 47, Incoming from Paris and Saigon, March 1–31, 1969)

32. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, March 8, 1969, 10 a.m.

SUBJECT

Viet Nam

PARTICIPANTS

Anatoliy F. Dobrynin, Soviet Ambassador
The Secretary
Malcom Toon, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary

[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET S. Secret; Nodis. Drafted by Toon. This memorandum is part II of IV.

The Secretary told Dobrynin that we hope soon to resume private talks with the Soviets on Viet Nam. Meanwhile, he felt Dobrynin should know that the continued rocket bombardment of cities in South Viet Nam was creating serious problems for us. Indiscriminate attacks on the population centers in South Viet Nam had deeply angered our public opinion and it was felt that these attacks represented a violation of the understanding which had been reached by the previous Administration with the North Vietnamese in connection with cessation of bombing of North Viet Nam.

Dobrynin said that the North Vietnamese have indicated both privately to the Soviets and in their public statements that their rocket attacks are in retaliation for increased military action in South Viet Nam. In the first place, the North Vietnamese maintain that B–52 raids have resulted in considerable civilian casualties. Secondly, they point out that general military activity in South Viet Nam has increased. Beyond this, the North Vietnamese are dissatisfied with our posture in Paris. They have informed the Soviets that we completely ignore the National Liberation Front in Paris and that we insist on discussing only military questions with the North Vietnamese, maintaining that political questions are to be decided by the South Vietnamese only.

The Secretary pointed out that B–52 raids may result in some civilian casualties but it is clear that the raids are aimed at purely military targets. The rocket attacks, on the other hand, are deliberately aimed at population centers. There is no justification for equating the two. Dobrynin demurred, pointing out that rocket attacks are probably directed at specific military targets. The Secretary said there was no evidence of this, and our information was that the attacks were aimed at heavily populated centers.

The Secretary reiterated his concern at the continuation of these attacks and wished Dobrynin to know that the North Vietnamese were miscalculating if they felt that this would soften the American position. The result would be just the opposite. With regard to the talks in Paris, the Secretary saw no reason why all questions could not be discussed by the four participating parties in private sessions. The NLF, of course, insists on talking privately with the United States, but this is something we are not prepared to do.

Dobrynin asked if we had made this position clear in Paris. His understanding was that until now we had insisted on discussing only military questions with the North Vietnamese and taken the position that political matters were the proper subject of discussion with the South Vietnamese and not the U.S.

The Secretary made clear that our only reservation was with private talks between ourselves and the NLF. He saw no reason why all issues, political and military, could not be discussed by all participants at some appropriate time.

Dobrynin said that he felt this represented an important change in the U.S. position and that he would report this immediately to Moscow.

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33. Editorial Note

On March 8, 1969, at 7:10 p.m., Henry Kissinger spoke on the telephone with President Nixon, who was in Key Biscayne, Florida, about recent developments relating to Vietnam including the decision not to retaliate for North Vietnamese attacks on South Vietnamese cities, the option of engaging in private talks with the North Vietnamese, and Secretary of State William Rogers' discussion with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin. (See Document 32.) Kissinger reported that Packard was very disturbed about Secretary of State "Rogers' action of today." The President stated that, "We cannot have this thing running in every direction!" Kissinger suggested it was a "question of judgment. I don't believe we are not making progress because the other side doubts our sincerity." Nixon stated that he thought he made that clear when he spoke with Lodge and Habib in Paris in early March. The discussion then switched to U.S.-Soviet relations, but the President returned to the issue of private talks with the North Vietnamese in Paris. Kissinger suggested that, "If you hit Cambodia [Menu bombing] after the private talks start it can break them, and you will be accused of insincerity." Kissinger advised: "Hit them and then ask for private talks." The President asked if Packard agreed with that advice. Kissinger responded that he did, "but doesn't feel confident about it. Rogers feels it would be bad for negotiations." Kissinger and the President then discussed Rogers' volunteering four-party talks to Dobrynin. Kissinger stated, "We weren't saying we didn't want to discuss political questions. I think, myself, we would have wound up, in this first testing period, in a weak position in a tough sequence of events. My concern is they will now feel free to press us along in these private talks." Nixon responded, "We can't be boxed in where we are at the mercy of the fact that we can't hit the north and we can't have private talks. We will have no bargaining position." Kissinger stated that after 4 weeks of pressing publicly for military and political talks, the North Vietnamese had achieved that and "they can go to private talks and string them out." Nixon suggested that Kissinger "can cut that down by making clear to the Soviets and I will say so in my press conference, there will be no compromise on this coalition government." Kissinger suggested that, "I don't believe it will be easy for you to attack Cambodia while

private talks are going on and not much is being done in South Vietnam." Nixon replied that, "My point is if, while the private talks are going on and they are kicking us, we are going to do something." Nixon and Kissinger returned to the Rogers–Dobrynin conversation. Nixon stated that, "There is not going to be any de-escalation. State has nothing to do with that. We are just going to keep giving word to Wheeler to knock hell out of them." Kissinger suggested that, "If they hit us again, we must refuse to have private talks for another week." The President stated: "We cannot tolerate one more of these without hitting back. We have already warned them. Presumably they have stopped. If they hit us again, we hit them with no warning. That is the way we are going to do it. I can't tolerate argument from Rogers on this. You warn once. However, if they don't hit us, we are screwed." Kissinger again suggested waiting at least a week before initiating private talks with the North Vietnamese in Paris "to see how they behave." The President concluded the conversation by stating: "In the future, we will have to keep more close control. I think that Bill [Rogers] did not realize the tremendous significance of tying political with military matters. We have to start talking about Viet Nam outside of the NSC—just among the President, Kissinger, Rogers and Laird—to bring up such things as this political matter to educate people. If Bill had been to Vietnam, he would not have done this." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 359, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

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34. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 8, 1969.

SUBJECT

Reflections on De-escalation

It has become obvious that once private talks start, de-escalation will be high on the agenda. Zorin referred to a "promise" made by

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 956, Haig Chronological Files, March 1969 [2 of 2]. Top Secret; Sensitive. This memorandum was not initialed, but an attached March 11 memorandum from Haig to Sneider indicates the President saw it.

Harriman which I believe to be true. Hanoi has been putting it out in newspapers—see, for example, Joe Kraft's column.[2]

The question then becomes: what is being de-escalated? What will be the impact?

De-escalation can come about in one of two ways: tacit or formal; that is to say, it can occur de facto or by agreement. However it might take place, it would bring about a major change in the situation and thus requires careful assessment.

De-escalation must be seen in the light of our overall strategy. The component of the Communist forces which gave the war its distinguishing characteristic has been the guerrilla forces. These have enabled Hanoi and the VC to prevent the consolidation of governmental authority, to move large forces unobserved and to create a general climate of insecurity.

When American forces appeared in the war, they were used mainly to fight North Vietnamese main force units. I have always considered this to be a strategic error, though the choice was not entirely up to us. Hanoi was determined to use its forces the way a bullfighter uses his cape: to keep us lunging in strategically unproductive areas and to prevent us from grinding down the guerrilla forces.

In recent months, many main force units have been withdrawn into Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam—either because they were forced or because they wish to preserve these forces for the post-war period. This has enabled us to devote—for the first time in the war—substantial forces to anti-guerrilla action. If we now de-escalate, Hanoi will get for nothing what it has had to pay heavy, perhaps excessive casualties to obtain: the effective neutralization of U.S. forces with respect to the Communist infrastructure.

Our military effort leaves a great deal to be desired, but it remains one of our few bargaining weapons.

The impact of de-escalation on the two sides would be highly asymmetrical. The guerrillas operate by terror or assassination; our side requires massive military effort. The opponent can achieve a major impact by occasional actions well below the threshold of violation; no corresponding actions are available to us.

You will be told that we can always start military operations again. In fact, the recent Communist offensive has shown that obtaining clear criteria as to what constitutes a violation is very complicated. Every difficulty we have had in deciding whether the bombing halt "understanding" had been violated will be compounded in the case of

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[2] Reference is to Joseph Kraft's syndicated column of March 6 entitled, "Unless Nixon Acts on Talks, He May Miss Chance for Peace."

de-escalation. How is one to construe the murder, kidnapping or intimidation of selected South Vietnamese officials? Will we even know who did it?

Violation criteria would probably be assessed in terms of major military operations of the type U.S. and Allied forces are now conducting in South Vietnam. These operations have been designed to provide a military shield for the GVN which enables them, with our assistance, to progress in the pacification area through the establishment of law and order and security for the populace. Conversely, it appears that the enemy has concluded that major military confrontations are no longer to their advantage. Their best hope for success rests with increased emphasis on terror and assassination, while preserving their main force elements as a psychological threat and for direct action after U.S. withdrawal. Thus, de-escalation would amount to a self-imposed defusing of our most important asset and the simultaneous enhancement of this most important asset—terrorism. We would, in effect, be tying the hands of our forces in Vietnam.

The related problems associated with maintaining a force level of 500,000-plus combat troops lacking an active combat mission could also prove troublesome. Unquestionably, pressures would build to bring our troops home. It would be very difficult to counter these demands if the level of military activity in Vietnam did not require their presence. An additional problem area would be the constructive employment of our forces in Vietnam during a period when military activity had dropped off substantially or completely. A rash of incidents with the South Vietnamese populations might occur which paralleled our experiences in Europe after World War II when an unbusy occupation Army soon found itself in uneasy economic and social competition with the populace with whom they were stationed.

All this suggests that we should not agree to de-escalate now—all the more so if you plan to withdraw some forces in a few months. Such a measure will be politically meaningful *only* if it is taken as the result of a choice—not as the inevitable corollary of under-utilized forces.

All this, of course, must be considered as part of an overall "game-plan" on which I am now working.

35. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 10, 1969.

SUBJECT

Dobrynin–Rogers Conversation on the Paris Negotiations

Secretary Rogers has suggested to Ambassador Dobrynin that we are now prepared to enter into private talks with North Vietnam on military issues and into private four-party talks on political issues.[2] This proposal, if implemented, would represent a major change in U.S. policy with serious consequences both for our posture at the Paris peace negotiations and our relations with South Vietnam.

Since January 20, we have undertaken a basic shift in our policy. We have stated that the political future of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese themselves. We have urged direct contacts between Saigon and the NLF—most notably in your talks with Ky when you assured him that we would not talk with the NLF.[3] We have worked to reestablish confidence in our relations with Saigon and assured them that we would take no steps without consulting.

We have combined heavy military pressure with a deliberate pace in Paris. We have specifically refrained from taking the initiative on opening private talks and have made clear that when such talks were possible we would talk only to the NVN and only about mutual withdrawal.

This policy was designed to avoid an impression of undo anxiety which might tempt Hanoi to draw out the negotiations in the belief that we could be outlasted and would later make concessions because of domestic political pressures. Our intention was first to discuss the issue of mutual withdrawal on which our bargaining position was the strongest. We hoped to delay talking about political issues relating to South Vietnam since such discussions could only lead to acrimony with the South—a basic objective of Hanoi. Saigon in any talks on political matters is likely to appear to be obstinate and we will be under great pressure to force the GVN not to prevent successful negotiations.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/HAK 1969 [Part 2]. Top Secret. The memorandum is not initialed. Kissinger elaborates on his concerns about Rogers' initiative and Nixon's "philosophical" reaction to it in *White House Years,* pp. 263–264. Haldeman also recounts Kissinger's distress. (Haldeman Diary, *Multimedia Edition,* March 9, 1969)

[2] See Document 32.

[3] See Document 28.

There are signs that this strategy is evolving successfully. Hanoi has indicated a willingness to engage in private discussions which would at least include military questions. This was reflected in a Vance/Lao conversation[4] and in several recent conversations with Soviet officials. The GVN has inaugurated private contacts with the NVN and the NLF. Our relations with Saigon have greatly improved and we are just beginning to establish full mutual confidence as reflected in your conversation with Ky and their failure to press hard for retaliation after the Saigon shelling.

We have adhered to this strategy in responding to the rocketing of Saigon. Our instructions to Ambassador Lodge left open the possibility of a military response, but made clear that we should not offer private talks and, if Hanoi proposed them, reply that we would not consider private talks if the rocketing continued.

Hanoi's strategy was to get us: (1) to engage in talks about political subjects, (2) to talk with the NLF, and (3) get us into talks on de-escalation.

Secretary Rogers, in his discussion with Ambassador Dobrynin on March 8, gave Hanoi the first 2 of its 3 objectives, did not rebut the third and did so without getting anything in return. This discussion thus seriously cut across our strategy by:

(1) proposing private talks *now,*
(2) proposing *political* talks including *four powers,*
(3) proposing the *U.S. talk to the NLF,*
(4) not insisting on an end to shelling as a precondition for private talks,
(5) not consulting first with the GVN.

A major consequence of the Rogers/Dobrynin conversation is therefore to make it difficult to resist early private talks with the NVN. By lobbing a few shells into Saigon, Hanoi has induced us to change our position on the same day that Lodge was putting our original position to Thuy. If the GVN learns of the conversation, it will seriously undercut our reasonably successful effort to establish a relationship of confidence with the GVN.

If we went ahead with the Rogers proposal, the consequences will be even more serious. Our efforts to persuade the GVN to enter four power talks runs the risk of provoking a major confrontation with Saigon and could lead to a breakdown of the Paris talks. Four-power talks would add to the NLF's prestige and could undercut the feasibility of bilateral GVN/NLF talks. We would be directly involved in

[4] It is not clear to which Vance–Lau conversation Kissinger is referring.

negotiating a political settlement and could find ourselves in the unenviable position of having to put pressure on the GVN for political concession in four-party meetings.

I therefore propose the following remedial steps:

A. We should not repeat the offer to engage in four-power private talks on political and military matters.

B. After a suitable interval, if the shelling ceased, we would move into bilateral private talks on military withdrawal.

C. Because both sides have traditionally confirmed private messages with public statements, we could with great effect, in this case, do the reverse:

1. At the next Paris session, Lodge's presentation should be devoted entirely to spelling out our desire to discuss mutual withdrawal and to reiterating our belief that the political future of the South is best left to the South Vietnamese.

2. The President or a high ranking State Department official should repeat the same message at a press conference or in a speech.

D. If the Dobrynin communication follows the standard pattern, Moscow will talk to Hanoi. Then the Soviets will come back to us indicating that if we put this proposal to Hanoi, progress will result.

E. When the Soviets come back, we cannot completely withdraw from the position we have taken but we can tell the Soviets the following:

1. Private talks cannot occur unless we have some confidence that indiscriminate attacks on cities will cease.

2. If Hanoi is interested in private talks on a two- or four-participant basis, it should approach the U.S. directly.

3. With regard to discussions on political issues in which the four participants will be present, we envisage that their success will be contingent upon preliminary bilateral talks on mutual withdrawal between Hanoi and ourselves, and discussions among the South Vietnamese on political matters. Paris would take this same position if the issue is raised by Hanoi.

F. We should not now inform Saigon of this episode.

36. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 12, 1969.

SUBJECT

Instructions for Private Talks at the Paris Negotiations on Vietnam

Following his meeting with you in Paris, Ambassador Lodge has submitted a proposal setting forth the views of the negotiating team on the timing and content of private talks with the North Vietnamese (Tab A).[2]

Lodge suggests that we try to schedule a meeting with the DRV as soon as we are convinced the circumstances are right. The meetings should be bilateral, but if the DRV is absolutely adamant on dragging in the NLF, we should try to get the GVN to agree to private four-party meetings.

Lodge would make discussions on mutual withdrawal the central subject of the private sessions, while insisting that the question of political settlement be handled by the GVN and the NLF. Lodge proposes full consultation with the GVN prior to any meetings and emphasizes that we must try to get both the GVN and the DRV to keep the meetings secret. The purpose of the first sessions would be to get a dialogue started with the DRV. We would move slowly on scheduling subsequent meetings, carefully studying Hanoi's reaction at each point.

The State Department instructions cover the key questions requiring consultation with Thieu at this time. Some modifications in the State draft are suggested for your approval, however, partly to soften Bunker's instructions in raising the possibility of discussing four-party talks with Thieu. The major changes suggested are noted in the attached draft.[3] Briefly, they are as follows:

1. In para 2(b) we have deleted any reference in discussions with Thieu to our willingness to enter into quadrilateral private talks at this time.

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Kissinger Papers, Box TS–64, Memoranda to the President, 1969 February–April. Top Secret. A handwritten notation on the memorandum reads: "Pres ok'd 3/14/69".

[2] Attached at Tab A was telegram 3388 to Paris/Delto 1451, March 10.

[3] The attached draft with the revisions was sent as telegram 38736 to Saigon, February 13. (National Archives, RG 59, EAP/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 47, Outgoing to Paris and Saigon, 1–31 March 1969)

2. In para 2(d) we have suggested, and Secretary Rogers concurs, that the request for private meetings come in about seven days rather than as soon as possible.

3. Also in para 2(d) we have added a proviso for a warning to the DRV that further private sessions would be difficult if the shellings of major cities continue. We have also noted that we are considering how we should respond in this context to the rocketing of Hue.

4. In para 4, we have elaborated on the instructions, underscoring that we wish a measured pace in the talks, over the next few months which will not reflect any anxiety on our part.

5. In para 5 we have modified the judgment that Hanoi is clearly ready for bilateral discussions, indicating we think there is only about a 50/50 chance of this at present. This is particularly true in the light of my talk with Dobrynin this evening.[4]

6. In para 6 we have deleted mention of a full statement of position on withdrawal, since that will probably not be hammered out in time. We are scheduling an NSC discussion on our withdrawal position.[5]

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[4] Kissinger is apparently referring to his discussion with Dobrynin, the evening of March 11. On March 19 Kissinger sent Nixon a memorandum summarizing that discussion, which was held at the Soviet Embassy in Washington. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/HAK, 1969, [Part 2])

[5] On March 14 at 6:40 p.m., Kissinger and Rogers discussed private talks in Paris. According to notes of the discussion, Kissinger stated: "President has talked to K a number of times this week about negotiating procedures. . . . His basic concern is that we start on a bilateral basis and not a quadrilateral basis. Then if the GVN asks for them that would be an ideal way to broaden them. K said he had not shown President Lodge cable [see footnote 2 above] because he did not want to get him upset. R said he is very anxious to get started on these talks—he has difficulty in seeing why we should waste more time in way we get started. K said his impression that we were going to start next week—is he wrong?. . . R said he does not see how we can logically take the position we will not talk in private with the same group and with the same arrangements that we do in public. K said he thinks there would be concern about giving away ahead of time before they even asked for it." After more discussion, much of it reiterating these basic viewpoints, Rogers agreed to try to get the private talks started bilaterally, but if that proved impossible he would go to four-party discussions. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 359, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) Nixon and Kissinger's discussions about the issue of bilateral or quadrilateral private talks are in notes of a telephone conversation, March 11, approximately 10 p.m. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin–HAK, 1969, [Part 2])

37. Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler) to Secretary of Defense Laird[1]

CM–4001–69 Washington, March 12, 1969.

SUBJECT

Observations and Recommendations Concerning the Military Situation in Southeast Asia

1. This memorandum is designed to set forth in summary fashion my impression of the current situation in South Vietnam, to include the effect of the enemy attacks launched in recent days, and the military problems posed General Abrams by the continuing enemy buildup in the DMZ area, Laos and Cambodia. Also presented are my views concerning military actions which we should take. Since this report is deliberately in summary form, I will not attempt documentation from operational and intelligence sources; such supporting detail is readily available.

2. The current series of enemy attacks has, to date, achieved no results of military significance. Contrary to effects of the Tet offensive of 1968, the enemy has gained little or nothing psychologically. Indeed, I was surprised at the calmness displayed by President Thieu, Prime Minister Huong and General Vien, Chief of the Vietnamese Joint General Staff, regarding the attacks by fire (ABF) launched by the enemy against Saigon and DaNang and, most recently, against Hue. Nevertheless, I think it clear that, if rocket attacks (even in the small numbers employed to date) continue against major population centers, an appropriate reaction must be undertaken. I make this judgment based on two factors: first, the GVN will be under great pressure to retaliate in kind; and, second, beyond a certain point U.S. restraint will be interpreted as confirming North Vietnamese contentions that our bombing halt was "unconditional," and that the U.S. lied to the GVN regarding the circumstances leading to the cessation of acts of force against North Vietnam. I understand that the Joint Chiefs of Staff have forwarded a package of appropriate retaliatory actions to Mr. Packard. (Apropos of retaliatory actions, you will recall Vice President Ky's assertion that the Vietnamese Air Force could retaliate with attacks

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, OASD/ISA Files, FRC 330 75–0013, Vietnam Task Force, Joint Staff Memos. Top Secret; Sensitive. Laird sent this memorandum to Nixon on March 13, indicating that it contained Wheeler's observations and recommendations of the trip he and Laird made to Vietnam, March 5–12. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 70, Vietnam Subject Files, Secretary Laird's Trip to S. Vietnam, March 5–12, 1969) See Document 38 for Laird's impressions.

against Hanoi. This is nonsense. However, at my request General George Brown, Commander, Seventh Air Force, drew up a plan for an attack against military facilities in the vicinity of Dong Hoi. Under this concept the South Vietnamese forces would provide the strike aircraft; U.S. forces would provide support in the areas of MIG cap, Sam and flak suppression, ECM, photo reconnaissance, etc. I consider that this plan has a certain political and military attractiveness.)

3. All sources, U.S. and Vietnamese, confirm that the pacification effort has been very little affected by current enemy actions. Indeed, there is evidence that, spurred by President Thieu's personal interest, progress continues in this key program. The Phoenix attacks on the VC infrastructure continue successfully. The Hoi Chanhs (enemy defectors) are on the rise. The RVNAF, including RF & PF, is steadily improving in effectiveness; they can be expected over time to assume more of the burden.

4. Free World forces continue to hold the initiative *within* SVN. The enemy continues to have the capability to mount offensive "surges" periodically. However, he can do so only at the expense of heavy personnel losses when he debouches from his sanctuaries, weeks and months of preparation of the battle area, and the expenditure of laboriously assembled logistic resources. Moreover, his tactical concepts require that he preposition supplies along his routes of advance to the battle, thus exposing them to capture or destruction. As General Abrams expresses it, the VC/NVA do not base their operations on a logistic "tail" as do other armies but on a logistic "nose."

5. The most striking and dangerous situations are comprised of the enemy troop and logistic build-ups in the DMZ area, in the panhandle of Laos and in Cambodia.

a. Ten (10) NVA regiments are deployed just north of, within and south of the DMZ. Moreover, intelligence now indicates that an additional NVA division may well be deployed in this same area. Moreover, the enemy has, since 1 November 1968, established an ample logistic base contiguous to the DMZ with which to support forces of the above magnitude in offensive operations. Also, there is quite convincing evidence that the enemy is infiltrating through the DMZ.

b. The enemy has been urgently stocking his base areas in the panhandle of Laos in order to be logistically prepared for the onset of the rainy season in that area. Normally, the monsoon will switch about four to six weeks hence. The immense quantities of material and supplies seized or destroyed during the recent operation in the A Shau valley are, I think, ample proof that enemy base areas situated deeper and further to the north in Laos represent lucrative targets for pre-emptive action by our ground and air forces. As an illustration, using 1968 rates of enemy ammunition expenditure and friendly casualties the caches

found in the A Shau valley would have provided the enemy the capability of inflicting 7,658 friendly KIA and 24,471 friendly WIA.

c. By now, I think that all of us recognize the importance to the enemy and the threat to our forces posed by the Cambodian sanctuary base areas. In actuality, it is those base areas from which the threat to Saigon originates and is sustained. They, and their counterparts in Laos and contiguous to the DMZ, are also the prime cause of U.S. casualties.

6. I have reached the following conclusions and, accordingly, submit the recommendations which follow:

a. Enemy base areas provide the human and material means to inflict casualties on U.S. forces and those of our allies. If these base areas are destroyed or neutralized, friendly casualties will automatically decrease.

b. The next rocket attack(s) on Saigon, Hue or Da Nang must be followed by an appropriate response by us. Preferably our response should take the form of naval and/or air attacks against targets in North Vietnam.

c. General Abrams should be authorized immediately to operate offensively in the southern DMZ in order to preempt enemy build-up in and use of that area.

d. General Abrams should be tasked for plans to attack and destroy, by air and ground action (raids in force) critical enemy base areas in Laos in order to deplete enemy logistic resources during the rainy season in Laos.

e. General Abrams should be tasked for plans to destroy by air and ground action (raids in force) enemy Cambodian sanctuary base areas.

Earle G. Wheeler

38. Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 13, 1969.

SUBJECT

Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, March 5–12, 1969

At your direction, I have now spent five days reviewing, with General Wheeler, the military situation in Vietnam. Two of these days were spent in consultations with Ambassador Bunker, Generals Abrams and Goodpaster and their colleagues, and South Vietnamese leaders, including President Thieu, Vice President Ky and Prime Minister Huong. Two other days in South Vietnam were spent in the field. I was able to visit I Corps, III Corps and IV Corps, the areas where the major part of the current military activity is taking place. In the field I saw elements of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. Finally, I spent a day-and-a-half at CINCPAC headquarters in Hawaii, discussing with Admiral McCain and his staff their views on the current status of affairs in Southeast Asia.

General Wheeler and Assistant Secretary Froehlke were in Thailand for one day and will submit separately their observations about the situation there. General Wheeler has also prepared a report for you on his views on certain key Vietnam issues.[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 70, Vietnam Subject Files, Secretary Laird's Trip to S. Vietnam, March 5–12, 1969. Secret; Sensitive. Laird and Wheeler arrived in Saigon on March 6 to assess the Vietnam situation. According to a February 20 telegram from Laird to Bunker and W. Abrams, Laird and Wheeler were to hold frank discussions on the state of enemy capabilities, intentions, and strategies; sanctuary issues in Cambodia and Laos; the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces modernization and expansion program; the pacification program; and the ramifications and impact of U.S. force reductions. Laird also proposed a day and a half of field visits to I Corps, and to major U.S. and GVN units in III and IV Corps. (Washington National Records Center, Secretary Laird Files: FRC 330 70 D 0142, Box 2, Folder #13) On March 8 Laird, Wheeler, Bunker, and Berger met with Thieu, Ky, and other Vietnamese officials. (Memorandum of conversation, March 8; ibid.) In a March 29 memorandum to Laird, Kissinger wrote: "the President has reviewed both your and General Wheeler's reports resulting from your recent trip to South Vietnam. The reports were extremely valuable in preparing the President for the National Security Council meeting on March 28th, and will be retained here for further use in relations to ongoing plans associated with Vietnam." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 70, Vietnam Subject Files, Secretary Laird's Trip to S. Vietnam, March 5–12, 1969)

[2] Document 37.

In this report I will make, first, some general observations. Thereafter, I will review in somewhat more detail:

- The current military assessment, including the issue of retaliation for the recent military attacks and the shellings of major population centers.
- The status of our forces, specifically, whether General Abrams has everything that he needs in men and equipment to insure the maximum safety and security of our personnel.
- The present readiness and progress of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF).
- The plans for withdrawal of American forces.
- Termination Day ("T" Day) Planning.

Finally, I shall draw some conclusions and make some recommendations.

General Observations

The trip I just completed to South Vietnam constituted the initial opportunity anyone from the new Administration has had to look firsthand at the military situation there. The trip was, therefore, in many respects a beginning. Both practically and symbolically, it was the beginning of a concerted and dedicated attempt by your Defense leadership to come to grips with the complexities and practicalities of the Southeast Asia conflict. The essential purpose of this aspect of the trip was to determine how we could achieve our objectives in Southeast Asia, consistent with our vital national interests.

But my presence in South Vietnam constituted a beginning, too, for our military leadership there. Just as it was their duty to provide for me the picture of what is happening in Southeast Asia, it was my duty to provide for them the realities of the situation in the United States. Hopefully, each of us accomplished our task.

In attempting to make the determination about how we could achieve our objectives, I used four basic assumptions:

1. No breakthrough in Paris is likely in the near future which will achieve a political resolution of the conflict.
2. We will not escalate beyond the limited objective of attempting to insure for the South Vietnamese people the right to determine their own political and economic institutions.
3. Self-determination requires a capability for sustained self-defense and self-reliance.
4. The North Vietnamese will not voluntarily abandon their aim to secure political control of South Vietnam.

The uniform view of U.S. civilian and military leaders in Vietnam, of the CINCPAC staff, and of the GVN leadership is that we now have and can retain sufficient military strength to preclude the enemy from achieving any kind of military verdict in South Vietnam. At the same

time, considering the restrictions with which we are compelled to operate in seeking our limited objectives, none of these men forecasts a military victory for U.S. and allied forces within the foreseeable future.

That, in essence, is what our military leaders in South Vietnam told me. I believe of equal importance is what I conveyed to them. In the sense that beginnings constitute breaks with the past, I emphasized that the American people expect the new Administration to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion. The people will not be satisfied with less. A satisfactory conclusion, I emphasized, means to most Americans the eventual disengagement of American men from combat.

Again, in the context of beginnings and breaking with the past, I told our people your Administration is not being held responsible for past decisions. The decisions which committed more than half-a-million troops, nearly $100 billion of resources, and more than 33,000 American lives are behind us. They represent "sunk" costs.

The decisions and the costs the American people and the new Administration are interested in, I stressed, are those in the future. Accordingly, I told our leaders in South Vietnam the key factor in sustaining the support of the American people is to find the means by which the burden of combat may promptly, and methodically, be shifted to the South Vietnamese. This must be done while continuing to insure the safety and security of our own and allied forces and while working towards the objective of self-determination for the South Vietnamese. These aims, I pointed out, are not in conflict. They can, and must, be attained as a package. That is the challenge posed for and by the new Administration.

The Current Military Assessment

Since the last week in February, the enemy forces have been engaged in a new offensive in South Vietnam. This has consisted primarily of attacks by fire against American and Allied military bases. In addition, there has been a troubling frequency of attacks on the civilian population, including rocket attacks on Saigon, Danang and Hue. These attacks are clearly inconsistent with the understandings that provided the reported basis on which the bombing of North Vietnamese territory was stopped.

From the military standpoint, the current offensive appears to be destined for failure. Ambassador Bunker, General Abrams, our commanders in the field, and the leaders of the Government of Vietnam are in unanimous accord that the enemy's efforts will gain no territory, nor will they bring about any permanent reduction in the level of pacification. The recently initiated enemy action has had little impact on the morale of the South Vietnamese people and their support for their Government. At the same time, this escalation of activity has increased

substantially the rate of U.S. and South Vietnamese casualties, and has brought into public question the validity of the assumptions which led to the elimination of the bombing of North Vietnam.

It would appear that the enemy's objectives are not primarily military, but rather are political and psychological. Perhaps most important is the enemy's desire to demonstrate that he retains the ability to control the level of the combat in South Vietnam. By so doing he probably hopes both to achieve greater negotiating strength in Paris and to increase the amount of disaffection within the United States. The enemy's goal appears to be that of producing pressure which will lead to an early and disorderly withdrawal of American forces. In the view of President Thieu, Hanoi also feels compelled to attempt to show its own military personnel and civilian population that the NVA/VC are in control of the situation in South Vietnam and have not entered into understandings with the U.S. in relation to the bombing halt. The MACV staff informed me that enemy attacks, since initiation of the current enemy offensive have been below the level of those of the Tet and May offensives in 1968, as have been the casualties on both sides.

Our military leaders in South Vietnam assured me that this offensive can and will be contained, but they also conceded the enemy's ability to conduct similar offensives in the future, at least on an intermittent basis. This continued capability on the part of the enemy derives from certain intractable factors in the Vietnamese situation. The forces of Hanoi and the NLF continue to be supplied with sophisticated equipment and weapons, such as 122 mm rockets, from Soviet and Communist China resources. In addition, the enemy forces are able to take refuge and sanctuary across the borders of Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam. The Laotian and Cambodian sanctuaries are of great importance in the enemy's ability to withstand our overwhelming superiority in mobility and fire power. Moreover, Cambodia has become increasingly important in the infiltration of supplies and men, and in the command and control of the enemy forces.

Consideration should be given to border area operations that will at least temporarily diminish the advantage to the enemy of our self-imposed geographical restrictions. Unless we are willing to expand greatly the geographic confines of the conflict, however, the availability of sanctuary areas for the enemy will continue to contribute to the impossibility of a final military solution.

Insofar as U.S. and allied military efforts are concerned, steady progress is uniformly reported. For example, in I Corps both General Cushman and General Stilwell cited significant advances in eliminating enemy influence, including the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI). General Cushman, however, informed me that an additional two years would be required before he could see the situation as being completely

in hand. Insofar as the VCI is concerned, Ambassador Colby, the Deputy for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), estimates that the anti-VCI program, the so-called "Phoenix" campaign, has eliminated perhaps 16 thousand of the 83 thousand estimated VCI. At the same time, he recognizes that these VCI losses have probably been replaced. A successful anti-infrastructure effort will thus require a substantially higher rate of attrition than has yet been realized.

Militarily, the situation in III Corps is coming more and more under control. General Abrams' tactics and precautions have virtually foreclosed the risks of significant enemy incursion into the capital city of Saigon. The mortar and rocket attacks have been infrequent and unimpressive in number. In IV Corps, as well, the military situation is steadily moving in a direction favorable to the Government of South Vietnam and the United States. But Major General Eckhardt, the senior U.S. Military Advisor in IV Corps, recognizes that the pacification effort is proceeding slowly in this traditional VC stronghold.

Similarly, the pacification effort has reached the point where more than 79 per cent of the South Vietnamese population is credited to the "relatively secure" category. This category includes so-called "A", "B", and "C" hamlets. The "C" category, which includes about 30 per cent of the population, is pivotal and subject to ready reversion to the "contested" classification. "A" hamlets remain relatively rare. There is none, for example, in the strategic area of III Corps immediately north of Saigon which I visited. Thus some appreciable VC influence continues to exist for the major share of South Vietnam's people.

The basic problem remains that of achieving permanent South Vietnamese governmental control over the country. Although Ambassador Bunker gives persuasive documentation of steady political growth by the Government of Vietnam, this progress is difficult to translate into nationwide security. Even greater national exertion will be necessary to bring GVN administrative and political structures into the villages and hamlets of South Vietnam. This would be a difficult task under peaceful circumstances. It is herculean while hostilities continue at the present level.

Substantial de-Americanization of the war is an indispensable precondition, it appears, to the healthy growth of indigenous political institutions. This thesis was highlighted in a comment made to me by the Senior Province Advisor assigned to Go Cong Province in the Delta. This advisor remarked that he sees his job as being "to put myself out of business as quickly as possible." We should all regard that as our job in Vietnam. This would be consistent with the attainment of U.S. objectives in this area.

In short, General Abrams has made remarkable progress in achieving a measure of military superiority throughout South Vietnam. The

pacification program, which must depend primarily and increasingly on South Vietnamese efforts, is also proceeding, though at a slower rate. But none of our officials, either military or civilian, is under any illusion that the battle in South Vietnam can be brought to a military conclusion within six months, a year or even several years. Options, over which we have little or no control, are available to the enemy for continuing the war almost indefinitely, although perhaps at a reduced intensity. Under these circumstances, and unless some change can be made in the relative contributions of U.S. and South Vietnamese forces, we are faced with an American killed-in-action rate which could run in excess of 100 a week, and at the enemy's initiative could be increased to multiples of that rate.

A matter that requires the closest scrutiny is the question of retaliation for the NVA/VC violations of the Paris understandings. Whatever the deliberate ambiguity of these misunderstandings, there can be no doubt that the rocket attacks on Saigon, Danang and Hue are completely inconsistent with the assumptions which underlie the bombing halt. We are, therefore, faced with the question of appropriate response to these indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population. Obviously, the question of retaliation, as well as its nature and extent, should be considered in the context of bringing us closer to our objectives in Southeast Asia and protecting our credibility. We should not be interested in merely "getting even," but rather in advancing vital U.S. interests.

These indiscriminate enemy attacks are not militarily significant. As of the preparation of this report, the attacks had not added in any substantially new way to the jeopardy of U.S. forces. The attacks, furthermore, have as yet done little to affect adversely the morale of the South Vietnamese public. In the view of President Thieu, they are designed primarily to improve the morale of the North Vietnamese by demonstrating a residual ability to control the level of the conflict in the south.

The last rocketing of Saigon occurred on the morning of Thursday, March 6. Since then, enemy rockets have been launched against the city of Hue. In my opinion, any further significant shelling or rocketing of Saigon, Danang, or Hue should bring about an appropriate response on our part. This leaves, of course, the key question as to what kind of response would be appropriate. In my conversation with President Thieu, he stated that it should be a wise and measured one, not disproportionate to the level of the enemy attacks. He also suggested that the response might be political or diplomatic, rather than military. As I see it, a response which would entail any extensive bombing of North Vietnam would yield as little militarily. Though it might demonstrate to the South Vietnamese our continued commitment to their cause, it

would serve to equate justifiable military activity on our part with unjustifiable and indiscriminate attacks on the enemy's part. It would lead to a renewal of the criticism from many factions within both the United States and the world community, and would tend to put us into the position vis-à-vis world and U.S. opinion in which the previous administration found itself just about a year ago.

As I indicated in a separate message to you on March 9,[3] I believe we stand to lose, on balance, if we are encouraged to actions which serve to equate military action on our part to indiscriminate terrorism on the enemy's part. I believe it would be reasonable to confine ourselves to consideration of political and diplomatic alternatives to the indiscriminate shellings. A temporary suspension of attendance at the plenary Paris sessions might be effective. If the North Vietnamese are eager for U.S. withdrawal and resolution of the conflict in SVN, such a temporary recess might be more of a burden on them than a military response. North Vietnam would be cast in the role of impeding progress to peace and would take the brunt of adverse world opinion.

To the extent further military action may be indicated against the enemy's current offensive, we should look for a response which would work to our advantage, either by securing some immediate military gain or by bringing us closer to genuine substantive discussions in Paris. A well-considered and effective operation against some enemy military target in the border areas might provide both an appropriate signal and some military benefit. I will be prepared to discuss this issue further with you privately and with the National Security Council.

Status of U.S. Forces—Men and Equipment

Under the superior leadership of General Abrams, our commanders and our men in the field exhibit the most heartening qualities of dedication and performance. They are confident of their ability to counter and throw back any enemy attack anywhere in South Vietnam. Our men are not only well led, but they are also well equipped and provided for. Not the least among the factors contributing to high morale among our forces is the realization that the most prompt and modern medical care is available. I had the opportunity personally to see how this medical care is being provided in one of the many American hospitals which exist throughout the country. I was assured by General Abrams that he needs nothing further in the way of men, equipment or facilities to insure the maximum safety and security for U.S. forces.

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[3] Reference is to a message from Laird to Nixon transmitted in MACV telegram 3049, March 9. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 68, Vietnam Subject Files, Communist Offensive, 22 February 1969)

A striking illustration of the complete adequacy of our military support can be seen in the comparative figures on air ordnance expenditures. In World War II, air ordnance utilized by the U.S. in the European and Mediterranean theaters amounted to 1.5 million tons. The Pacific theater accounted for 0.5 million tons. In the Korean War, the total expended by U.S. elements was 0.6 million tons. World War II and the Korean War together thus accounted for 2.6 million tons. By way of comparison, during the years 1966 through 1968, 2.8 million tons have already been expended in Southeast Asia.

Readiness and Progress of RVNAF

I recognize that the RVNAF modernization program had been designed to create an RVNAF capable of coping with insurgency that could remain if US/NVA forces withdrew. I was disappointed, though, by the relatively low rate of progress evidenced toward raising the RVNAF capability to assume more of the burden of the war.

In total, the regular, irregular, and police forces of South Vietnam now include over one million men. The arms and equipment furnished by the United States have increased in quantity and quality. I am recommending that we advance our plans and furnish additional items needed to achieve full modernization for these indigenous forces. I am doing so, however, solely on the basis that this will permit us immediately to begin the process of replacing American forces in South Vietnam with better trained, better led, and better armed South Vietnamese military and para-military personnel.

I regret to report that I see no indication that we presently have a program adequate to bring about a significant reduction in the U.S. military contribution in South Vietnam. The development of such a program should receive our first priority. For example, despite a strong recommendation made, I understand, last summer that the promotion policy of ARVN should be adjusted so as to rectify the substantial shortages in officers in the ranks of captain through colonel, substantial shortages still exist. Progress has been slow. The need for a drastic change in promotion policies apparently has been accepted in principle and potentially adequate corrective programs have been initiated but progress continues to be slow.

Similarly, although our military leaders have recommended the adoption of the accelerated Phase II modernization program, I was given no indication that its completion would enable us to effect any substantial reduction in American forces in South Vietnam. As mentioned earlier, the present RVNAF modernization program was designed only to build up the South Vietnamese forces so that they could cope with VC insurgents. Our military authorities believe neither the South Vietnamese manpower base nor any possible modernization program would enable the RVNAF to cope alone with a threat comparable to the present level

of aggression. This has been the assumption from the inception of the RVNAF improvement program. However, I do not believe we can accept the proposition that U.S. forces must remain in substantial numbers indefinitely to contain the North Vietnamese threat, if political settlement proves unobtainable. The heavy expense of RVNAF modernization cannot be justified as a measure merely to permit the GVN to cope with local insurgency.

The presentation given to me by the MACV staff was based on the premise that no reduction in U.S. personnel would be possible in the absence of total withdrawal of South Vietnamese troops. I do not believe that our national interests, in the light of our military commitments worldwide, permit us to indulge in this assumption. Nor do I feel that true pacification and GVN control over its own population can ever be achieved while our own forces continue such a pervasive presence in South Vietnam.

Our orientation seems to be more on operations than on assisting the South Vietnamese to acquire the means to defend themselves. Thus, for example, we have continued to tolerate notoriously incompetent Commanders in the Fifth and Eighteenth ARVN Divisions in the key III Corps region. I sense, too, a tendency on the part of both our own people and the GVN to discount somewhat the seriousness of the high RVNAF desertion rate. The emphasis can and must now be shifted to measures through which South Vietnam can achieve a self-defense capability that will strengthen our joint hand in Paris and prevent ultimate military defeat if political settlement proves impossible.

Planning for Withdrawal of U.S. Forces

The question that arises is not whether we should do more in South Vietnam, but rather whether we should do less. No one now suggests the necessity for sending more U.S. troops to Southeast Asia. But at the same time, no one has furnished me with any detailed analysis of the necessity for the continued presence of over 549 thousand Americans in South Vietnam and Thailand.

We are presently able to contain the enemy militarily and to maintain mass military pressure on him. With an appropriate improvement in the performance of the Armed Forces of South Vietnam, we should be able to retain this posture with a simultaneous diminution in the U.S. share of the total military effort. This will require full study of the best way to effect the maximum replacement of U.S. combat forces with those of South Vietnam. With your approval, I will direct that such a study be undertaken immediately.

In the meantime, I believe it is essential that we decide now to initiate the removal from Southeast Asia of some U.S. military personnel. The qualitative and quantitative improvement of the RVNAF to date, although perhaps less than desired, should permit us to redeploy from

Southeast Asia between 50 to 70 thousand troops during the remainder of this calendar year. I am convinced that this will in no way jeopardize the security of the remaining U.S. and Allied forces and that such a move is necessary to retain U.S. public support for our continued efforts in South Vietnam. Embassy officials in Saigon suggested to me that any reduction on our part would trigger proportionate reductions in other Allied forces. Given the present highly disproportionate contribution of South Vietnam's Asian neighbors, as compared with our own, such reduction on their part would be unwarranted. But even if they were made, withdrawal of Korean, Thai, Australian and New Zealand troops in an equal percentage would not significantly affect the total military strength confronting the enemy. Moreover, it is clear that South Vietnam's leaders expect and are entirely ready for a reduction of this size. President Thieu has indicated this repeatedly in public pronouncements. He expressed this opinion forthrightly in our private discussion on March 8.[4] At the same time, I feel very strongly that we, rather than the GVN or the possible reaction of other troop-contributing countries, should determine when and how many American soldiers should be withdrawn from the conflict in SEA.

Termination ("T" Day) Planning

The foregoing discussion assumes no termination of the war in South Vietnam, but rather the orderly replacement of United States Forces as the armed forces of South Vietnam take over a steadily increasing share of the war effort. I have discussed with Admiral McCain and General Abrams the status of their plans for the more rapid turnover and removal of American military equipment that would be required in the event a political settlement brings the conflict to a termination.

Under such circumstances, we would want to leave the South Vietnamese forces with the equipment necessary for them to cope with the residual insurgency and to help deter any renewal of aggression by North Vietnam. At the same time, we should not feel that the forces of South Vietnam must be turned into a replica in miniature of the United States military establishment. As in the case of the Republic of Korea, we should anticipate that the more sophisticated elements of the needed defensive strength could continue to be derived from United States resources.

For planning purposes we should define "T" Day as that date on which agreement is reached to cease hostilities in South Vietnam and the

[4] A memorandum of this conversation between Laird and Thieu and other U.S. and South Vietnamese officials was attached.

North Vietnamese are returning their forces to North Vietnam. Our Paris delegation continues to refer to the terms of the 1966 Manila Conference communiqué. I, personally, have had serious questions about those terms and believe that they were rendered obsolete by initiation of the Paris negotiations. Under the Manila communiqué terms, the allied forces would begin their withdrawal concurrently with the gradual withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops. Withdrawal of U.S. and Free World forces would continue only while North Vietnam moves toward total withdrawal and ceases all infiltration. The provision of the Manila communiqué to the effect that U.S. and other allied forces will be withdrawn not later than six months after these conditions have been fulfilled must be interpreted, if it is to apply at all, as referring to those residual forces that would be on hand at the time when all North Vietnamese forces have returned to their own country.

The Manila communiqué may not, of course, form the basis of any settlement that may be reached in Paris. The Manila communiqué was designed on the assumption of a de facto termination to hostilities, rather than negotiations. The Paris talks may yield a withdrawal formula which is either more gradual or more precipitate than that contemplated at Manila. In any event, our planning should proceed on a basis that will permit us to effect an orderly withdrawal of U.S. troops and an efficient turnover of United States equipment to the South Vietnamese, beginning as soon as hostilities have ceased.

I found T-Day planning has advanced to the stage where plans are either under development, or the plans have been published and are under review by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Abrams' staff has been able during the past few weeks to define more accurately the size of the problem confronting us in withdrawing personnel and equipment. For example, whereas in October 1968 MACV estimated that some 10 million short tons of matériel and supplies would require removal from Southeast Asia, the current estimate is that the amount is more like 5.5 million short tons. The ongoing MACV staff work includes attempts to improve inventory control and to reduce inventories in certain supply categories.

I believe, however, that we need to address more expeditiously the "T" Day problems of orderly and systematic withdrawal of men and equipment. Even short of cessation of hostilities, such planning can have considerable utility in making our phase-down and the transfer of effort to the RVNAF more efficient.

As in the case of RVNAF modernization, there appears to be considerable reluctance to recognize the inevitability of an early reduction in the American effort in South Vietnam. In the event that a political solution cannot be found in Paris, I am convinced that achievement of our objectives requires immediate initiation of efforts to diminish our

share of the total military effort. Accordingly, our entire defense organization must be alerted to the need to develop and implement promptly the measures that will facilitate an efficient and orderly reduction in the current United States involvement in Vietnam.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Our fighting men in Southeast Asia, under the superb leadership of General Abrams, are fully supported and have the resources in men, material, and facilities to accomplish their assigned tasks with maximum possible safety and security.

2. Steady progress is being made in the application of military pressure on the enemy. But there is consensus among our civilian and military leaders in South Vietnam that a military victory within 6, 12, 18, or 24 months, or even longer, is not feasible under prevailing constraints.

3. The enemy's increased use of border sanctuaries as safe havens for logistics, training, and command and control support is a matter of increasing danger to our forces. Consideration should be given to the modification of our rules of engagement to permit more effective actions against this threat, short of lasting extension of the geographic area of the war.

4. The RVNAF continues to show improvement, but we must explore ways to accelerate equipment delivery and increase combat effectiveness. There may be certain areas such as pilot and technical training which will be difficult to accelerate. In any event, we shall need to provide additional funding for RVNAF modernization purposes.

5. The precondition for this additional assistance on an accelerated basis must be that it will permit the expedited replacement of U.S. forces.

6. This replacement process should begin and be pursued on a systematic basis designed to assure sustained pressure on the enemy and sustained support of the war by the American public.

7. The leadership of the Republic of Vietnam is prepared to participate in such a replacement program and expresses the belief that, as our forces are replaced, the RVN's independent ability to meet the enemy's aggression will be strengthened.

8. We must make sure that our entire Defense establishment understands the need to refine our concept of T-Day planning and to develop a detailed program for transferring and redeploying men and matériel as hostilities diminish and finally terminate.

9. To enhance the vital interests of our country (particularly in recognition of our worldwide military requirements), to stimulate increased self-defense effectiveness and self-reliance by the Government

of RVN, and to sustain the support of the American public for our stated objectives, plans should be drawn for the redeployment of 50–70 thousand U.S. troops from South Vietnam this year. These plans should also be developed to provide for continuing substantial replacement of U.S. with South Vietnamese forces in the following years.[5]

Melvin R. Laird

[5] A memorandum of a March 8 conversation between Laird and Prime Minister Tran Van Hoang was attached.

39. Memorandum for the Record[1]

Washington, March 15, 1969.

SUBJECT

March 16 Rocket Attack on Saigon

The following directives were issued by the President at 1545, March 15, as a result of the most recent rocket attack on Saigon:

1. The President ordered the immediate implementation of the Breakfast Plan. (TOT—Tuesday morning, Saigon time; Monday afternoon, Washington time.)[2]

2. The Department of State (and Ambassadors Lodge and Bunker) to be notified only after the point of no return in the implementation of the Plan.

3. Appropriate Government agencies and their field representatives are to be instructed that they will make no comment on the recent rocket attack on Saigon. (The President wishes to personally sign such a directive.)

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 136, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. 1, Through 3/19/69. Top Secret.

[2] Prior to issuing this directive Kissinger received three telephone calls from President Nixon at 3:35, 3:44, and 3:45 p.m. on March 15, ordering these actions. The language in the first three directives is almost verbatim from the President's brusque orders. The transcript notes of the last telephone call of 3:45 p.m. read: "President said everything that will fly is to get over to North Vietnam. President said there will be no appeal from that either. He will let them know who is boss around here." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 368, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

4. The President directed the following additional military measures:

a. Maximum possible aerial reconnaissance over North Vietnam.
b. Increased Naval activity in international waters adjacent to North Vietnam.

Richard Nixon

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40. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 16, 1969.

SUBJECT

Breakfast Plan

I. Major Political/Psychological Reasons for Action

A. Failure to take action in response to Saigon/Hue shellings—especially after repeated Presidential warnings—would appear to Hanoi as a demonstration of weakness.

B. Failure to act would encourage Hanoi to use shellings and other military pressures in an effort to force major concessions at the Paris negotiations.

C. The GVN will be more willing to agree to private talks, and less suspicious about our statements on the conditions for a bombing halt. Indeed, the Thieu/Bunker conversation is likely to be sticky if we respond to the latest shelling of Saigon with a request to initiate private talks.

D. Retaliatory action, if combined with a proposal for private talks, will serve as a signal to the Soviets of the Administration's determination to end the war. It would be a signal that things may get out of hand.

II. Arguments Against

A. Domestic critics of the Vietnam war could seize on this to renew attacks on war and pressure for quick U.S. withdrawal.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 89, Vietnam Subject Files, Breakfast Plan. Top Secret; Sensitive.

B. Hanoi could try to buttress domestic critics with attacks aimed at gaining large U.S. casualties.

C. Could start escalatory cycle.

III. Some Possible Consequences of Breakfast Plan

A. *Minimum Possible Consequences*

1. Pro-forma Cambodian protest.

B. *Larger Possible Consequences*

1. If attack on COSVN is formally announced as "appropriate response" major protest by Cambodia is probable, cutting off prospect of resuming diplomatic relations for the present. (NVN will probably try to pressure Sihanouk on this point.)

2. Soviets could feel compelled, probably under Hanoi pressure, to register strong protest which might affect our other talks with them.

3. Hanoi will feel compelled to retaliate, should our public statements indicate action is retaliatory.

IV. Scenario

A. *Basic Plan of Action*

1. NVN military concentrations in the DMZ will be attacked 12 hours prior to Breakfast Plan. This attack, in response to currently well publicized NVN buildup in the DMZ, will be acknowledged as the "appropriate response" to the shelling of Saigon and Hue. This would have the following advantages: (a) it would indicate a response; (b) it would divert public attention; (c) it would therefore enable Cambodia to play down the Breakfast Plan and; (d) it would still show restraint.

2. Breakfast Plan will be treated as a routine military operation within the framework of our current military actions in Cambodian territory and not publicly or in any messages identified as a retaliatory action against the shelling of Saigon and Hue. Hanoi is likely to recognize the action as our response, without a public statement. Any public statement identifying it as a retaliatory action, on the other hand, would be more likely to induce retaliatory actions by Hanoi, a major protest by Cambodia, a Soviet protest, and major domestic criticism in the press.

3. The military action will be combined with an effort in Paris to initiate private talks.

B. *Press Scenario*

1. The attacks on the DMZ will be publicly announced with no additional comment. If the press asks whether these attacks are the "appropriate response" mentioned by the President, the spokesman will state that the press can draw its own conclusions.

2. Breakfast Plan would be announced routinely by Saigon as a normal B–52 operation against targets along the Cambodian border. The targets would not be specifically identified.

3. Press briefing and backgrounders would in no way directly identify the action as the "appropriate response" to the Saigon/Hue shellings.

4. All press queries should be referred to the Saigon spokesman who will neither affirm nor deny reports of attacks on Cambodia but state that this is under investigation. With respect to any attacks against Cambodia, we will take the same public position of "no comment" as in the case of bombing attacks on Laos, with the additional statement that reports of such attacks are under investigation.

5. If the Cambodians protest publicly, we will state publicly that we are investigating the Cambodian protest.

6. At no point will attacks against Cambodia be officially denied. *When* we reply to a Cambodian protest, we will state that we have apologized and have offered compensation.

C. *Diplomatic Scenario*

1. On March 18, Ambassador Bunker will inform President Thieu privately about DMZ strike and Breakfast Plan and seek Thieu's immediate agreement to the initiation of private talks on this basis.

2. On March 18, following Thieu's agreement, Ambassador Lodge will be authorized to initiate a request immediately for private talks with the North Vietnamese.

3. If Cambodia makes it normal routine protest, we will agree to investigate and subsequently confirm that the raid took place in Cambodian territory, apologize, and offer compensation.

4. If Cambodia makes a major protest, we will acknowledge responsibility, offer compensation, explain that incidents along the Cambodian border occur due to the extensive VC use of military exploitation of Cambodian territory in this area, and request an ICC investigation of the area.

5. If the Soviet Union privately makes a major protest against our action, we will point out the military reasons for the action, the fact that both Saigon and Hue were shelled after full warning, that more provocative options were available but not undertaken, and that we would now like to get down to serious negotiations and have initiated a request for private talks as suggested by them.

41. Editorial Note

Although there is no record of the meeting in the President's Daily Diary, merely a reference that President Nixon went to the Oval Office on Saturday, March 16, 1969, at 4:30 p.m. and returned to the residence at 6:51 p.m. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files), both Henry Kissinger and President Nixon describe in their memoirs an afternoon meeting lasting 2 hours on March 16 in the Oval Office among the President, Secretary of State Rogers, Secretary of Defense Laird, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Wheeler and Kissinger. (Kissinger, *White House Years,* pages 246–247 and Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon,* page 381)

Kissinger's account stresses that the decision to bomb the Cambodian sanctuaries had already been made. (See Document 39.) Kissinger states that the President "felt it necessary to pretend that the decision was still open. This led to hours of the very discussion that he found so distasteful and reinforced his tendency to exclude the recalcitrants from further deliberations." According to Kissinger, the discussion "followed predictable lines. Laird and Wheeler strongly advocated attacks and Rogers objected not on foreign policy but on domestic grounds." Kissinger recalls that Nixon "permitted himself to be persuaded by Laird and Wheeler to do what he had already ordered." Nixon's own recollections stress his decision to bomb Cambodian sanctuaries. Nixon recalls that he said: "The state of play in Paris is completely sterile. I am convinced that the only way to move the negotiations off dead center is to do something on the military front. That is something they will understand." No other record of this meeting has been found.

The day before the meeting, Kissinger called Secretary of Defense Laird at 5:40 p.m., and according to the transcript notes of March 15, Kissinger told Laird that "he just talked to the President and he would like to order this thing. L said fine. K said when he had talked to Buzz [Wheeler] earlier there were two possibilities: one, only a breakfast plan [B–52 bombing of Cambodian sanctuaries] and the other one to split forces for target [and also bomb North Vietnamese troop concentrations in the DMZ]. K said to lay on both and we will decide tomorrow which to execute. L said they could do it. K said the President may want to have a meeting between L, K, and Bill [Rogers] and the President is counting on L to be firm at that meeting. L said he does not have to worry about that, he will be firm." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 369, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) Laird and Kissinger discussed the meeting in two telephone conversations at 9 and 9:30 [apparently p.m.] on March 16. In the first conversation, Kissinger told Laird that the President had

approved the Cambodian bombing, "something he cannot ever avow" and was willing to do the other attack, but asked Laird's political advice. Laird responded that in view of Rogers' opposition, presumably at the meeting on March 16, "it would be better to do what we agreed upon. Laird didn't see enough advantage in pushing what Bill doesn't want. It is important to maintain a good relationship. HAK agreed. HAK said he was concerned from the domestic political viewpoint." During the second conversation, Kissinger told Laird that the President agreed with his recommendation especially in view of Rogers' opposition. Kissinger told Laird that Nixon knew that "Laird has the best interests of the Administration at heart and it was better to keep the team together." (Ibid.)

On March 17 at 1:20 p.m. the President called Kissinger to ask when the breakfast bombings would begin and Kissinger responded they would commence in 1 hour. The transcript notes indicate that: "President said what pleases him is that he is glad the fellow [Thieu on March 17] agreed to private talks right away. President thinks the two are closely related. K agreed. Pres said this was token our intent and they think we really mean business. Otherwise, they were about to conclude that we were being pressured and starting again on the same cycle that we had gone through before. K said we were getting ready for some arm twisting and it was not necessary at all. Pres said good deal—pretty hard for them not to talk." (Ibid.)

On March 18 at 8 p.m. Kissinger and Wheeler discussed the results of the breakfast bombing. Wheeler was enthusiastic about the results—"secondaries [secondary explosions] were about 4 to 7 times the normal bomb burst, this was significant." Kissinger suggested that "if they [the North Vietnamese] retaliate without any diplomatic screaming, we are in the driver's seat. Psychologically the impact must have been something." Wheeler mentioned that North Vietnamese MiGs were recalled to China, "and they are in a high state of alarm." Kissinger responded that now they have to go back to the drawing board since they didn't expect it to happen. Kissinger congratulated Wheeler on the idea and told him the President thought he had done a good job. Wheeler responded it was mostly Abrams' idea. (Ibid.)

42. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 17, 1969.

SUBJECT

Possible CIA Courses of Action in Cambodia

You asked that I explore in the 303 Committee two possible CIA courses of action with respect to Cambodia:

(a) CIA potential for creating covert paramilitary harassing operations directed against North Vietnamese Regular Forces in the sanctuary areas just over the Cambodian border

(b) CIA capability for eliminating or reducing the arms traffic through Cambodia to communist forces in South Vietnam.

CIA can develop the operations described in (a) above at some sacrifice to high priority operations now directed against the Viet Cong infrastructure in South Vietnam. CIA recommends against initiating such operations on the grounds of high cost versus expected low effectiveness against the large concentrations of regular NVN forces there.[2] The Committee members endorsed the CIA recommendation.

With respect to (b) above, CIA has identified a number of Cambodian army officers who are actively involved in supporting the movement of arms and ammunition through Cambodia to communist forces in South Vietnam. CIA does not now have direct, secure and controlled access to any of these officers but is continuing to explore vigorously opportunities in this direction. CIA is skeptical that any of the officers involved in the arms traffic would be now susceptible to bribery both because of the profits accruing to them from such operations as well as the personal political risks entailed in a relationship involving the United States.[3]

CIA has pointed out that if recent U.S. diplomatic approaches to Cambodia result in the formal resumption of full diplomatic relations, CIA will gain an operating base for improved intelligence collection and covert action in support of U.S. diplomatic measures aimed at at-

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 301, NSC File, 303 Committee, 1969–1970. Secret; Eyes Only. Sent for action.

[2] In a memorandum to the 303 Committee, February 13. (Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, Subject Files, Vietnam, 1969–1970)

[3] This summarizes an attached but not printed CIA memorandum of March 14 entitled, "Possibilities for Bribing Cambodian Officials to Reduce Arms Flow to the Viet Cong."

tempting to convince Prince Sihanouk that it is in his best interest to make an honest effort to reduce or halt the arms traffic.[4]

I recommend that:[5]

(a) you approve the 303 Committee's judgment that the probable effectiveness of mounting a CIA paramilitary effort against the NVN regulars in Cambodia would not be worth the expense, and

(b) that as diplomatic relationships develop with Cambodia, I monitor those diplomatic and CIA steps which can be taken in an effort to eliminate or reduce the arms traffic from Cambodia to the communist forces in South Vietnam.

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[4] In a memorandum of February 26 entitled, "CIA's Potential for Covert Support to Possible United States Government Diplomatic Efforts to Reduce the Movement of Arms and Ammunition Through Cambodia to Communist Forces in South Vietnam." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. I, 8–69)

[5] There is no indication on the memorandum of a Nixon decision. At its March 13 meeting, the 303 Committee agreed to recommend to the President that CIA should not undertake covert harassment missions against North Vietnam in Cambodia because of high costs versus low returns. The Chairman of the Committee, Kissinger, passed on a request from Nixon that Helms and CIA explore methods—either through bribery or corruption of the right people in Cambodia—to prevent arms and supplies passing through Cambodia to the enemy in South Vietnam. Helms responded that CIA had already studied the question and determined that gaining access to the right people was a major problem and that arms traffickers were making so much profit that U.S. bribery attempts would be inadequate. (Minutes of the March 11th 303 Committee, March 13; Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, 303/40 Committee Meetings, 2/16/68–1/20/70, March 13, 1969) For the President's decision, see footnote 2, Document 47.

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43. Telegram From the Embassy in Laos to the Department of State[1]

Vientiane, March 18, 1969, 0605Z.

1714. 1. As I leave Laos, I wish I could say that I am leaving it in much better condition than I found it in 1964. Unfortunately, that is far from true. There have been some improvements—in political stability, in the spread of economic benefits, and in the provision of social services. But the fundamental, overriding problem of the war has not been

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 3, President's Daily Briefs. Secret. Repeated to Bangkok, Moscow, Saigon, and Paris for Lodge.

resolved. Until it is, the survival of Laos as a sovereign and independent nation remains in peril.

2. The war is a vicious cycle. So long as it continues, the country must maintain a large military establishment. So long as the country must maintain a large military establishment, the budget will remain hopelessly out of balance and revenues will never suffice to permit economic independence or progressive development.

3. While this same military establishment is the prime instrument for defending the country and has done better than we expected, it has also built up institutionalized privilege, corruption, and law-evasion, which, in turn, alienate the villagers from the government which the military represent. Therefore, while intended to defend the central government and advance its interests, the military end by corrupting its rule and corroding its prestige. Thus the enemy, merely by posing a threat to the government, succeeds in weakening the authority of that government.

4. The Lao had genuinely hoped, when the Paris negotiations began, that peace would be restored in Southeast Asia before the current dry season. They felt grievously deceived when this hope was dashed and had little stomach for the fight this year. Hence, they gave up more terrain this season than was truly taken from them by force of arms. It remains to be seen how much more will be lost in the six or seven weeks which remain in the dry season.

5. But, no matter what situation we find when the rains come, I think we should be under no illusions as to the future. The Lao have suffered enormously under all these years of war. Among the Meo, for example, practically an entire generation of fighting men has been wiped out.[2] It is pitiful to see their units so heavily manned by young boys of 14 and 15 years of age.

6. In fact, it is, in my judgment, a miracle that the Lao have fought so sturdily for so long and that the fabric of their primitive society has not totally collapsed prior to this time. They have been held together by spit and straw, aid, encouragement, and hope.

7. But all this is drawing to a close. If the North Vietnamese push as heavily next dry season as they have this year, and if they abandon

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[2] CIA officers drew a similar picture in a weekly meeting of March 13 between representatives of EAP of State and DDP of CIA. According to a March 18 memorandum by Trueheart to Hughes: "CIA drew a rather bleak picture of the outlook for friendly forces during the remainder of the dry season and stressed that there is no possibility of further strengthening Laotian ground forces, conventional or guerrilla, from indigenous resources." While tactical air support had blunted and delayed the North Vietnamese offensive, CIA officers were convinced that only better and more ground troops could halt the advance. (Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, EAP General CA, Country Files, EA Weekly Meetings, 1969)

their political restraints, I doubt that Laos could successfully weather another offensive without losing some vital areas of its territory and without severe strain on the stability of the current political leadership. Therefore, in my view, the period between now and next November is critical.

8. There obviously are conclusions to be drawn from this evaluation. As I understand it, my new responsibilities in Washington will, in part, concern those conclusions. In view of that fact, I will refrain from stating any of them in this message. When I reach the clear, safe atmosphere on the Potomac, I will not wish to have my vision impaired by any myopic observations which I might have written from the miasma of the Mekong.

9. Ave atque vale.

Sullivan

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44. Summary of Interagency Responses to NSSM 1[1]

Washington, March 22, 1969.

THE VIETNAM SITUATION

The responses to the questions posed regarding Vietnam[2] show agreement on some matters as well as very substantial differences of opinion within the U.S. Government on many aspects of the Vietnam situation. While there are some divergencies on the facts, the sharpest differences arise in the interpretation of those facts, the relative weight to be given them, and the implications to be drawn. In addition, there remain certain areas where our information remains inadequate.

There is general agreement, assuming we follow our current strategy, on the following:

—(1) The GVN and allied position in Vietnam has been strengthened recently in many respects.

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[1] National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–122, NSSM Files, NSSM 1 Response. Top Secret. Davis sent copies of this summary to Agnew, Rogers, Laird, and Director of Emergency Preparedness Lincoln under cover of a March 22 memorandum. Copies were also sent to Richardson, General Wheeler, and Helms.

[2] See the attachment to Document 4.

—(2) The RVNAF alone cannot now, or in the foreseeable future, stand up to both the VC and sizable North Vietnamese forces.

—(3) The GVN has improved its political position in certain respects. It remains weakest, and the VC/NLF strongest, in rural areas. It is not clear whether the GVN and other non-communist groups would be able to survive a peaceful competition with the NLF for political power in South Vietnam.

—(4) The enemy have suffered some reverse but they have not changed their essential objectives and they have sufficient strength to pursue these objectives. We are not attriting enemy forces faster than they can recruit or infiltrate. Soviet and Chinese supplies have enabled the enemy to carry on despite our operations.

—(5) The enemy basically controls both sides' casualty rates. They can still launch major offensives, though not with 1968 Tet effectiveness or impact.

—(6) The enemy is in Paris for a variety of reasons, including a desire to pursue his objectives at lower costs. He is not there primarily out of weakness, but rather from a realization that a military victory is not attainable as long as U.S. forces remain in SVN, yet a victory in the political area is very possible.

—(7) Hanoi is attempting to chart a course basically independent of Moscow and Peking.

Within these parameters of agreement there are different overall perspectives. There is some shifting between agencies or shading of their positions depending on the issues, so it would be somewhat misleading to categorize them overall. Agency positions will be clear in the remainder of the paper.

A composite of more hopeful views would look as follows:

—an overall allied momentum on various fronts is in large part responsible for the enemy's presence at the negotiating table and lower profile on the battlefield.

—U.S. military operations have been increasingly effective and with less constraints could be even more so.

—there are more South Vietnamese fighting with better effectiveness.

—recent gains in pacification represent real advances against the VC and should hold up.

—the GVN is more stable than at any time since Diem and is making good political progress.

—one cannot forecast "victory," within current constraints, but our negotiators should know that the tides are favorable.

A composite of more skeptical views would shape up as follows:

—there have been recent improvements in the allied position but these have produced essentially a stalemate.

—enemy activities in Paris and Vietnam do not flow primarily from weakness.

—Allied military efforts—short of unacceptable risks of widening the war—cannot now or in the foreseeable future bring the enemy to his knees.

—great problems confront the larger, better equipped South Vietnamese forces.

—pacification gains are inflated and fragile.

—inadequate political progress is being made.

—while our negotiators are in a stronger position with regard to the military situation, a compromise settlement is the most likely outcome for Vietnam and our focus needs to be increasingly on political actions.

Thus there are U.S. Government disagreements on a number of questions including the following:

—In explaining reduced enemy military presence and activities, some give greater weight to allied military pressure, others to the enemy's political motives and tactics.

—The improvements in RVNAF are considered much more significant by some agencies than others.

—Some observers see no cutback in U.S. forces possible without a proportionate reduction in combat capability, while others see a certain amount of "fat" in current U.S. force levels.

—Some underline advancements in the pacification program, while others are extremely skeptical both of the evaluation system used to measure progress and of the solidity of recent advances.

—In looking at the political scene, some accent recent improvements while others highlight the necessities of continued and accelerated political actions by the GVN to overcome remaining obstacles if the GVN is to have a reasonable chance to compete with the VC/NLF/PRP [*PRG?*].

—Some respondents assign much greater effectiveness to past and current bombing in Vietnam and Laos than others.

—Some believe, and others totally disagree, that a vigorous interdiction campaign against land and sea supply routes in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia could choke off enough Soviet and Chinese supplies to make North Vietnam give up the struggle.

In addition to these differences, there are major intelligence community disagreements concerning:

—the enemy order of battle;

—the importance of Cambodia (in particular Sihanoukville) as a supply channel for the enemy;

—the impact of possible Vietnam outcomes on Southeast Asia.

Following is a summary of the major conclusions and disagreements about each of six broad areas with regard to Vietnam: the negotiating environment, enemy capabilities, RVNAF capabilities, pacification, South Vietnamese politics, and U.S. military operations.

1. Negotiating Environment
(Questions 1–4)

(Reasons for the enemy presence in Paris. Impact of Vietnam on Southeast Asia. Influence of Moscow and Peking on Hanoi. Possible factions in North Vietnamese leadership.)

There is general U.S. Government agreement that Hanoi is in Paris for a variety of motives, including a desire to pursue his objectives at lower costs, but he is not there primarily out of weakness; that Hanoi is charting a course independent of Moscow, which favors negotiations, and of Peking, which opposes them, despite the DRV reliance on its allies for supplies; and that our knowledge of possible political factions among North Vietnamese leaders is imprecise. There continues disagreement about the impact on Southeast Asia of various outcomes in Vietnam.

Why is the DRV in Paris?

Various possible North Vietnamese motives for negotiating are discussed, and there is agreement that the DRV is in Paris for mixed reasons. No U.S. agency responding to the questions believes that the primary reason the DRV is in Paris is weakness. All consider it unlikely that Hanoi came to Paris either to accept a face-saving formula for defeat or to give the U.S. a face-saving way to withdraw. There is agreement that Hanoi has been subject to heavy military pressure and that a desire to end the losses and costs of war was an element in Hanoi's decision. The consensus is that Hanoi believes that it can persist long enough to obtain a relatively favorable negotiated compromise. The respondents agree that the DRV is in Paris to negotiate withdrawal of U.S. forces, to undermine GVN–USG relations and to provide a better chance for VC victory in the South. State believes that Hanoi's increasing realization that it could not win the conflict by continued military and political pressure also played a major role. Hanoi's ultimate goal of a unified Vietnam under its control has not changed.

Vietnam Impact on Southeast Asia

There continues to be sharp debate between and within agencies about the effect of the outcome in Vietnam on other nations. The most recent NIE on this subject (NIE 50–68)[3] states that a settlement which

[3] See *Foreign Relations,* 1964–1968, vol. VII, Document 220.

would result in the communists taking control of the Government in South Vietnam, not immediately but within a year or two, would be likely to have adverse psychological effects throughout the area and bring Cambodia and Laos into Hanoi's orbit at a fairly early state, but that these developments would not necessarily unhinge the rest of Southeast Asia.

The NIE dissenters believe that an unfavorable settlement would stimulate the communists to become more active elsewhere and that it will be difficult to resist making some accommodation to the pressure then generated. They believe, in contrast to the Estimate, these adjustments would be relatively swift and insensitive to subsequent U.S. policy.

The assessments rest more on judgments and assumptions than on tangible and convincing evidence, and there are major disagreements within the same Departments. Within the Defense Department, OSD and DIA support the conclusions of the NIE, while Army, Navy and Air Force Intelligence dissent. Within State, the Bureau of Intelligence supports the NIE while the East Asian Bureau dissents. CIA supports the NIE conclusions while Embassy Saigon generally sides with the dissenters.

Factors entering into the judgments are estimates of (1) Hanoi's and Peking's behavior after the settlement; (2) U.S. posture and policy in the regions; (3) Asian leaders' estimates of future U.S. policy; (4) the reactions of the area's non-communist leaders to the outcome in Vietnam; (5) vulnerabilities of the various governments to insurgency or subversion; and (6) the strengths of opposition groups within each state.

All reject the view that an unfavorable settlement in Vietnam will inevitably be followed by communist takeovers outside Indo China and there is agreement that much will depend on what the countries do for themselves and the other factors mentioned.

Moscow and Peking Influence

There is general governmental agreement on this question. Peking opposes negotiations while Moscow prefers an early negotiated settlement on terms as favorable as possible to Hanoi. Neither Peking nor Moscow have exerted heavy pressure on Hanoi and for various reasons they are unlikely to do so, although their military and economic assistance give them important leverage. CIA notes that "in competing for influence Peking and Moscow tend to cancel out each other." For its own reasons, Hanoi's tendency in the last year has been in the Soviet direction. However, the Hanoi leadership is attempting to chart its own independent course, despite its reliance on its allies for supplies.

Hanoi Leadership Factions

There is agreement that knowledge of the existence and significance of possible factions within the Hanoi leadership is imprecise. There are differences of opinion within the leadership on tactics as opposed to ultimate objectives but there are not stable "Moscow" and "Peking" factions. The Hanoi leadership will form different alignments on different issues. The attempts by the agencies to ascertain the position of various North Vietnamese leaders on specific issues shows the imprecision of our information and analysis. For example, different agencies set forth sharply conflicting identifications of the position of individual leaders such as Giap on particular questions.

2. The Enemy
(Questions 5–10)

(Explanation of recent enemy military activities. Attrition of enemy forces. Enemy order of battle, offensive capabilities, supply channels.)

Analyses of various enemy tactics and capabilities reveal both significant agreements and sharp controversies within the Government. Among the major points of consensus:

—A combination of military pressures and political tactics explains recent enemy withdrawals and lower levels of activity.

—Under current rules of engagement, the enemy's manpower pool and infiltration capabilities can outlast allied attrition efforts indefinitely, although the quality of enemy personnel suffers.

—The enemy basically controls both sides' casualty rates.

—The enemy, if he is willing to take the risks, can still launch major offensives, although not at 1968 Tet levels or with dramatic effect.

Major controversies include:

—CIA, DIA and State assign much higher figures to the enemy Order of Battle than MACV. They also quantify additional categories that are not part of the Order of Battle but are judged to be significant in terms of the enemy's political/security capabilities.

—MACV/CINCPAC/JCS and Saigon consider Cambodia an important enemy supply channel. A joint CIA–DIA–State team acknowledges the importance of Cambodia as a source of food supplies but feels that the Laotian supply corridor is the primary channel for the movement of military supplies (arms and ammunition).

Recent Enemy Activities

Military pressures and political considerations are viewed as responsible for the withdrawal of some North Vietnamese units into Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries during the summer and fall of

1968. Military factors included heavy enemy losses, effective allied tactics, material shortages, and bad weather. Political factors centered on enemy efforts to make a political virtue out of a military necessity in a talk-fight strategy to influence the Paris negotiations.

Although the question asked of agencies indicated some doubt, all respondents agreed that the enemy did undertake a third-wave offensive during the week of August 17. At a cost of 5,500 enemy KIA, the enemy tripled the number of his attacks to 100 per week and his attacks during the second half of August were about one half the level of his "second-wave" offensive in May. Prisoners and captured documents reported the goal of achieving a general uprising and overthrow of the GVN. The lack of greater success was attributed to: the enemy's economy-of-forces tactics; his desire to demonstrate initiative but at reduced risk; effective U.S. spoiling actions and increased intelligence; and the continuing deterioration of enemy Post-Tet capabilities in terms of quality of men and officers and lack of training.

In contrast to the implication of a question posed to the agencies, all evaluators except the Department of State and Embassy Saigon state that VC guerrillas and local forces are *not* relatively dormant and that levels of harassment and terror remain high. The Embassy notes "the current low level of guerrilla and local forces activity," and State agrees there has been a "relative decline." Both agree that among the reasons are the heavy casualty rates, manpower problems and loss of cadres. But according to Embassy evaluators, the main factor is that "the VC are husbanding their resources to give themselves the option of a 'climaxing' offensive." State notes that to support the VC counter-pacification campaign and their "Liberation Committees," "the Communists may feel that a demonstrably strong blow against the pacification program would have wide repercussions, particularly at a time of optimistic Allied claims about pacification successes."

NVN/VC Manpower

It is generally agreed that the NVN/VC manpower pool is sufficiently large to meet the enemy's replenishment needs over an extended period of time within the framework of current rules of engagement. According to the JCS, "The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong have access to sufficient manpower to meet their replenishment needs—even at the high 1968 loss rate of some 291,000—for at least the next several years. . . . Present operations are not outrunning the enemy's ability to replenish by recruitment or infiltration." Enemy losses of 291,000 in 1968 were roughly balanced by infiltration and recruitment of 298,000. North Vietnamese manpower assets include 1.8 million physically fit males aged 15–34 of whom 45% are in the regular forces (475,000) and paramilitary (400,000) forces; 120,000 physically fit males reach draft age each year and 200,000 military and labor

personnel have been freed by the bombing halt from defensive work. The potential manpower pool in SVN is estimated at half a million men and recruitment, while down, is running at approximately 3,500 per month. Enemy maintenance of the current commitment of 300,000 new men per year requires that the Allies inflict losses of 25,000 KIA per month, or 7,000 more than the current rate. MACV considers current Allied force levels adequate to inflict such casualties if the enemy chooses to engage.

The enemy's employment of economy of forces tactics since the fall of 1968 and intelligence evidence reflect the enemy's concern about his 1968 level of losses, which amounted to nearly 100% yearly attrition of his full-time fighters in the South and, if continued, could lead to nearly total North Vietnamization of main force units in South Vietnam. He is judged unlikely to undertake the heavy losses of a major offensive unless he believes he could thereby achieve a breakthrough in Allied will-power in Vietnam or Paris. Yet, without a VC/NVA offensive on the scale of Tet 1968, the JCS believe "it will be exceedingly difficult in 1969 for allied forces to attrite the enemy at 1968 levels."

Control of NVA/VC Attrition

There is general agreement with the JCS statement, "The enemy, by the type action he adopts, has the predominant share in determining enemy attrition rates." Three fourths of the battles are at the enemy's choice of time, place, type and duration. CIA notes that less than three percent of about 1.7 million Allied small unit operations conducted in the last two years resulted in contact with the enemy and, when ARVN is surveyed, the percentage drops to one tenth of one per cent. There are inaccuracies and variations in service reporting but these figures indicate the general magnitude. With his safe havens in Laos and Cambodia and with carefully chosen tactics, the enemy has been able during the last four years to double his combat forces, double the level of infiltration and increase the scale and intensity of the main force war even while bearing heavy casualties. MACV/CINCPAC/JCS consider that a resumption of full scale hostilities with a relaxation of rules of engagement would result in depletion of the enemy's manpower and war-making resources, forcing him to recognize the futility of continuing the war or to face the inevitable destruction of his capability to continue the war.

VC/NVA Order of Battle

There is considerable disagreement concerning the estimates of Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Order of Battle. Both MACV/CINCPAC and CIA/DIA—the only two groups making independent estimates—include the same elements in their estimate of the military threat that is quantified in the Order of Battle. When these two estimates are made

comparable in terms of major units included or excluded, the CIA/DIA estimate of the elements making up the enemy's military threat is at least 35,000 and possibly 125,000 greater than the MACV/CINCPAC estimate.

There is no great controversy over the size of the Political Infrastructure. The somewhat larger CIA/DIA estimate (see the table) allows for the inclusion of certain supporting staffs excluded from the MACV/CINCPAC estimate.

The CIA/DIA estimates of enemy strength include an additional category made up of the Self Defense Forces and Assault Youth, estimated at 90,000 to 140,000 persons. They are not judged to be part of the military threat but are quantified because they are partially armed, perform military support functions, and are a principal target of the Allied pacification and security program. MACV/CINCPAC do not quantify these forces.

The Department of State, noting that the MACV estimates results from adding up so-called "hard" field intelligence figures for main force and local and guerrilla forces, believes CIA's extrapolation is developed more realistically from the totality of evidence. OSD presents both the MACV/CINCPAC and CIA/DIA estimates, pointing out that the differences in overall strength presented by the two are not sufficient to cause a change in overall strategy. CIA feels, however, that the difference could be significant if the true military threat is closer to the higher end of the range estimated by CIA/DIA. CIA also feels that the difference in estimates could have a significant bearing on peace terms and in judgments of the residual military capabilities of VC forces should the NVA forces be withdrawn. On the following page is a table laying out these different estimates.

Recruiting figures vary for reasons similar to the divergencies on strength. Monthly VC recruitment is estimated by CIA at 8,500 in 1966, 7,500 in 1967, double the 1967 rate during the first quarter of 1968 and dropping sharply after the Tet offensive to approximately 3,500 per month. CIA estimates a smaller drop than MACV. Saigon reports that the last six months reflect a reduced level of recruitment, citing as evidence GVN expansion, reduction in VC standards, VC attempts to improve existing cadre, increased use of NVA fillers in VC units, and GVN mobilization effectiveness.

NVA/VC Capabilities for a Large-Scale Offensive

All agree that (as recent events have borne out) the enemy has a capability for a large scale offensive against cities, bases and/or villages in the Accelerated Pacification Program if he wishes to bear the heavy casualties that would result. Allied countermeasures and preemptive capabilities make it highly unlikely that such an attack would

COMPARISON OF ESTIMATES OF MILITARY-POLITICAL STRENGTHS IN SOUTH VIETNAM[4]

Military Threat	*DIA/CIA*	*MACV/CINCPAC*
Combat forces		
NVA	105,000 to 125,000[a]	92,000[b]
VC	45,000 to 55,000	37,000
Subtotal	150,000 to 180,000	129,000
Administrative services		
NVA	10,000 to 20,000	
VC	45,000 to 55,000	
Subtotal	55,000 to 75,000	42,000
Guerrillas	60,000 to 100,000[c]	59,000
Total military threat	265,000 to 355,000	230,000
Infrastructure	80,000 to 100,000	83,000
Other irregular organizations	90,000 to 140,000[d]	N.A.[e]

[a] An estimated 20,000 to 25,000 of the NVA troops are serving in VC units. This estimate excludes an estimated 28,000 NVA troops deployed north of the DMZ. [Footnote in the source text.]

[b] This is a MACV/CINCPAC estimate of 106,000 NVA troops adjusted to exclude the same elements excluded from the CIA/DIA estimate because they are north of the DMZ. [Footnote in the source text.]

[c] DIA/CIA believe that the military threat represented by guerrilla forces is not on a parity with that of main and local forces because probably only about one-third of the guerrillas are well-armed, trained, and organized. [Footnote in the source text.]

[d] Includes self defense, secret self defense, and assault youth forces. [Footnote in the source text.]

[e] MACV and CINCPAC do not quantify these forces. [Footnote in the source text.]

[4] Secret.

have an impact on the scale of the Tet offensive of 1968. Further the enemy would weigh the effect of such an offensive on the Paris talks and on the risk of touching off a resumption of bombing in North Vietnam.

NVA/VC Supply Channels

There is general agreement that the main channels for military supplies reaching enemy forces in the northern areas of South Vietnam (I, and northern II Corps) are the Laos Panhandle and the DMZ. Disagreement exists as to the channel of supplies for III Corps and southern II Corps. MACV points to Cambodia, believing that no large shipments of ordnance are coming into III or IV Corps and southern II Corps via Laos and that Cambodia has during the last two years become a major source of supplies for these regions. MACV has estimated that some 10,000 tons of arms and ammunition have gone through Sihanoukville to the border between October 1967 and September 1968 for the use of the enemy in III, IV, and parts of II Corps. CIA and State disagree strongly with that estimate, and point out the lack of reliable information on the volume of munitions shipments entering Sihanoukville as well as the volume moved across the border. CIA also points out that the volume of Communist supplies flowing through Laos has been more than adequate to cover the external requirements of all Communist forces in South Vietnam. CIA, nevertheless, does not contest the MACV view that Communist forces in IV Corps also are supplied principally from Cambodia, but points out that a substantial part of the munitions supplies moved into this area do not move through Cambodian-controlled channels.

OSD summarizes without comment the national level CIA/DIA estimates for total enemy external daily supply requirements of 80 tons: 34 tons come from Laos, 14 tons across the DMZ, and 32 tons from Cambodia (of which 29 tons involve mainly food and other noncombatant goods).

3. The South Vietnamese Armed Forces (Questions 10A–13)

(Extent and types of RVNAF improvements. Present and future RVNAF capabilities against various threats, with and without U.S. support. Changes required of RVNAF.)

In general, points of disagreement among U.S. agencies on the RVNAF capabilities are more numerous than points of agreement. There is consensus that the RVNAF is getting larger, better equipped and somewhat more effective. All agree that it could not now, or in the foreseeable future, handle both the VC and sizable NVA forces without U.S. combat support. On other major points there are sharp differences. The military community gives much greater weight to

RVNAF statistical improvements while OSD highlights remaining obstacles and CIA points out that qualitative factors must also be considered in evaluating the RVNAF. Paradoxically, MACV/CINCPAC/JCS see RVNAF as being less capable against the VC alone than do CIA and State.

RVNAF Capabilities Against the Enemy

The Vietnamese Armed Forces (RVNAF) are being increased in size and re-equipped to improve their ground combat capability. The best measure of this improvement is the RVNAF's expected performance against a given enemy threat. However, there is a paradoxical divergence in agency views on the RVNAF ability to handle the internal VC threat without U.S. assistance. State (both EA and INR) and CIA—who generally rate RVNAF improvement and effectiveness lowest among the respondents, and who accept the highest estimates of overall VC strength—believe that, "Without any US support, . . . ARVN would at least be able to hold its own and make some progress against the VC unsupported by the NVA" (i.e. the VC without NVA fillers, though with regroupees and matériel support). CIA caveats this judgment, however, by noting that a critical factor, and one almost impossible to judge, would be the effect on the will of both the ARVN and VC of a pullout of North Vietnamese and U.S. forces.

In contrast is the view of MACV/CINCPAC/JCS, who rate RVNAF improvement and effectiveness highest and who accept the lowest estimates of VC armed strength. The military community, nevertheless, believes that without U.S. combat support, in opposing VC main and local forces without any NVA units or fillers, RVNAF "would have to reduce the number of offensive operations and adopt more of a defensive posture," resulting in "loss of control by the Government of Vietnam over substantial rural areas." Thus, MACV/CINCPAC/JCS believe that RVNAF would not be able to cope with purely indigenous VC forces without U.S. combat support until the completion of the modernization program in 1972.

OSD, however, believes RVNAF's capability against VC forces is closely associated with time. If most U.S. forces withdraw now, RVNAF's newly gained confidence may collapse; however, RVNAF capabilities should increase over time provided that a number of major reforms are made in addition to the current modernization program, if even this goal is to be met. "Without major reforms within the RVNAF command and selection system, however, it is unlikely that the RVNAF, as presently organized and led, will ever constitute an effective political or military counter to the Viet Cong." OSD also believes that some reduction of U.S. forces would give impetus to RVNAF to make the required changes.

All agencies agree that RVNAF could not, either now or even when fully modernized, handle both the VC and a sizable level of NVA forces without U.S. combat support in the form of air, helicopters, artillery, logistics and major ground forces.

RVNAF Improvements

There is consensus that RVNAF forces are now much larger (826,000) than in December 1967 (743,000) and will be further increased to 876,000, with the greatest increases in manpower given to the Popular and Regional Forces needed for local security. The RVNAF is also better equipped. All regular combat units have M16 rifles and are beginning to receive increases in their own artillery and helicopter support. Regional and Popular Forces (393,000 of the total RVNAF strength in December 1968) have 100,000 M16 rifles and are scheduled to receive 150,000 more in 1969. MACV has stepped up his training efforts by forming 353 mobile teams in 1968 to train and advise the militia.

Moreover, all agencies agree that overall RVNAF capabilities, number of operations and effectiveness increased during 1968. Data presents a mixed picture in some areas, but it is clear that the larger number of enemy killed by RVNAF resulted from better effectiveness (more kills per 1000 troops, along with higher kill ratios) as well as increased force size. In spite of these statistical improvements (which CIA in particular finds unreliable indicators), RVNAF is best thought of as a force which enlarged its contribution in 1968 within a total allied effort which also expanded. The modernization program, just beginning to have a high impact in the field, promises that results will continue to increase so long as RVNAF receives backbone in the form of a U.S. ground combat presence.

RVNAF Problems

All agree that RVNAF faces severe motivation, leadership and desertion problems. The differences lie in assessing the magnitude and impact these problems have on the prognosis for RVNAF's future. The continuing motivation problem involves loyalty to the government, getting RVNAF troops to fight and doing the right things to improve relations between soldiers and the Vietnamese people. The officer problem is mixed in politics and little has been done to correct it. Poor leadership and motivation contribute to regular ground combat forces deserting (net) at an annual rate of 34% of their strength (gross rate for 1/3 of the divisions is more than 50%). Total RVNAF desertions (net) are equivalent to losing one ARVN division per month.

Thus, OSD does not believe that current expansion and reequipment programs are sufficient to make RVNAF into an effective fighting force unless major political and military actions, which are not now emphasized, are taken. OSD considers essential action to recognize and

reward combat leadership and development of a favorable attitude by the military towards their own people which will result in acceptance and support of the government by its citizens.

JCS, CINCPAC, and MACV recognize leadership and motivational problems, and believe that substantial progress has been made in these areas since 1965, and with current remedial programs RVNAF is making reasonable progress toward development as a self-sufficient force able to hold its own against an internal VC threat. CIA feels that RVNAF is making limited progress, despite the fact that many of its weaknesses are uncorrected. OSD and State also see limited progress and note that many RVNAF weaknesses remain uncorrected. (Within State, INR is less hopeful than the East Asian Regional Bureau.)

4. Pacification
(Questions 14–20)

(Changes in the security situation in Vietnam. Future prospects. Strength of the Viet Cong and efforts against them.)

Two well-defined and divergent views emerged from the agencies on the pacification situation in South Vietnam. One view is held by MACV and Embassy Saigon and endorsed by CINCPAC and JCS. The other view is that of OSD, CIA and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) in State. (The East Asian bureau in State lies somewhere in between.) The two views are profoundly different in terms of factual interpretation and policy implications. Both views agree on the obstacles to improvement and complete success. What distinguishes one view from the other is each's assessment of the *magnitude* of the problem, and the assessment of the degree of improvement likely to take place in the near future.

The Two Views

The first group, consisting of MACV/JCS/Saigon, maintains that "at the present time, the security situation is better than any time during period in question," i.e., 1961–1968. MACV cites a "dramatic change in the security situation," and finds that the GVN controls three-fourths of the population. JCS suggests that the GVN will control 90% of the population in 1969. The second group, OSD/CIA and INR in State, on the other hand, is more cautious and pessimistic; their view is not inconsistent with another Tet-offensive-like shock in the countryside—for example, wiping out the much-touted gains of the 1968 Accelerated Pacification Program, or with more gradual erosion. Representing the second group's view, OSD arrives at the following conclusions:

(1) "The portions of the SVN rural population aligned with the VC and aligned with the GVN are apparently the same today as in 1962: 5,000,000 GVN aligned and nearly 3,000,000 VC aligned."

(2) "At the present, it appears that at least 50% of the total rural population is subject to significant VC presence and influence."

CIA agrees, and INR in State goes even further, saying:

"Our best estimate is that the VC have a significant effect on at least two-thirds of the rural population."

The Major Issues

The substance of the argument is evident in the chart on the next page.[5] Using HES data for 1967–1968, the chart shows that the first group's interpretation leaves only 26.7% of SVN's population to be pacified as of November 1968. The second group thinks 41.3% of the population was yet to be pacified. More importantly, the second view shows little pacification progress over the period except for the gains of the Accelerated Pacification Campaign (APC) program, and they are skeptical about these gains. State (INR), OSD, and CIA maintain that the October–December APC acquisition of 9.4% of the population for the GVN is a fragile claim because these gains were achieved by spreading our military and administrative resources thinly over contested areas. These agencies, therefore, argue that the APC gains have stood so far only because the VC/NLF have not challenged them, and they believe it is "quite likely" the gains will be contested in the coming months.

If the APC gains and those other gains secured in the wake of the fall NVN withdrawals are removed the substance of the long-term debate emerges clearly. The chart then shows that according to the second view, thus modified, pacification programs have registered no progress over 1967–68. The first view sees significant progress over the 1967–68 period. It is further seen that the second view placed the chart's relatively secure line much lower. For example, in August 1968, the first group says 65.8% of the population was under GVN control; the second group places only 49.9% in the GVN category.

The source of this difference is a derivative of a wider dispute over the value of the HES composite indicator which is really an average of eighteen indicators, indiscriminately mixing security factors with development factors and not assessing appropriate weighting for each indicator. The second group arrives at their estimate by allocating a portion of the first group's GVN controlled population to the contested category. They do this by breaking out the "grey area" population on the basis of military and political activity instead of the composite HES indicator. According to their view, in the fall of 1968 at least one-half of South Vietnam's rural population was subject to a significant VC/NLF presence; for the first group, this figure was approximately

[5] Not reproduced here.

one-third. The East Asian Bureau in State takes a middle position and believes that the "relatively secure" population figures derived from HES should not be accepted in toto.

By neither view can pacification be said to have progressed greatly in the last three years, at least, prior to the last few months. This conclusion is emphasized in the OSD view if consideration is given to the fact that about the same number of people have been brought under GVN control by population migration as have been by pacification gains. Nor does either view promise anything close to complete success within two to three years. MACV/JCS anticipates snowballing gains in the future, but other agencies note that stalemating of GVN pacification efforts could make the rural population more ready to accommodate with the NLF. The East Asian Bureau of State believes that the moment for pacification gains was not opportune until late 1967 and that we can anticipate further progress in the next two years.

It is noteworthy that the gap in views that does exist is largely one between the policy makers, the analysts, and the intelligence community on the one hand, and the civilian and military operators on the other.

The implications of the disagreement are very divergent. One view sees a high probability of GVN success and generally applauds the GVN's performance. It finds that the GVN has been ineffective at times, but that it has not been negligent, and overall progress has been most satisfactory.

The other view is greatly different. The GVN has yet to succeed in the countryside. The rural population situation has not changed significantly and certainly not at a rate which will free us of noticeable burdens within 2–5 years. We may even be over-extended in the rural areas and open to a damaging VC counterattack.

In CIA's view, progress has been slow but there has been progress. The real test of how solid recent gains in pacification have been will come when the VC initiate serious counter-pacification activity.

Changes Required

As to the changes required to increase favorable change in security and control, all agree that improvement in leadership, both civil and military, and at all levels, is a primary prerequisite. Other changes recommended are improvements in quality and quantity of small-unit operations in support of territorial security and pacification. A shopping list of recommended changes is provided by MACV/JCS, Embassy Saigon, and OSD. INR in State essentially states that "the basic deficiencies [of pacification][6] remain and give little reason to expect a

[6] Brackets in this and following paragraph are in the source text.

significant change in the situation in the countryside in the next two years." Additionally, OSD has provided gradations of changes which depend upon assessments of present progress and with the more radical changes calling for a reorientation of the advisory system and refocusing of pacification efforts.

Lesser Issues

In 1968, 15,776 members of the Viet Cong political and administrative Infrastructure (VCI) were neutralized, 87.1% of whom were easily replaceable functionaries. Anti-VCI operations showed major improvements, but all agree with the MACV statement "these [VCI] losses have not unduly disrupted the communist political apparatus." A precise estimate of VCI operations is complicated by the fact that current estimates of the size of the VCI differ by 25% or more. Moreover the criteria used to measure neutralizations are different from those used to estimate the infrastructure. Thus any direct comparison of the numbers neutralized and the numbers estimated to be in the VCI are misleading. Analysis of Phoenix and other anti-VCI activities also shows that there are major difficulties with the GVN's method of detainee disposition, and suggests the need for GVN judicial reforms.

All agencies agreed that the Phoenix program was long overdue and potentially very valuable. The respondents agreed that it is too early for a thorough assessment of the Phoenix program, and they predict it is unlikely to cause the NLF major problems in 1969. Embassy Saigon noted that Phoenix bears close watching with respect to the attitudes or rural population, attitudes toward the American sponsors, and a potentially deleterious effect on the possibilities for rural GVN–VC accommodations.

Every agency except MACV/JCS agrees that the available data on war damage to the civilian population is inadequate. CIA concluded the rural hamlets take a tremendous beating both from friendly and enemy forces. The responses received suggest that this is a very serious problem in need of further U.S. Government attention and analysis.

Recent GVN personnel changes were found by all agencies to have brought a significant upgrading in the averaging quality of GVN officials. Nonetheless, corruption, favoritism, and neglect of the populace's problems were still seen as major GVN shortcomings. There was no conclusive evidence that the 1968 personnel changes affected the GVN's relations with minority groups.

5. The Political Scene
(Questions 21–23)

(Current attitudes toward the GVN. Efforts to strengthen it. Noncommunist prospects in Vietnam.)

This section on the political situation can be boiled down to three fundamental questions: (1) How strong is the GVN today? (2) What is being done to strengthen it for the political struggle with the NLF? (3) What are the prospects for continued non-communist government in South Vietnam?

The essence of the replies from U.S. agencies is as follows: (1) The GVN is stronger recently than for many years but still very weak in certain areas and among various elites. (2) Some steps are being taken to strengthen the GVN politically but these are inadequate. (3) It is most difficult to predict the prospects for continued non-communist government, but they are chancy at best.

Within these broad thrusts of the responses there are decided differences of emphasis among the agencies. The implication of these different emphases could very well tip the political balance in South Vietnam over the next several years. Thus, MACV/JCS and Saigon, while acknowledging the problems, accent more the increasing stability of the Thieu regime and the overall political system; the significance of the moves being made by the GVN to bolster its strength; and the possibility of continued non-communist rule in South Vietnam given sufficient U.S. support. OSD on the other hand, while acknowledging certain progress, is decidedly more skeptical and pessimistic. CIA takes a cautiously optimistic view, acknowledging certain progress, but warning of weak spots which still must be overcome. OSD and CIA note recent political improvements and GVN measures but they tend to deflate their relative impact and highlight the remaining obstacles. State's position, while not so consistent or clear-cut, generally steers a middle course, being somewhat skeptical about the overall political situation and the GVN position and seeing prospects as mixed. State both accents recent stability and acknowledges inadequate GVN political actions.

The Present Situation

We have a great quantity of information on Vietnamese politics but the quality is suspect. It varies greatly by elite and level and is usually sounder for broad groups than factions or individuals. OSD remarks that we are dealing with a nascent constitutional system in which the elective process has yet to take hold and elections are viewed as a manipulatory process designed to confirm present leaders with their power positions.

Non-communist elements rally in times of common danger from the communist threat, but otherwise generally engage in a perpetual struggle for power. Most elites may be willing to participate in the GVN but their motives are often mixed. State observes that there generally is a greater commitment to the GVN and anti-communist struggle today and that active non-communist opposition has decreased. In their

view toward the military struggle, Northerners are most insistent on military victory, but the central and Southern Vietnamese indicate ambiguity and war-weariness. Firm support for the GVN, as long as it projects a strong anti-communist image, comes from most military elements, Catholics and portions of the bureaucratic and merchant classes. The major problem for the GVN remains in the rural villages where the VC are strongest. Opposition also comes from certain Buddhist, youth, union and professional elements. Various ethnic and religious minorities, while often anti-communist, are not strongly tied to the GVN. The Army could be a distinct threat to the continance of the GVN if it perceives a weakening of resolve by Thieu toward communists or if U.S. support for civilianization of the GVN or for Thieu is perceived as weakening.

In reading the Vietnamese political scene, one must keep in mind that pragmatism, expediency, war weariness, a desire to remain unaligned and end up on the winning side are all common features. So are family loyalty, corruption, social immobility and clandestine activities.

OSD points out (and a recent Saigon cable corroborates this view) that there has been a noticeable shift recently by many non-communists towards acceptance of the NLF in some capacity as part of an eventual political settlement. How much of this is political opportunism colored by the belief they can control the communists is unknown, but, in any case most elites would want to minimize the communist influence in the government. Most elites are now opposed to a forced coalition government which includes communists in significant positions of power. However, these elites may be highly vulnerable to manipulation by the NLF/PRP [*PRG*] given its organizational strength and political skills.

South Vietnamese attitudes toward the U.S. are varied and ambivalent. Our presence is seen as a necessary evil to forestall a communist take-over. Our involvement is viewed with a mixture of gratitude, shame, and suspicion. Essentially, recent events, especially the Paris talks, have made it apparent to the Vietnamese that the U.S. commitment is not open-ended and that some withdrawals are likely during 1969.

GVN Political Actions

All agencies agree that there has been substantial progress in broadening the government; all except OSD and State see significant movement against corruption; and all agree that political mobilization is both the most crucial and the weakest area. There is a certain ambivalence in agency views which maintain that U.S. pressure for reforms is needed but that we should not get too directly involved. OSD points out past U.S. failures at directing Vietnamese political life into desired channels.

Recent encouraging moves toward broadening the government include various elections, a national assembly with real deliberative powers, and greater Southern and civilian representation in the Cabinet. However, many groups are still not included or are under-represented. And the key problem of engaging the SVN population through GVN political organization from the top to the grass roots level has yet to be addressed by the GVN.

Recent dismissal of many unworthy officials and some increased emphasis on competence for promotion have not disspelled widespread corruption, reliance on personal loyalties and nepotism.

Events of the past year have sharpened the realization of the need for non-communist unity, but the GVN has made less progress on political mobilization than elsewhere. Its ability to gain support will depend primarily on the extent to which it can provide security, an alternative to the NLF, and social and economic progress. OSD has provided specific recommendations for U.S. actions to assist the GVN in attaining these ends.

Prospects

Political mobilization of non-communist elites is the most crucial factor, but it rests inter alia on broadening the government and advancement based on merit, and there are many other political steps needed. In general, all these factors will be increasingly important as the U.S. reduces its military effort. Such a reduction might stimulate political progress but it will also entail risks. As noted earlier, there is some ambiguity as well as differences of view about the proper U.S. role in SVN politics. State and Saigon caution against undue U.S. involvement and pressure. State adds that failure to act and U.S. actions elsewhere can also have impact. MACV/JCS place greater emphasis on the use of our leverage in effecting needed reforms. OSD argues for selective and less visible U.S. involvement in assisting the GVN politically while disengaging portions of the larger visible U.S. presence.

CIA notes that RVNAF will for some time remain the only national political force capable of matching the communists from the point of view of strength and organization. It does not appear realistic or prudent to expect that civilian groups alone can stand up to the communists within the next few years or that they should be given the practical burden of this effort at the expense of the military.

No agency clearly forecasts a "victory" over the communists, and all acknowledge the manifold problems facing the GVN as we withdraw. MACV/JCS stress the need for continued U.S. support. OSD and State believe that a compromise settlement is most likely and emphasize GVN self-reliance. The USIB state that progress in SVN has been sufficiently slow and fragile that substantial U.S. disengagement in the next few years could jeopardize all recent gains.

JCS and OSD each list their essential conditions for cessation of hostilities. While they agree on certain elements, the JCS look toward continued U.S. support to assure the sovereignty of the GVN while OSD requires only that the South Vietnamese be free to choose their political future without external influence.

6. U.S. Military Operations (Questions 24–28)

(Changes in U.S. deployments and tactics. Possibilities for U.S. force reductions. Effectiveness of B–52s, bombing in Laos and North Vietnam.)

The major points of agreement within the U.S. Government on these subjects are:

—the description of recent U.S. deployments and tactics;

—the difficulties of assessing the results of B–52 strikes, but their effectiveness against known troop concentrations and in close support operations;

—the fact that the Soviets and Chinese supply almost all war material to Hanoi and have enabled the North Vietnamese to carry on despite all our operations.

There are fundamental disagreements running throughout this section, including the following:

—OSD believes, and MACV/JCS deny, that there is a certain amount of "fat" in our current force levels that could be cut back without significant reduction in combat capability.

—MACV/JCS and, somewhat more cautiously, CIA and State ascribe much higher casualty estimates to our B–52 strikes than does OSD.

—MACV/JCS assign very much greater effectiveness to our past and current Laos and North Vietnam bombing campaigns than do OSD, State and CIA.

—MACV/JCS believe that a vigorous bombing and interdiction campaign could choke off enough supplies to Hanoi to make her stop fighting, while OSD and CIA feel that such a campaign could not reduce North Vietnam's capabilities to a level that would prevent it from continuing to support the struggle. CIA also is not convinced that the U.S. could sustain an unlimited interdiction and bombing program over a long period of time without losses reaching unacceptable levels.

U.S. Deployments and Tactics

In early 1968, MACV moved the equivalent of two divisions from II and III Corps to northern I Corps. This deployment was a defensive reaction to the threat of a major NVA seige of Khe Sanh and the coastal

lowlands. With the further enemy offensives in February and May, U.S. forces throughout the country (except for I Corps) were pulled back into screening positions around SVN's major cities and used to push the VC forces out. Since then, one of the two U.S. divisions redeployed to I Corps has been returned to III and IV Corps. MACV now gives top priority to the control of Saigon, the approaches to it in III and northern IV Corps, and the heavily populated upper Delta.

Until late 1968, allied (particularly U.S.) efforts were directed largely against enemy main forces through large (1,000 men or more) unit operations. With the recent withdrawal of NVA main force units from SVN, U.S. units have been able to operate in smaller units and with more emphasis on the enemy's infrastructure and support apparatus. U.S. field commanders estimate that nearly half of their operations are in support of pacification. The deployment of U.S. units in SVN's populated areas and the change in tactics has, MACV asserts, helped improve pacification progress.

U.S. Force Reductions

MACV/JCS and OSD agree that there is no way of reducing U.S. force levels in Vietnam without some reduction in combat capability. However, OSD argues that reducing some U.S. logistics headquarters, construction or tactical air personnel may not have any significant effect on U.S. combat capability or effectiveness. For instance, OSD concludes that because of the halt in bombing North Vietnam, the U.S. needs neither as many interdiction aircraft as we now have, nor our full force of three Navy carriers off North Vietnam, although reduction in any of these areas depends upon NVN's observance of the tacit conditions of the U.S. bombing halt. MACV/JCS feel that while some of the above elements would help to minimize loss of combat capability, in general significant reductions in our force levels will cause "at least equal" reductions in our combat capability.

OSD also thinks that U.S. forces could be reduced as the RVNAF improves and expands. By their estimates, the ongoing RVNAF improvement plan might free up to about 15–20 U.S. maneuver battalions and their support units (some 30–40,000 men) by mid-1969 without a decrease in total allied force capability. This projection assumes that RVNAF combat effectiveness increases along with their combat capability. Additionally, some U.S. forces could be reduced as they turn over equipment to selected RVNAF units. In their responses, MACV/JCS do not consider this question.

B–52 Effectiveness

All agencies acknowledge that sound analysis of the effectiveness of B–52 strikes is difficult. Consistent data bases are lacking. As a result there are sharp differences on casualty estimates. While JCS esti-

mates that about 41,000 enemy were killed in 1968 by the B–52s in all in-country strikes, OSD believes that perhaps as few as 7,100 were killed. The consensus is that some strikes are very effective, some clearly wasted, and a majority with indeterminate outcome.

There is agreement that B–52 strikes are very effective when directed against known enemy troop concentrations or in close support of tactical operations, and have served to disrupt VC/NVA operations. However, OSD and State, unlike MACV/JCS, find that B–52 strikes against suspected enemy infiltration routes, logistics or base camps/areas (50% of 1968's sorties) are probably much less effective than close support strikes. CIA cites a range of casualty estimates and considers it impossible to select one, but believes it is apparent that B–52 strikes have become a significant factor in the attrition of enemy forces.

The Laos and North Vietnam Interdiction Campaign

It is agreed that our bombing campaign both prior to and after November 1968 has reduced the enemy's throughput of supplies. However, State/CIA/OSD consider that this reduction has not materially affected the enemy's capability to supply his forces. MACV/JCS feel the bombing in Laos since 1 November 1968 has succeeded in reducing significantly enemy throughput capacity so that his minimum essential requirements in both Laos and SVN were not met during the period 1 November 1968 to 25 January 1969. State/CIA/OSD think it has failed to prevent the flow of supplies to SVN, though CIA feels it has cost the enemy heavily.

Post-November Campaign

Since early November, MACV has attempted to reduce the logistic capacity of the enemy by blocking the two key roads near the passes from NVN into Laos. MACV finds it has effectively blocked these roads 80% of the time and therefore caused less traffic to get through. OSD/CIA/State agree that enemy traffic on the roads attacked has been disrupted. However, they point out that the enemy uses less than 15% of the theoretical road capacity, that he is constantly expanding that capacity through new roads and bypasses, and that our air strikes do not eliminate, but only delay, traffic.

Besides blocking the roads, our bombing destroys material in transit on them. (In this connection, State notes the change in emphasis in Laotian bombing from the destruction of matériel, prior to mid-1968, to interdiction of the routes themselves.) JCS/MACV and OSD/CIA agree that we destroy 12% to 14% of the trucks sighted moving through Laos and 20% to 35% of the total flow of supplies in Laos. To MACV/JCS, the material destroyed forces the enemy to provide additional matériel to compensate for losses in order to maintain an acceptable level of support to the VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam. OSD

and CIA find that the enemy needs in SVN (10 to 15 trucks of supplies per day from the North) are so small compared with his logistics capacity that the enemy can replace his losses easily by increasing his traffic flows to offset attrition and get through to SVN as much supplies as he wants to despite the bombing.

Pre-November Campaign

Prior to November 1968, we bombed in southern North Vietnam as well as Laos. The MACV/JCS find that this campaign reduced the flow of supplies into Laos greatly and that this flow increased greatly after the bombing halt. The OSD/CIA agree that traffic followed this pattern, but argue that normal seasonal weather changes as well as the bombing affected the traffic pattern.

Alternative Campaign

All agencies agree that Chinese and Soviet aid has provided almost all the war material used by Hanoi. However, there is some disagreement on whether alternative military courses of action could reduce the flow enough to make a difference in South Vietnam. If all imports by sea were denied and land routes through Laos and Cambodia attacked vigorously, the MACV/JCS find that NVN could not obtain enough war supplies to continue. OSD and CIA question the effectiveness of a campaign to block the overland routes from China which alone could provide NVN enough material to carry on the war.

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45. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 25, 1969.

SUBJECT

Quarantine of Cambodia

Secretary Laird has sent you a study prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at your request, on the feasibility and utility for quarantining Cambodia against the receipt of supplies and equipment to support the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces operating in and from Cam-

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. I, 8–69. Top Secret; Sensitive.

bodia. (Secretary Laird's memorandum and the Joint Chief's study are attached at Tab A.)[2]

The basic conclusions of the Joint Chiefs are:

(1) An air/sea blockade and other steps to quarantine Cambodia are both militarily feasible and of some utility in intensifying enemy supply problems in the III and IV Corps areas.

(2) Ground operations to deny the enemy use of the Laos Panhandle for support of enemy forces operating in and from Cambodia are not feasible within current force levels. However, present interdiction operations against enemy lines of communication in Laos should be continued to the maximum extent.

(3) While diplomatic exchanges between the U.S. and Cambodia may present an opportunity to gain Cambodian assistance in reducing enemy use of Cambodia as a sanctuary, the most effective method would be preemptive ground and air operations of limited depth and duration in Cambodia and in the tri-border area of Laos.

On the basis of these conclusions, the Joint Chiefs made four recommendations:

(1) Air/sea blockade or quarantine be retained as an option to be undertaken when appropriate against the receipt in Cambodia of supplies and equipment for the support of VC/NVA forces operating in and from Cambodia against South Vietnam.

(2) Interdiction operations against the enemy's lines of communication in Laos be continued to the maximum extent.

(3) Current political initiatives be used to gain Prince Sihanouk's support or acquiescence in allied military efforts to reduce the enemy's sanctuary and the flow of supplies to VC/NVA forces operating in and from Cambodia.

(4) In concert with other appropriate initiatives outlined above, short-term air and ground raids be authorized against clearly identified VC/NVA forces and supplies in sparsely populated areas of Cambodia along the SVN border, and in southern Laos.

Secretary Laird has recommended that the National Security Council review this issue before any new military actions are authorized because of the political implications of the Joint Chief's recommendations. These political implications are briefly the need to estimate Prince Sihanouk's level of tolerance for operations inside Cambodia, and the question of consulting with Prince Souvanna

[2] Tab A, a memorandum from Laird to Nixon, March 18, and Annex A, an undated JCS study of a quarantine of Cambodia, are not attached. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

Phouma on further operations in Laos, as we have done in the past with good results. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are also preparing a list of specific military actions in Cambodia which would not be subject to National Security Council review.

Recommendation:

That Secretary Laird and Secretary Rogers be requested to prepare a joint study on the military and political implications of preemptive operations against Cambodia and Laos for consideration by the National Security Council.[3]

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[3] Nixon initialed the disapprove option and wrote: "Let's not make any 'decisions' on this until we get another crack or two at Cambodia. Later—have the study made." In an April 8 memorandum to Laird, Kissinger informed him that the President had reviewed the study on quarantining Cambodia and that he "desires that this matter be held in abeyance for the time being." (Washington National Records Center, OSD/ISA Subject Decimal Files: FRC 330 72 A 6308, Box 7, Cambodia 1969 000.1)

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46. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Vietnam Negotiations Papers for the NSC[2]

Attached are the General Negotiating Strategy Paper and a paper on Mutual Withdrawal approved by the Review Group for discussion

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 82, NSC Meetings, Jan–Mar 1969. Top Secret; Nodis; Paris Meetings; Plus. On a copy of this memorandum in the Johnson Library, Halperin Papers, Box 4, Chronological File, March–July 1969, a note on the first page reads: "HAK discussed with RN and perhaps shown to him."

[2] On March 12 Kissinger sent Rogers, Laird, and Helms NSSM 29, which informed them that the President had directed preparation of two papers described as: "1. *Negotiating strategy paper.* This paper should discuss the strategy we would follow in private talks with Hanoi. It should also consider our strategy for dealing with the GVN in regard to private talks. 2. *Mutual withdrawal of forces.* This paper should consider our basic objectives with regard to mutual withdrawal. It should discuss major issues and alternative positions on these issues." These papers were to be submitted to the Review Group by March 17. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–140, NSSM Files, NSSM 29)

at the NSC meeting on March 28.[3] Summaries of each of these papers are included, as well as an issues for decision paper.[4] This memo summarizes the major points of difference which you may wish to have discussed at the NSC meeting, and contains my recommendations.

Also attached is a summary of the agency responses to the questions on Vietnam which we prepared prior to January 20.[5] The summary has been agreed to by the agencies.

I. Strategy Paper

A. De-Escalation

The issue is whether we should be prepared to negotiate de-escalatory steps in Paris. Some argue that the enemy will raise the issue and we must be prepared to talk about it because critics of the war will keep on this issue. It is also argued that mutual de-escalation would increase public support for the war and give us time to work out a settlement. While acknowledging the difficulties of developing proposals, Paris argues that the scope and pace of B–52 strikes, U.S. offensive operations, and U.S. harassment and interdiction fire could be curtailed.

The opposing position is that we should not ourselves raise the subject in Paris and, if the other side raises it, say we are prepared to discuss it in the context of mutual withdrawal. MACV and the JCS feel very strongly that we should not be prepared to negotiate de-escalation. MACV argues that the cut-down on combat sweeps would shift degree of initiative from us to the enemy, which he would exploit to rebuild his strength in populated areas. He also argues that this would result in a shift in the KIA ratios in a direction less favorable to the U.S. He argues that a cutback in artillery and air support including B–52's would result in further loss of American lives and would have "seriously adverse" results. Furthermore, tacit understandings on mutual de-escalation have already been proved illusory.

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[3] Neither attached; Bundy sent a revised draft of both papers to the Chairman of the NSC Review Group under two separate covering memoranda, both March 21. They were found attached to an uninitialed and undated draft of Kissinger's memorandum to Nixon. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 182, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous/Memcons, Vol. II) The approved papers, comprising NSDM 9, are ibid., NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–209, NSDM Files, NSDM 9. For the NSC meeting, see Document 49.

[4] Attached were two summary papers, both March 25, entitled, "A General Strategy and Plan of Action for the Vietnam Negotiations" and "US Position on Mutual Withdrawal" and an undated paper which is printed as an attachment.

[5] Document 44.

I believe that we should not feel obliged to talk about de-escalation simply because the enemy may want to do so. Attempts to negotiate a de-escalatory agreement would only bog talks down while adversely affecting the morale of our troops. I, thus, recommend that the second position be included in the Game Plan.

II. Mutual Withdrawal

A. Residual U.S. Forces

The Joint Chiefs and MACV argue that we should keep open the option of maintaining U.S. combat forces in South Vietnam after we complete our mutual withdrawal. They argue that we cannot be sure that the GVN will be able to handle the NLF alone and should be free to leave our own combat forces in South Vietnam.

State and Paris argue that we need to be clear in our own minds that we are prepared to take out all of our combat forces, while leaving behind civilians and MAAG personnel, in the improbable event that Hanoi fully satisfies the conditions we set for mutual withdrawal.

This is in large part a theoretical issue. If we adopt the State/Paris position, we would be committing ourselves in principle to withdraw all of our combat forces only if Hanoi met all of our conditions. These conditions would be (1) withdrawal of all North Vietnamese regulars, all North Vietnamese serving in VC units, and all other personnel infiltrated from North Vietnam into the South, (2) withdrawal must be to North Vietnam, not to Laos and Cambodia, and (3) there must be adequate verification. It is very doubtful that Hanoi would ever adequately perform on each of these conditions. We will always be in a position to assert that Hanoi has not lived up to its commitments and hence we are free to leave troops behind. If Hanoi did meet all of our conditions fully, it is doubtful that we would need to leave any combat troops in South Vietnam. Our decision whether to proceed with a complete withdrawal will be a political one not bound by what we have agreed to in principle if Hanoi met our conditions.

On the other hand, an effort on our part to exempt some combat forces would be taken by the Soviets and our public, as well as Hanoi, as a hardening of our position. Hanoi would very likely seize on this issue to attempt to stir public controversy in the U.S. Thus, I believe we should be prepared in principle to withdraw all of our combat forces if Hanoi meets our conditions.

B. Completion of Withdrawal Within Six Months

State feels that we should not repudiate the Manila Declaration commitment to be out six months after all North Vietnamese forces

have been withdrawn. The Manila Communiqué was negotiated with and accepted by the GVN and the Troop Contributing Nations. Any new position on a time limit would require a further round of negotiations with them. Harriman assured DRV, on instructions, that this was our position. We could also have problems in Congress if we repudiated the Manila Communiqué.

On the other hand, Secretary Laird believes that the Manila six-month time limit is far too rigid. He has in the past indicated that he would like to have up to two years to take all of our troops out. Saigon, without noting any MACV dissent, accepts the six-month deadline for personnel, but points out that additional time will be required for the removal of military supplies and equipment.

State points out that the six-month formula gives us considerable leeway since we can decide when all of Hanoi's forces have in fact been withdrawn from South Vietnam all the way to North Vietnam. Since it is almost certain that North Vietnam will in fact leave behind some forces, we will, in actual fact, have flexibility in implementing the six-month provision.

This issue is closely related to the residual combat troop issue. Again, if Hanoi did not meet our conditions we could complete our withdrawal at our own pace—if at all. The one added element is that we introduced this concept initially at Soviet urging since they said Hanoi did not believe that we would ever really withdraw. If we back off this pledge, we are likely to find it harder to get the Soviets involved constructively.

If we interpret the conditions which Hanoi must fulfill rigidly, then the six months deadline gives us flexibility. If we are not going to be rigid—and there will be strong pressures on you not to be—then it would be better to have a longer deadline. However, you should take account of the problems with our public and Congress, with our allies, and with the Soviets which would result if we changed the time limit. Thus, if we do not change the time limit, you will face problems down the road; if we do change, you will face problems now.

We need urgently to have a study of the details and modalities of mutual withdrawal including, in particular, the question of adequate verification.

Attachment

Paper Prepared for President Nixon[6]

Washington, undated.

VIETNAM NEGOTIATIONS ISSUES FOR DECISION

Following the NSC meeting:

You may wish to approve the Negotiating Strategy and the Mutual Withdrawal papers as guidance for the first phase of the negotiations. Recognizing that our views on the issues discussed in the paper may require revision as the negotiations proceed, it would be extremely useful to be sure that everyone starts out on the same track.

I, therefore, recommend that you do approve the two papers. We would then distribute them on a very selective basis.

I. Negotiating Strategy Paper

A. *Approval of this paper* means in essence:

1. Objectives:

a. Our general objective is to give the South Vietnamese the opportunity to determine their own political future without outside interference.

b. Our first priority objectives are agreed or tacit mutual withdrawal (with attendant reduction in hostilities), reestablishment of the DMZ, eventual total ceasefire, release of allied prisoners, relevant interim policing machinery, and restoration of 17th parallel as provisional boundary line. Other objectives down the line include status of the two Vietnams, relationships between them, follow-on inspection and supervision machinery, international guaranties, Laos, Cambodia, and economic questions.

c. We leave to the Vietnamese themselves questions concerning the political future of South Vietnam and minimize our negotiating involvement in these issues.

2. Game Plan

a. Our emphasis will be on private talks, between the DRV and ourselves on the one hand, and the GVN and NLF on the other.

b. Our posture will be one of sincere desire for progress, but not an over-eagerness that could mislead Hanoi.

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[6] Top Secret; Sensitive.

c. Our early negotiating emphasis will be on mutual withdrawals, the DMZ, and POWs (as it already is in Paris).

B. In approving the paper you will have to choose between two positions on *deescalation:*

1. Express an interest in communicating with the enemy about possible deescalatory moves and authorize our negotiators to discuss the subject.

2. Indicate that you do not wish to enter into negotiations in Paris on deescalatory moves except in the context of mutual withdrawal.

I recommend Option 2. It is hard to visualize concrete deescalatory proposals that would be truly reciprocal. Most suggestions would seem to favor the enemy militarily. We need not feel obliged to talk about deescalation simply because the enemy may raise the issue. Attempts to negotiate deescalatory agreements would only bog talks down while adversely affecting the morale of our troops. However, there is no reason why we cannot proceed with in-house studies of this problem.

II. Mutual Withdrawal Paper

A. *Approval of this paper* means in essence:

1. Our basic objectives are to achieve the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia back to North Vietnam and to get adequate assurance that such withdrawals have taken place.

2. We would insist on the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese regular forces, fillers in nominally VC units and other personnel infiltrated from the North, although we would be prepared to live with some inevitable ambiguity about the latter category.

3. We would be willing to withdraw U.S. allied forces contingent upon withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces and units.

4. We would begin our withdrawals as North Vietnam begins its withdrawals and ceases its flow of new manpower; we would not require subsidence of violence as a formal precondition to our withdrawals but would look at this factor in assessing the enemy's compliance with withdrawal agreements.

5. We would work toward a timetable that would include phasing of agreed withdrawals on each side, simultaneous initiation of withdrawals, and completion of enemy withdrawals before our own.

6. In carrying out our withdrawals, we would continually look at the total pattern of North Vietnamese actions to assess their good faith.

7. We would not link the issue of mutual withdrawals with the future internal political structure of South Vietnam, although we would not complete withdrawals if the total picture in Paris and Vietnam gave us ground for serious doubt concerning Hanoi's intentions.

8. We would press for North Vietnamese withdrawals from Laos and Cambodia, particularly, in the case of Laos, those troops which have been supporting operations in South Vietnam.

9. We would insist that agreed withdrawals and future compliance must be subject to adequate policing, although we cannot yet be clear on what specific types of arrangements will be necessary and appropriate.

10. Any unilateral allied withdrawals would be based on full consultation with the GVN and our assessment of the overall picture, including the impact of such withdrawals on our negotiating position.

B. There are two issues discussed in the paper on which there is disagreement: (1) residual U.S. forces and (2) six month deadline.

C. With regard to *residual U.S. forces,* the options are:

1. Be prepared to state that agreed and verified mutual withdrawals will, in principle, in the end include the withdrawal of all U.S. and allied combat and directly combat-related forces, if there is a full and verified withdrawal to North Vietnam of the North Vietnamese forces.

2. At least for a period of time, plan to leave some combat forces behind and avoid any commitment to pull them all out.

I recommend Option 2. To attempt to exempt some combat forces from our withdrawals would clearly be considered a hardening of our position by all concerned. We would set back the negotiations and stir great controversy in this country (and not just among dovish elements). If Hanoi does fulfill its withdrawal obligations, it is not clear that U.S. combat forces would be needed.

D. With regard to the *six-month deadline,* the options are:

1. Be prepared to specify at an appropriate time that the period between completion of a full and verified North Vietnamese withdrawal to North Vietnam and the completion of our own withdrawal would be not more than six months.

2. Simply say that withdrawal would be completed as soon as practicable, avoiding any time limits.

I recommend Option 1. To drop the six month target would also be considered a hardening of our position in relation to past private and public statements. We will have considerable flexibility in defining the starting date for our six month obligation, and we can insist upon strict compliance by Hanoi with whatever withdrawal agreements are negotiated.

III. Further Studies

You may wish to direct studies on:

A. Actual modalities of mutual withdrawal, including verification procedures.

B. Possible forms of political accommodation in South Vietnam.

C. Laos, in the context of the Vietnam settlement.

D. Possible forms of deescalation.

I recommend all four studies. I believe that it would be useful to study deescalation in part to make clear the great difficulty of developing any concrete proposals.

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47. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March, 27, 1969.

SUBJECT

Covert Support for the Lien Minh (National Alliance for Social Revolution)

On 25 March 1969, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker briefed the 303 Committee on the present status of President Thieu's efforts to build a broad coalition of forces into a political structure, the Lien Minh, which will be capable of competing successfully with the communist political machinery following a peace settlement.[2]

President Thieu first discussed his Lien Minh concept with Ambassador Bunker in the early part of 1968. Subsequently, in 303 Committee discussions, it was agreed that this was the most potentially promising effort seen thus far in South Vietnam to develop a broadly based political structure with mass appeal and support. Ambassador Bunker was authorized to provide [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] in covert CIA funds to President Thieu to give impetus to the effort. This amount was passed directly to President Thieu in increments during the period August 1968–March 1969.

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 301, NSC Files, 303 Committee, 1969–1970. Secret; Eyes Only. Sent for action. Initialed by Kissinger on March 29.

[2] This memorandum essentially repeats Bunker's briefing of the 303 Committee on March 25. In addition the 303 Committee was told at the meeting that on March 20 the President agreed that a CIA paramilitary operation in Cambodia against North Vietnamese regulars "would not be worth the expense." The Committee was also informed that the President authorized monitoring possible diplomatic and covert ways to reduce arms traffic from Cambodia to South Vietnam. (Minutes of 303 Committee, March 25; Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, 303/40 Committee Meetings, 2/16/69–1/20/70)

President Thieu has moved slowly and cautiously but some progress has been made. Lien Minh is established and operating in Saigon/Cholon and running community projects in 9 of the 11 districts; some neighborhood money has been raised; 20 provincial committees have been formed and selection and training of provincial cadres is under way. Theoretically, its membership comprises some 40 or more groups, the principal ones being the National Salvation Front (NSF), Free Democratic Forces (FDF), and CVT, South Vietnam's largest labor federation, but not many cadres.

President Thieu, in his conversation with Ambassador Bunker last week, explained that he had been moving cautiously behind the scenes and not openly putting his full weight behind the Lien Minh as the time was not right.[3] Now that there is a rapidly growing awareness among the people and their leaders that a peace settlement is coming and that the fight against the communists will shift to the political field he is ready to move.

President Thieu is concentrating on development of middle-level working cadres and programs that will interest the masses and inspire them with hope. There are some 5,000 cadres now in Lien Minh in trade unions, some farmer groups, and in a few political, religious and other organizations. He plans to coalesce and expand these forces initially to something on the order of 16,000 and eventually to a 50,000 cadre organization. He will need money, training schools, indoctrination programs, and a range of activities to do this.

President Thieu has already begun talking with individual political leaders and plans to convene a national convention or "seminar" in April at which he expects to be elected leader of the new movement.

Ambassador Bunker strongly recommended that he be authorized to pass additional covert funds to President Thieu in the amount of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] in increments during the next six months to support further development of the Lien Minh during this crucial period. He estimates the risks of disclosure are slight since President Thieu receives the funds directly. He also estimates that this contribution will be initially about 50% of the support of the Lien Minh, but as its financial base broadens the U.S. contribution will become proportionately less.

The 303 Committee endorsed Ambassador Bunker's recommendation on the understanding that he will provide monthly progress reports on Lien Minh developments and any indications of increased risk of exposure of U.S. support.

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[3] As reported in a March 21 memorandum of conversation between Thieu, Bunker, and Berger at the Embassy in Saigon. It is attached to the minutes of the March 25 303 Committee. (Ibid.)

I recommend that you approve the 303 Committee's endorsement of Ambassador Bunker's recommendation and authorize the passage of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] in covert funds to President Thieu in increments during the ensuing six months.[4]

[4] Nixon initialed the approve option.

48. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 28, 1969.

SUBJECT

U.S. Relations with Cambodia

Secretary Rogers has recommended (Tab I),[2] the issuance of a border declaration on Cambodia *in two or three weeks,* following consultation with our allies. He has also recommended that you approve the draft letter (Tab B)[3] thanking Sihanouk for the release of four American airmen and acknowledging his letter of February 25.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. 1, 8–69. Secret; Exdis. Sent for action.

[2] Tab I, attached but not printed, is a memorandum from Rogers to Nixon, March 26, entitled "U.S. Relations with Cambodia," in which Rogers recommended that Nixon "approve the issuance of a declaration recognizing the territorial integrity of Cambodia within its present frontiers, as a further step toward resumption of diplomatic relations on satisfactory terms."

[3] The draft letter to Sihanouk and Sihanouk's February 25 letter to Nixon were attached to Rogers' March 26 memorandum. According to an April 2 memorandum from Moose to Walsh, the President approved the border declaration and transmission of the letter to Sihanouk through the Australians. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. 1, 8–69) The border declaration was delivered to Sihanouk by the Australian Ambassador on April 16. It read: "In conformity with the United Nations Charter, the U.S.A. recognizes and respects the sovereignty, independence, neutrality, and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Cambodia within its present frontiers." (Telegram 55018 to Bonn and 10 other posts, April 10; ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 1 CAMB–US) Sihanouk called a press conference on April 18 to thank Nixon for the "gesture of equity and justice" and expressed the conviction that "inevitable border incidents" would not cause another rupture in U.S.-Cambodian relations. (Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, April 18; ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 5, President's Daily Briefs)

Rogers' recommendations are consistent with the course of action you approved in early February looking toward a resumption of diplomatic relations with Cambodia. After issuing the border declaration, Rogers plans to send a diplomatic officer to Phnom Penh to explore reopening our embassy there. These actions assume a continued favorable attitude toward resumption of relations on the part of Sihanouk. In his messages to you, in conversations with diplomats in Phnom Penh, and in public statements, Sihanouk has consistently encouraged a resumption of relations.

I agree with Secretary Rogers' recommendations, but would urge that we push for somewhat faster action on the border declaration if the consultations with our allies go well.

Recommendations

1. That you approve the issuance of a border declaration, with instructions to Secretary Rogers that we should aim for delivery in about 10 days.[4]

Alternatively, I prefer to stick to three-week time table

2. That you approve the draft letter at Tab B.

[4] Nixon initialed the approve option.

49. Minutes of National Security Council Meeting[1]

Washington, March 28, 1969.

The Meeting started at 10:00 a.m. The following were in attendance:

The President
The Vice President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
Director, Office of Emergency Preparedness
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Director of Central Intelligence
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 82, NSC Meetings, Jan–Mar 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive. These minutes were based on notes taken by Haig that were typed by a White House secretary; Haig made corrections by hand to the typed transcript.

Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker
General Andrew Goodpaster
Mr. Philip A. Habib
Mr. Richard Sneider
Colonel Alexander M. Haig

The President introduced the meeting stating there were three issues to be addressed:

1. De-escalation.
2. Mutual withdrawal and the related issues of residual troops in-country; and
3. The provision of the Manila Declaration, i.e., the interpretation of the six-month clause.

The President stated that discussion would be held on these three points, following a briefing by Ambassador Bunker.[2] Ambassador Bunker made the following points in explaining President Thieu's and the South Vietnamese Government's attitude on a negotiated peace settlement:

1. The present offensive has demonstrated South Vietnam's growing confidence and conversely has highlighted the growing weakness of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese in a military sense.

2. President Thieu now visualizes and accepts that there will be a transition from purely military operations into a struggle which will be conducted within a political framework. This transition in his own estimate of the situation is a further reflection of the growing strength of the Thieu Government. In Thieu's words, "A year ago, we could only talk in terms of military victory. Six months ago, we could talk in terms of a peace settlement. Today we can talk in terms of a political settlement".

3. The bombing halt of 31 March [1968] led to the realization on the part of the South Vietnamese that U.S. would not underwrite them indefinitely. This tended to crystallize South Vietnam's resolve and combined with the growing dynamism and forceful and sagacious leadership of President Thieu, great progress has been made (Ambassador

[2] On March 12 Nixon sent Kissinger a memorandum indicating he "would like to talk with Bunker within the next two or three weeks. I have been reading his cables and he seems much more concerned about attacks in South Vietnam than we are here. I have never met Bunker and I feel that because of the importance of his position I need to talk to him so that I can judge for myself what weight to give to his cables. Get him back here as soon as it is convenient so that it does not look like a crisis, but under no circumstances do I want his return delayed beyond three weeks." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Personal Files, Box 1, Memorandum for the President, RN Memos 68–12/69, Mar. 69) Nixon met Bunker in San Clemente on March 23 for an early Sunday morning meeting also attended by Rogers, Kissinger, and Goodpaster. (Ibid., White House Central Files, Daily Diary) No other record or time of this meeting has been found. The President, apparently accompanied by Bunker, Kissinger, Rogers, and Goodpaster, flew to Washington at 12:39 p.m. (Ibid.)

Bunker emphasized that he knew of no equal to President Thieu within the ranks of South Vietnamese leaders).

4. In the past two months, President Thieu has talked of a settlement in two terms:

a. A general election which would permit the NLF to function as a party but perhaps under a different name.

b. Acceptance by Thieu of private talks and also an acceptance of the possibility that the NLF would be included in such talks but with emphasis on conversations between the U.S. and Hanoi; but still recognizing the possible expansion of the talks to all four parties if required.

An alternate approach to the political settlement in Thieu's mind would include general elections with possible accompanying changes in the Constitution and the inclusion of international supervision of the election procedure.

5. Concerning 4 above, Ambassador Bunker stated that he had warned Thieu on the issue of the NLF's fear of reprisals from the South Vietnamese Government and confirmed that Thieu had agreed to discuss this as well as a political settlement. Thieu indicated that perhaps an international supervisory commission could oversee this situation.

6. Thieu has discussed the question of guarantees and has expressed strong concern that viable guarantees be provided to insure that the North would pay a heavy price for renewed attacks. At the same time, he recognized that South Vietnam's armed strength would be a major factor, together with outside guarantees in precluding the renewal of North Vietnamese attacks. In general, Thieu believes he could maintain his control of the government under the above circumstances because the NLF has been badly hurt in recent months and their infrastructure is in a bad state of repair.

7. The Government and the people of South Vietnam now recognize the need for peace. At this point, the President asked when this shift in South Vietnamese attitude occurred. Ambassador Bunker replied that Thieu has known this for some time. Secretary Rogers asked "but when did it occur?" Ambassador Bunker answered to the effect that this has been true for several months. In December, for example, Thieu agreed to accept a greater share of the burden of conducting the war. He has admitted over the past six months that the people must get ready for political warfare. At the same time, he has had to bring the government along at a pace which he felt personally was best suited to the circumstances. He has managed this extremely well. The evolution has occurred primarily due to the growing strength of the government in both political and psychological terms.

Secretary Rogers asked whether or not Bunker knew that Thieu was going to make his recent statement on private talks. Ambassador Bunker replied "no".

The President commented, "I think the main point here is that the error made by the previous Administration was in beating the South Vietnamese over the head publicly to be more forthcoming," commenting that he had informed a Congressional group last night that we had carefully avoided this approach in order to build the South Vietnamese's trust. The President asked Ambassador Bunker whether or not Thieu really trusts us. Bunker replied, "yes, and this is my main point. We have re-established trust since January and this, in turn, has been a major contributor to their willingness to come along with us on the peace issue. The principal factors in this phenomena have been your talk with Ky and our generally coordinated posture."

Secretary Rogers interjected, "Thieu saw my statement before the Foreign Relations Committee and gave us his OK overnight."[3]

The President turned the briefing over to Mr. Habib who reminded the Council that since his last appearance before him, the U.S. had received signals through the Russians that the North Vietnamese were anxious to move on private talks. He confirmed that the U.S. movement in Paris had been very deliberate and that as a result our relations with the GVN in Paris had improved greatly. Habib emphasized that the Plenary Sessions have not changed very much in tone and serve primarily as propaganda sessions and a forum for tentatively exploring new ideas. In these sessions, Habib emphasized, there continues to be a sharp contrast between the conduct and expertise of the NLF on the one hand and GRV on the other, the latter being far more skilled and polished.

Habib emphasized that the U.S. Delegation had accomplished much in the public forum in Paris through the maintenance of a businesslike stance, the avoidance of polemics, and the presentation of brief and specific proposals. Habib summarized that there had been two private meetings since January, the first primarily a protest meeting and the second dealing with substantive issues. Both private meetings were conducted with the full blessing of the GVN Delegation. During the second meeting, the U.S. concentrated on the issue of withdrawal. The North Vietnamese, on the other hand, came in with a Plenary Session type statement but in a private mood. Habib noted that much of that statement was used in yesterday's Plenary Session,

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[3] Apparent reference to Rogers' statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 27, in which he described the U.S. and South Vietnamese negotiating position and the essential elements in an ultimate settlement. His testimony is in Department of State *Bulletin,* April 14, 1969, pp. 306–307.

confirming that it was clearly just the opening round in the secret forum. Habib judged that the North's opening statement was not surprising, and it emphasized:

a. Complete withdrawal of U.S. forces,
b. Requirement that we deal with the NLF,
c. Charges of U.S. escalation, and
d. Confirmation that they are willing to continue the fight.

The North Vietnamese made no specific proposal rather reemphasizing the four and five points and emphasizing participation by the NLF. They did not exclude the possibility of the GVN's participation in the negotiation; made it quite clear that they wanted to continue secret talks; indicated the probability that the bilateral track was acceptable and, in general, continued to give hints of some anxiety. On balance, it appears that we have rattled them in recent weeks, Habib maintained.

The President then asked, "is this just wishful thinking on our part", to which Habib replied, "it might be but I think they want to talk and this is just the first of a series of secret sessions. In this regard, we left open the determination of the next meeting with the general language that "when either side has something to say", the next talk will occur. Habib emphasized that the North Vietnamese nodded as this statement was made and nodded again afterwards. The North also emphasized the importance of secrecy.

The President asked what the implications were of the North Vietnamese side's rejection of Thieu's offer to go into secret talks. Habib replied that this rejection was not as rigid as it appeared in the press and that they actually placed their main stress on refusal to meet with the GVN, leaving the door open somewhat. Habib added "when their spokesman was pressed, they hedged and didn't attack the secret meeting as much as they did the other parts of Thieu's statements."

The President then asked Ambassador Bunker whether or not the GVN would accept a role in four-sided talks which would place them in a position of tagging along with the U.S. Ambassador Bunker replied that when it comes to actual negotiations on the political side that the U.S. cannot do this in behalf of the South Vietnamese but that they will probably go along initially with a four-sided forum.

The President stated, "then it is very important how we proceed on this issue".

Secretary Rogers then emphasized his concern that we were overly sensitive about this point, remarking that first we were concerned whether or not they would accept secret talks at all, but then when we asked Thieu, he readily went along. The Secretary of State then stated he thought the only thing that was really important is that the U.S. does not meet only with the NLF.

The President asked Mr. Habib how long he thought the talks would go on, "18 months, two years? Do you see a Panmunjon situation developing here? Looking at this problem, how long are we going to be in negotiations with sub-threshold fighting continuing?"

Habib replied, "we think it will take some time but in very short order we will get to the heart of the thing in the discussions probably in a month or two." Ambassador Bunker stated that President Thieu sees this year as the critical one. Providing the North sees no flagging in our determination; with such determination, a settlement should probably occur this year.

Secretary Rogers said, "yes, but suppose we lose out, can we start to turn over the fighting to the South Vietnamese?"

General Goodpaster replied, "this depends—we can move in this direction but it depends on what the South Vietnamese themselves do." Secretary Rogers stated that we were told this years ago but we see no movement. "How can we convince the people after all of this failure?"

Habib stated, "the North reads this very carefully, based on how things are gong on the ground but also how they read U.S. domestic attitude. They are most sensitive to it. This is the basis for their current tactics. They are conducting a long, low-level attack and watching U.S. opinion concurrently."

The President then asked, "how do we de-Americanize this thing in such a way as to influence negotiations and have them move along quicker?"

Secretary Rogers said "certainly pacification is a poor explanation."

The President replied "in fairness I must say progress has been made, especially under Thieu. I can certainly defend it to that extent but I need some symbol."

Ambassador Bunker stated, "our problem has always been a case of over-optimism in over-stating the issues. It is time that we tell the American people it is going to be long and tough."

Secretary Laird remarked, "oh, we have been telling the people that. We told them there were going to be improvements in the South Vietnamese forces. There are only a couple of divisions that are worth anything. In several, there have been no improvement whatsoever."

General Goodpaster asked who said this a year ago. The Secretary of State said, "we have been saying this for over a year and a half. What do we say now?"

General Lincoln said, "I think South Vietnam has improved its forces but it is not being reported, especially back here."

General Goodpaster stated, "it is true that the 5th and 18th Divisions have been weak and continue to stay that way."

Mr. Helms said, "yes, we have heard this story before."

Secretary Rogers stated, "we have to de-Americanize the war to safeside a failure in the negotiations. We need discernible progress." The President stated that timing is a problem. "We must move in a deliberate way, not to show panic. We cannot be stampeded by the likes of Fulbright."

Secretary Rogers said, "but if we say we are going to be deliberate, the American people won't stand for it."

General Goodpaster said, "I think we must remember that the money for the improvement of the RVNAF did not come until after Tet and progress has been substantial since that time. We have moved from 750,000 to 855,000 troops and the caliber of the force has improved. There can be no question about their improvement. The RF and the PF have grown quantitatively and qualitatively. The overall improvement has been substantial and we are, in fact, closer to de-Americanizing the war but we are not at the decision point yet."

The President stated, "we need a plan. If we had no elections, it would be fine. Just like Great Britain in Malaysia, we cannot sustain this at current rates for two years. The reality is that we are working against a time clock. We are talking 6 to 8 months. We are going to play a strong public game but we must plan this. We must get a sense of urgency in the training of the South Vietnamese. We need improvement in terms of supplies and training."

Secretary of Defense Laird stated, "I agree, but not with your term de-Americanizing. What we need is a term Vietnamizing to put the emphasis on the right issue."

The President agreed.

The Secretary of Defense then stated that there are considerable problems on Phase II add-ons with respect to the Congress. They are not willing to pay for the sophisticated equipment, especially trucks. The Secretary had told General Westmoreland to visit the people on the Hill and explain to the people our problem.

General Goodpaster stated, "they must have mobility. The ARVN uses the road to a greater degree than we have to. For example, they are using cranes for all kinds of purposes."

The President asked if the Viet Cong had cranes.

General Goodpaster replied that we are now at a time when we can plan for the first increment for our withdrawal but only based on a decision in the light of conditions at the time. Our view this time will be July.

The President noted that U.S. casualties were down this week and asked if the offensive was over. General Goodpaster replied, "not yet. The enemy has some forces it has not committed, primarily because they have not been able to get them in position but also because they have been extremely conservative in this operation."

The President asked whether there would be another offensive in May or June. General Goodpaster replied that it took 6 months for the enemy to get sufficiently built up to launch this one and infiltration is now down somewhat. This will probably result in a smaller offensive this May.

The President then asked why it would be so difficult to make our decision if this offensive has been so poor, "why won't we be able to pull the forces out?" General Goodpaster replied, "we want to look at the status of pacification, the improvement of RVN and you can't pull out troops in the midst of an offensive. Also, they could come across the DMZ."

Habib stated "if we look at the record, we can see that over the year, the Viet Cong have carefully geared their military operation to the conduct of their negotiations. The enemy is willing to accept casualties for purely negotiating reasons. He will conduct his ground operations for political objectives in Paris."

The President re-emphasized that the South Vietnamese must do more.

Ambassador Bunker said, "we must also remember that negotiations are themselves influenced primarily by what happens on the ground. They took terrible losses during the lull. Defectors were up, KIAs were high, the infrastructure was rolled up. They are already this year running close to last year's losses. That is why they are in Paris. They are suffering on the ground."

The President asked the Director of CIA to give his views and to capsulize conditions in North Vietnam.

Mr. Helms stated that morale is now a factor in North Vietnam.

The President interrupted and said, "did you say this a year ago?"

Mr. Helms said, "no" and continued emphasizing that the morale problem developed since the bombing halt. Conversely, the offensive has generated some new discipline in the North since they have expected retaliation and are "policing-up" attitudes. There are differences in the leadership in Hanoi. Some agree with negotiating a solution; others disagree. On balance, CIA believes they can go the route if the Soviets and Chinese continue to support them at current levels. Also, they can continue for extended periods with reduced military operations. We believe they can carry on with their current manpower resources.

The President told Mr. Kissinger to discuss the de-escalation point. Mr. Kissinger stated there are two problems for discussion. The first is the game plan and the second, the issue of mutual withdrawal. Looking first at the game plan, a judgment is needed on how to move after one or two more private meetings. We can stress mutual withdrawal initially, plus the DMZ issue and then swing into the political issue. In the game plan proposed for consideration there is one main disagreement

and that involves the issue of de-escalation. Whether or not we should do it is one aspect of the consideration and the other is if we decide to do it in principle, should we then be willing to negotiate it. On the issue itself, the alternatives are:

To consider it only in the context of mutual withdrawal. If we were to decide to negotiate it, we might get into endless discussion. We have a problem of defining it. If we were to adopt a policy of de-escalation, the enemy would lose much of the incentive for negotiating a settlement and the very act of talking about it is a time waster.

On the other side is the argument that de-escalation reduces casualties, strengthens our staying power. Perhaps these two sides are overdrawn but these are the diversions in the game plan.

The President then asked, "by de-escalation, does that mean our unilateral withdrawal." Mr. Kissinger replied, "no."

The President replied, "then it should be understood that this is not what we are talking about when we use the term de-escalation."

Secretary of Defense stated, "I think General McConnell can talk to the Chief's position."

Secretary of State interrupted, "I agree with the first point that de-escalation is not good but we cannot say this in public."

The President stated, "I am afraid if we get into the issue of de-escalation, they will really go for our B–52. Then, we are in a jam."

Mr. Habib stated, "from their standpoint they have been very general in talking about de-escalation. We would not have to propose this in any specific way. Most of the conversation on de-escalation is accusatory. I think we can afford not to raise it initially. But if they begin to move, we should listen."

The President stated, "you wouldn't volunteer."

Secretary Rogers replied, "yes, but we should not be negative on this subject of de-escalation."

Habib stated, "I think we should hold off as Mr. Kissinger has said."

The President stated, "no more talking about this. We are not going to give on this issue. On the other hand, if they raise it, what do you have in mind?"

Secretary Rogers stated, "I think we are in accord on this one."

General McConnell then stated, "I agree with Position 2 with this caveat, if discussion of de-escalation does not include any limitations on weaponry or pacification."

General Goodpaster added, "or Commander's tactics."

Mr. Habib stated, "they have raised all of this but we have never answered."

The President stated, "on the withdrawal issue, I think the question is a moot one. Whether all U.S. forces are withdrawn or not is actually intertwined with what the other side does, especially if we are talking about bargaining and guarantees. We can take all of our forces out if they abide with the conditions. If they don't and we can't, that is fine, but if we can make the American people feel better on this issue, that is also fine."

Mr. Kissinger stated, "there are actually two issues involved: (1) residual forces and (2) our public and private negotiating position. Here, the alternatives are, should we negotiate a requirement for residual forces or should we opt to the listing of a series of conditions which we know won't be met, while speaking as though all forces will be withdrawn?"

The President asked Ambassador Bunker what the South Vietnamese reaction would be on this issue.

Ambassador Bunker replied, we would like to leave this issue open. Thieu has already agreed to the six months provisions of the Manila formula but the key issue would be the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces completely out of Laos and Cambodia and the provision of guarantees which are binding.

The President stated, in my view we should agree to total withdrawal of U.S. forces but include very strong conditions which we know may not be met.

The Secretary of State affirmed the President's position, commenting that if we insist on leaving U.S. forces there, we are going to run into difficulty. It would be much easier to provide a cover set of circumstances which would permit us to do it without claiming it as an objective at the outset.

The President said there is no doubt that U.S. forces will be in Vietnam for some time, something like a large military assistance group, but our public posture must be another thing. The type conditions that we should insist be met are: (1) verification, (2) supervision, (3) total withdrawal from Laos and Cambodia, (4) guarantees or assurances that the above have been done.

Mr. Kissinger then discussed two problems with respect to negotiations. The first is the time that forces would be in Vietnam after a settlement. The second is the issue of how we would treat the six months' provision of the Manila formula. Secretary of State interrupted and stated that he could see no reason why the U.S. Government should stick to the Manila formula. He stated we should have mutual withdrawal which would be total but with strong conditions. Habib added that we have said total withdrawal with conditions and we should not change now. We have told the Soviets this and the South Vietnamese have agreed to it. In terms of the six months' provision, we did say six months at Manila. The South Vietnamese were quite upset and the

North Vietnamese were especially angry and we took the position that it would take us more time (six months) to get our forces out because of the nature of our problem.

The President stated we will not change our position on this issue. We will not outwardly back away from the Manila formula. At the same time, we will keep in mind that we can depart from it in a de facto way.

The President again emphasized that the conditions of withdrawal were the operative portions of any agreement. The President stated it will take a long time to withdraw U.S. forces completely and, frankly, I don't think it can be done within six months.

Habib added it should be understood that under the Manila formula, the withdrawal is phased. When we talk about six months, it means six months after the withdrawal by the North Vietnamese. This is what they understand. This is a sensible position and should pose no problem.

General Lincoln affirmed that this should be feasible.

The President said while we will not depart publicly from the Manila formula, we should not refer to it, simply let it fade away.

Rogers asked if the President meant we should not make any reference to the six months' provision.

The President replied, I want us to be hard in our negotiations but soft in our public stance. Habib said we have not touched on the six months' provisions recently.

The President said that is right, don't get all involved on this issue. If Thieu sees that they meet the conditions that we have established, then we should have no problems with the South Vietnamese. Actually, our negotiated positions to date have been much tougher than was the Manila formula.

Ambassador Bunker said that Manila has been a source of great confusion in South Vietnam and until recently, they thought we would not move at all until six months after the North Vietnamese were entirely out of South Vietnam. Now they understand our position. They understand that the withdrawal would be mutual and simultaneous but that we would have six months longer to complete our total withdrawal.

Again, the President emphasized that we should not get hung up on this issue and that we should emphasize to the South Vietnamese the conditions we will insist upon.

Habib stated that the North Vietnamese will be the ones that will raise this issue. The President replied then tell them we will be out when you meet the conditions that we have established. In other words, after you are gone and the conditions are met, then we will meet our end of the bargain.

General Goodpaster stated that he had three points he wished to make. First, that U.S. forces would need at least three months to get

ready to start any withdrawals. Second, that U.S. forces would need at least six months to get the people and equipment out, emphasizing that people are needed to move equipment and, third, that after all combat forces have been withdrawn that they will need an additional three months to roll up equipment.

The President agreed. Habib stated we will need just such a plan, i.e., a withdrawal plan carefully phased to work with in Paris when we see some progress in the negotiations. Secretary Rogers said it is time that the military realized the kind of problems we have. Why do the military always talk about how much time it will take to withdraw, why do they always rattle the saber in public? This is what has caused our problem with the young people.

General Goodpaster asked that the group consider the facts. He pointed out that the U.S. was now in Phase II of the Vietnamization Program, a program designed to get the VNAF ready to handle the war alone. By mid-year, he stated, we will be nearly completed Phase II. By FY 70, our shortfalls will only exist in helicopters and special forces units. However, it takes until FY 72 for them to get the helicopters and for certain naval forces it will be as late as FY 73.

General Goodpaster emphasized that these problems must be recognized and agreed to furnish Paris with this information. He concluded by pointing out that Phase III which involved the logistics and self-sustaining capability of the South Vietnamese, was programmed for completion at the end of FY 72. In effect, we are talking about two years for the Vietnamese to be ready to take over. It is essential, he said, that we do not place ourselves at a tactical disadvantage at any one point in the process.

The President strongly endorsed General Goodpaster's position.

Dr. Kissinger again took over the conduct of the discussion and asked the group to consider the issue of verification, and the phased withdrawal plan, mentioning the possibility of withdrawal in a de facto sense without negotiations or withdrawal, dependent upon formal negotiations.

The President interrupted and stated he would like to make one more point with the individual involved. He asked Ambassador Bunker if there was anything he had heard here so far which would make his job impossible. Ambassador Bunker replied no.

The President then said that he doesn't like the old style used by the previous Administration of referring always to understandings. He stated that he wanted these things known and formally agreed to, not just indirectly understood. He wants this considered very carefully and when we talk about withdrawal of our forces, we should consider the location to which they will be withdrawn. Are we talking about Okinawa, Hawaii or Thailand or perhaps CONUS?

The President said we need the answers to these questions. They are both political and practical. He said we should meet again in one or two months after these studies are completed. Habib said we need an agreement with the South Vietnamese on the nature of a withdrawal pattern and we will get to work on the issues of phased withdrawal and verification.

Bundy said it is easy to handle the phased withdrawal issue but verification becomes a problem. Who is gong to do it? Do we ask foreign governments to do it? We can prepare a plan but being sure it is complied with is another question.

Habib says we will need these papers shortly. We can only afford to have about two more private meetings before we are ready to talk turkey on withdrawal.

The President then asked Mr. Habib what the Administration could do in Washington to strengthen the U.S. Paris negotiating position. Habib replied, first and foremost, is to keep quiet. Not talking is the best solution. On the issue of de-escalation, there should be no discussion in the public forum.

Rogers interrupted and stated we have got to know what to say publicly. We are constantly being put into the position of commenting. We should probably refer to de-escalation in terms of withdrawal and restoration of the DMZ.

General McConnell stated that he would like to emphasize that when we consider withdrawals and certainly the military wants out as much as anyone, we should not put U.S. forces at a tactical disadvantage and, further, that the U.S. forces must have time to get the equipment out and to get the South Vietnamese ready to handle the problem.

The President reaffirmed General McConnell's position.

General Goodpaster added it should be understood that in practical terms we cannot de-escalate on the ground. We must understand this here at this table.

Habib then added, we must be equally mum on the issue of secret talks. We cannot talk about them publicly in Washington.

The President emphasized to all that this would be done.

Bundy stated that we now need a paper on political settlement, the elements of it, a paper on verification of withdrawal. Finally, we need an answer for the South Vietnamese on what type of guarantees would be provided. The latter is a very thorny area.

Secretary of State affirmed that there would be no talk about abandoning Manila.

The President thanked Ambassador Bunker and Mr. Habib for their contributions and the meeting was adjourned.

50. Talking Points for President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 31, 1969.

TALKING POINTS FOR MEETING WITH
AMBASSADOR LODGE AND MR. HABIB
2:00 P.M., MARCH 31, 1969

1. Express your appreciation to Ambassador Lodge for returning to the U.S. at this time for an exchange of views on the progress of negotiations in Paris. Compliment Lodge on the conduct of the negotiations to date and make the point that you wanted him back at this time so that he would have the first-hand benefit of the results of last Friday's National Security Council meeting on Vietnam prior to proceeding with the private talks.

2. Review the game plan for the private talks:

a. Visualize separate discussions between the US/DRV and the GVN/NLF, private talks including all participants not excluded but the initial focus should be on the US/DRV route.

b. Our posture on the pace of the talks should be ready but not eager. We want to avoid giving Hanoi the impression we are acting from weakness or under pressures.

c. We should maintain public posture of seeking progress without revealing content of private talks.

d. During the early stages we would:

(1) Stress mutual withdrawals. This subject is the foundation of any agreement, of concern to both sides, and our major source of leverage.
(2) Secondary but significant emphasis on restoring the DMZ.
(3) Keep after the question of prisoners.
(4) *De-escalation.* There was a split position in the bureaucracy on this subject prior to the NSC meeting. Some believe we should present and discuss proposals; others disagree. As a result of the NSC meeting on Friday, you have decided:[2]

(a) There will be no de-escalation except as an outgrowth of mutual troop withdrawal.
(b) The U.S. side will not initiate any de-escalation proposals in the Paris negotiations.
(c) If the DRV raise the issue of de-escalation, the U.S. side will listen but only discuss it in the context of mutual withdrawal.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 181, Paris Talks/Meetings, Memos and Miscellaneous, March–May 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive. No drafting information appears on the paper, but it was likely prepared by the White House Staff. Nixon and Kissinger met with Lodge and Habib from 2:05 to 2:55 p.m. on March 31. (Ibid., White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary)

[2] See Document 51.

e. In the broader phase of the negotiations, we would:

(1) Consider moving into a whole set of issues associated with the 62 and 54 Accords and try to get as many agreements as possible. Even in the early stages of talks, Laos, Cambodia and the withdrawal of NVN troops to the DRV must be emphasized. On the definition of U.S. forces subject to withdrawal and as a result of Friday's NSC meeting, you have decided that we should be prepared to state publicly that the U.S. would withdraw all combat forces from South Vietnam if Hanoi meets rigid conditions of a mutual withdrawal agreement. These conditions should include provisions for:

(a) Verification and supervision of withdrawal.
(b) The withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from Laos and Cambodia.
(c) Guarantees to maintain the agreement.

(2) On the issue of a timetable for completion of U.S. withdrawal, you have decided that there will be no public repudiation of the former U.S. position that we would complete our withdrawal within 6 months of the completion of Hanoi's withdrawal (Manila formula). This position, however, will be adopted with the recognition that, in practice, the U.S. will be in a position to control the timing of the completion of our withdrawal, since we can determine if Hanoi has fully met the conditions of the mutual withdrawal agreement. The key point will not be the timetable but rather getting Hanoi to comply with the conditions of the withdrawal.

(3) Concerning the political structure of the South, we should push forward South Vietnamese discussions of the internal political structure. At the same time, we should minimize our involvement in these questions, closely coordinate with the GVN, and urge them to develop negotiating positions.

(4) Concerning GVN, Allied and Soviet roles, we should strive at all times to keep our position fully coordinated with the GVN. We should give the Soviets every opportunity to exert influence in the direction of progress. We do not now envisage a major French role.

3. Inform Lodge that you recognize that the North Vietnamese have been quite successful in conducting their military operations in South Vietnam in such a way as to exert maximum influence on the Paris negotiations. At the same time, you believe we should avoid the de-escalation route at this time in order to preclude a Panmunjom stalemate at the outset. Indicate that you are willing for a time to "take the heat" on this issue.

4. Inform Lodge that you have instructed Ambassador Bunker and General Goodpaster to continue on a priority basis to improve the efficiency and capabilities of the South Vietnamese armed forces and that you anticipate some unilateral U.S. troop withdrawals commencing as early as July, providing there is no drastic change in the situation on the ground.

5. Ask Lodge to provide his appraisal of how the negotiations are proceeding.

51. National Security Decision Memorandum 9[1]

Washington, April 1, 1969.

TO

The Vice President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Director, Office of Emergency Preparedness

SUBJECT

Vietnam

As a result of the National Security Council meeting on March 28, 1969,[2] I have made the following decisions on the issues listed below:

The Issue of De-escalation

1. There will be no de-escalation except as an outgrowth of mutual troop withdrawal.

2. The U.S. side will not initiate any de-escalation proposals in the Paris negotiations.

3. If the DRV raise the issue of de-escalation, the U.S. side will listen but only discuss it in the context of mutual withdrawal.

The Issue of U.S. Forces Subject to Withdrawal

On the definition of U.S. Forces subject to withdrawal, I have decided that we should be prepared to withdraw all combat forces from South Vietnam if Hanoi meets specific conditions of a mutual withdrawal agreement. These conditions should include provisions for:

1. Verification and supervision of withdrawal.
2. The withdrawal of North Vietnamese Forces from Laos and Cambodia, as well as from South Vietnam.
3. Guarantees to maintain the agreement.

The Issue of a Timetable for Completion of U.S. Withdrawal

There will be no public repudiation of the former U.S. position that we would complete our withdrawal within six months of the completion of Hanoi's withdrawal. This position will be adopted with the recognition that, in practice, the U.S. will be in a position to control

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 363, Subject Files, NSDM. Top Secret; Sensitive. General Wheeler also received a copy. Nixon's initials appear at the end of the memorandum.

[2] See Document 49.

the timing of the completion of our withdrawal, since we can determine if Hanoi has fully met the conditions of the mutual withdrawal agreement. The key point will not be the timetable but rather getting Hanoi to comply with the conditions for withdrawal.

The draft papers considered by the National Security Council on March 28, 1969, are approved with modifications reflecting the above decisions.[3]

I have also directed that the following studies be undertaken for which appropriate NSSMs will be forthcoming:

1. Specific plan timetable for Vietnamizing the war.
2. Phased withdrawal under conditions of:

    a. Mutual withdrawal, or
    b. Vietnamizing the war.

3. Verification for mutual withdrawal.
4. Detailed political settlement for SVN.
5. International guarantees for above.

RN

[3] See footnote 3, Document 47.

52. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 3, 1969.

SUBJECT

Vietnam Problem

I. The Problem in Paris

In trying to settle the Vietnam war, we can follow two routes: (1) through the Paris talks, (2) through some extraordinary procedures. The Paris route is certainly the more convenient and presents fewer administration problems. However, to be successful, the following conditions must be met by the Paris route:

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1319, Unfiled Material, 1969, Box 3 of 19. Top Secret; Sensitive.

1. We must convince the American public that we are eager to settle the war, and Hanoi that we are not so anxious that it can afford to outwait us.

2. We must continue military pressures of a scope sufficient to deter Hanoi from turning the negotiations into another Panmunjom.

3. Our Government must be sufficiently disciplined so that all of its elements speak with the same voice.

4. Relations with the GVN must be maintained at a level of intimacy to deprive Hanoi of the expectation that they can use the negotiations to break the Saigon Government.

If we can meet all these conditions, we might wind the war up by next Spring. However, the prospects for meeting these conditions do not seem to me too bright for the following reasons:

1. The dominant view in the State Department favors measures whose practical consequences will be to relieve the pressures on Hanoi and thus encourage Hanoi to prolong the negotiations.

2. The Paris delegation is profoundly divided and at least its junior members are quite undisciplined. We will thus be under constant pressure of leaks from Paris. (I am attaching a report from a Colonel who has been in the Paris delegations for your information.)[2]

3. The split between the military command in Saigon and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department is so great that it will be very hard to present a coherent approach in Paris to avoid constant oscillation between extremes.

4. As our negotiators get more impatient and as public pressures start building up, there will be an increasing temptation to squeeze Saigon and to maneuver it into the position of being the chief obstacle to a settlement. If you compare our negotiating position a year ago with what it is today, this process of gradual chipping away becomes obvious. I would suspect that our minimum position today will be much stronger than our maximum position a year from now.

5. The tendency to make foreign policy by press-leaks or only partially considered statements deprives our policy of flexibility and coherence. To obtain discipline, on the other hand, might produce a bloody fight which would impair our diplomacy.

II. A Possible Solution

For all these reasons, I have concluded that our best course would be a bold move of trying to settle everything at once. Such a move should:

1. Attempt to involve the Soviet Union;

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[2] Not attached, but Nixon attached an extract of this report to an April 10 memorandum to Rogers; see Document 57.

2. Attempt to negotiate a package settlement in order to avoid endless delay.

3. Present a credible threat of serious consequence if no settlement is reached.

Soviet involvement is crucial; however, the Soviet problem is complicated. They cannot be eager to run major risks for Hanoi because a victory for Hanoi does not benefit the Soviet Union geopolitically and might hurt it ideologically by proving the validity of the Chinese interpretation of international affairs. But a humiliation for Hanoi is also not acceptable because it stakes Moscow's claim to leadership of the world communist movement. In these circumstances, Moscow tends to procrastinate; it does just enough to keep its claims as a major communist power but below the threshold of military confrontation with us. It helps tactically in Paris, but so far has not made a strategic move to end the war.

Moscow is likely to move off this course only on the basis of its own requirements, not of our needs. Secondly, it will require some event to galvanize Moscow into action or to give it an excuse for it.

This leads me to propose a program with the following components.

1. An approach to Dobrynin by me along these lines:

a. The President has reviewed the Vietnam situation carefully.

b. He will not be the first American President to lose a war, and he is not prepared to give in to public pressures which would have that practical consequence.

c. The President has therefore decided that he will make one more effort to achieve a reasonable settlement. If it fails, other measures will be invoked.

d. These measures could not help but involve wider risks. U.S.-Soviet relations are therefore at a crossroads.

e. The President is eager to move into an era of conciliation with the Soviet Union on a broad front. As a sign of this, he is willing to send a high-level delegation to Moscow to agree with the Soviet Union on principles of strategic arms limitations. He is also willing to consider other meetings at even higher levels.

f. The head of the delegation to discuss strategic arms limitations would be Cyrus Vance.[3] He would be empowered, while in Moscow,

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[3] Kissinger talked with Vance on March 18 to explore his willingness to undertake a mission to Moscow to link the opening of the SALT talks with an overall proposal for a settlement on Vietnam. Vance would meet secretly with a senior North Vietnamese representative in the Soviet capital, and be empowered to negotiate both issues. (*White House Years*, p. 266)

to meet with a North Vietnamese negotiator and agree with him on a military as well as a political settlement. Our offer to Hanoi will be generous and forthcoming in keeping with the sacrifices Hanoi has made and the courage with which it has fought.

g. The President will give this effort in Moscow 6 weeks to succeed.

h. The President will ask nothing of the Soviet Union inconsistent with its position as a senior communist power. He expects that nothing will be asked of the U.S. inconsistent with its worldwide obligations.

i. If this negotiation is successful, the President will conclude that the major danger to war is being removed and he would expect progress in many areas.

j. The President is prepared to repeat this proposition to a Soviet Ambassador personally if there is any interest in the Kremlin.

2. If Dobrynin agrees, a mission should be sent to Moscow headed by Vance for the purpose of discussing principles of strategic arms limitations. Vance should be empowered to discuss North Vietnamese issues.

3. The object of the Vietnam negotiations would be as follows:

a. *Definition of Objective:* To reach prompt agreement with the North Vietnamese on the general shape of a political-military settlement, specifically:

(1) *Military*—Agreement that there will be mutual withdrawal of all external forces, and a ceasefire based on a mutual withdrawal.

(2) *Political*—(i) Agreement that guarantees the NLF freedom from reprisals and the right to participate fully in the political and social life of the country in exchange for agreement by NLF and DRV to forego further attempts to achieve their political objectives by force and violence. (ii) Agreement that there will be a separate and independent SVN for at least 5 years.

(3) *Mechanism for supervising and verifying the carrying out of the settlement.* The agreement with the DRV should not attempt to spell out the manner in which the general principles agreed to will be implemented. That should be left for Paris.

4. If Vance can get an agreement in principle, the negotiations would shift back to Paris for final implementation. The whole process should be completed before the end of August.

III. Pros and Cons

This procedure would have the following advantages:

1. It would give the Soviet Union an excuse and a method for involving itself in the process.

2. It would prevent a Panmunjom of protracted negotiations while casualties mount.

3. It would give you control over the negotiations.

4. It is the only way to end the war quickly and the best way to conclude it honorably.

5. If it becomes known, it will be considered as an imaginative peace move.

6. The beginning of SALT negotiations will give you a little more maneuvering room domestically. Focusing the initial talks on "principles" keeps you from being pressured all the time.

The course outlined here has the following disadvantages:

1. It will get no cooperation from the bureaucracy and may even be sabotaged if they find out about it.

2. It may be used by Hanoi to undermine our position in Saigon. I think this risk would be minimal. Hanoi's fear of Peking will make it reluctant to publicize the talks.

3. It will be difficult to give Vance the dual negotiating role without the other members of the SALT delegation knowing about it.[4]

4. A related question is whether a high DRV official can come to Moscow at the same time the SALT talks are going on without suspicions being aroused.

5. Another question is whether the DRV can negotiate in Moscow in light of the current tensions between Moscow and Peking.

6. All these difficulties are surmountable. The real problem is that the approach outlined here should not be implemented unless you are prepared to take tough escalatory steps if Moscow rejects the overture (mining Haiphong, bombing Cambodia, etc.). To fail to do so would be to risk your credibility.

With this proviso, I believe the pros outweigh the cons. If you agree, I shall work out a more detailed scenario.[5]

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[4] This was a concern Vance raised to Kissinger. (Ibid.)

[5] Kissinger spoke to Nixon at Key Biscayne and the President was "dubious about the 'Vance ploy,' as he called it," but Nixon agreed to make a diplomatic approach to the Soviet Union. (Ibid., pp. 267–268) See Document 55.

53. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 3, 1969.

SUBJECT

Memorandum of Conversation with Ambassador Dobrynin, April 3, 1969

Dobrynin called me about 3:30 p.m. to ask whether he might come by for fifteen minutes this afternoon. I received him at 4:30 p.m. and he stayed for an hour.

[Omitted here is information unrelated to Vietnam.]

However, it soon became clear that the note was just a pretext. Dobrynin turned the conversation to Vietnam and asked me what I thought of developments. I said we were very relaxed, we knew what we were doing and would not be deflected by public protest. Dobrynin asked me whether we had "any intention of expanding the war." I replied that I had always told him that the President was determined to end the war one way or the other. He could be sure that I did not speak idly and that I hoped Hanoi kept Moscow fully informed of everything that was going on. Dobrynin said: "You know we do not have any advisers at the headquarters in South Vietnam." I replied: "Well, I hope they keep you informed of everything that goes on."

Dobrynin then asked how I visualized the relationship between a military and political settlement. I decided to play fairly tough and said that we would probably want to discuss military issues first. (I did this to preserve the option of the Vance mission and to have our willingness to discuss political matters within that framework serve as a concession.) I added that we could understand it, however, if after the military issues were settled, Hanoi would make their application dependent on progress towards a political settlement. Dobrynin pretended that this was a major concession and said it put a new complexion on things. He said we had to understand that the NLF was reluctant to risk itself in a forum with the GVN since it considered the GVN determined to destroy it. Dobrynin asked whether I saw any chance of replacing Thieu and Ky. I said no, but we were willing to consider safeguards for the NLF after a settlement. Dobrynin said this

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin–Kissinger, 1969, [Part 2]. Secret; Nodis. The memorandum was not initialed by Kissinger, but Document 55 makes it clear that Kissinger sent it to the President.

was all terribly complicated. The NLF did not insist on a coalition government. It would settle for a peace cabinet (without Thieu and Ky) which would safeguard its members.

Dobrynin then returned to the problem of escalation. I told him it would be too bad if we were driven in this direction because it was hard to think of a place where a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States made less sense. I added that it seemed to me our interests in Vietnam were quite compatible. Dobrynin replied: "Our interests in Vietnam are practically identical. We might want a slightly more neutral South Vietnam than you, but it is not an issue of consequence."

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to Vietnam.]

Comment:

Dobrynin seemed very insecure when speaking about Vietnam. All of this suggests to me that maybe the Vance mission is our best hope.

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54. Editorial Note

South Vietnamese Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky attended the State Funeral of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower in Washington on March 30, 1969. Ky and Ambassador Bui Diem met with President Nixon, Ambassador Bunker, and Presidential Assistant Henry Kissinger from 2:05 to 2:34 p.m. on April 1. This meeting was one of many President Nixon had that day with foreign leaders attending the funeral. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) No other record of the discussion between Ky and Nixon has been found. Ky also met with Under Secretary of State Elliot Richardson on April 1 and Secretary of State William Rogers on April 3 at 12:30 p.m. Records of these discussions are in memoranda of conversation of those dates (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 VIET S) Ky also met with Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird on April 2 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. (Memorandum of conversation, April 4; Washington National Records Center, OSD/ISA Files: FRC 330 72 A 6308, Vietnam #2, 1969, 000.1) Telegram 54546 to Saigon, April 9, provides an overall assessment of Ky's trip. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 VIET S)

On April 4 Ky met with Kissinger at the Vietnamese Chancery in Washington at 9:40 a.m. Ky assured Kissinger that relations between the Nixon administration and the South Vietnamese Government had improved greatly. Kissinger invited Ambassador Bui Diem, who was attending the meeting, to come and see him if he was confused about

the President's Vietnam policy. Kissinger told Ky to disregard a public statement by Laird about a possible coalition government with the National Liberation Front and assured Ky that the President would make Vietnam policy. Asked about the war effort, Ky stated that although the North Vietnamese were getting weaker, he realized that a political statement was "the only practical solution." Ky assured Kissinger that South Vietnam could live with a settlement as long as North Vietnamese troops withdrew from South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. When Kissinger raised the issue of elections, Ky assured him that his government could win elections at the local level and would accept supervision. Ky reported optimistically on "Vietnamizing the conflict." Kissinger concluded the discussion with promises of close cooperation, a special channel to Bui Diem if serious problems arose, and another assurance that only the President and the White House mattered on Vietnam policy. (Ibid.)

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55. Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

April 5, 1969, 9:45 a.m.

[Omitted here is discussion of Peru and the International Petroleum Corporate dispute.]

P: I was wondering, in view of the rather patent attempt of the North Vietnamese to try to indicate that there is no progress being made in the talks—and then also the statement that the Administration had attempted to reduce its casualties and they wouldn't let that happen[2]—I'm inclined to think that even without a reason, we ought to go ahead and crack them pretty hard on the North.

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 359, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File. No classification marking. Nixon was in Key Biscayne, Florida; Kissinger was in Washington.

[2] On April 3 North Vietnamese delegation officials in Paris denied that "secret talks" had started and that "some progress" was being made. On April 1 the NLF news agency stated that Abrams' defensive strategy of "avoiding losses and reducing expenses" had proved to be a "fiasco" by their post-Tet military offense. (Quoted from Stanley Millet, ed., *South Vietnam: U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia,* Vol. 4, 1969, pp. 35 and 40)

HAK: I know what you mean. I don't know whether you've had a chance to see a conversation I had with Dobrynin—it's in a package sent to you yesterday.[3] He came in with a pretext on European matters, but it was terribly transparent—he launched into a long talk on Vietnam. He said "we don't have any military observers with the Communist party in the south." I said "I hope they tell you what's going on." He kept coming back to this problem.

P: They don't have private talks next week?

HAK: No, it would be a good week for doing it. I've become convinced—and Dobrynin's conversation made it stronger—that we try the other route we have been discussing. The Soviets are getting edgy. I think if we gave them some way of getting themselves into it they might be ready to do it now.

I think domestically, and in Thieu government, it's going to be hard to hold it together. You have Laird's statements, for example—what he said about B–52's and private talks, etc.

P: Everybody has to get out and make it appear things are going well—they aren't used to playing a big game.

HAK: That's the problem.

P: They can't just stand there and (wait?), which is what you have to do.

HAK: Spend your assets at once, rather than piddle them away.

P: I agree we're going to have to change it. I'm not sure that will work. We may have to do something even more strong. I'm not sure the Vance ploy will work.

HAK: We don't have to tie ourselves to the Vance thing.

P: I'm concerned at the present time we're sort of piddling around and Walsh is jittering(?) around in Paris. The tone of the private talks has changed. I'm not so sure that they don't read what we're doing and that they're going to wait us out. It will worry them a little—that was the purpose of the other one, wasn't it?

HAK: That was the purpose, and we learned from it. We learned Hanoi was pretty eager, because they never would have come to private talks.

P: Let's assume the other side won't. We hit them again. I suppose they could then squeal that what we were doing—they might want to use this as a pretext.

HAK: They still have to get Sihanouk. They have no status for complaining. We have to play it cool.

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[3] See Document 53.

P: Particularly in that corner.

HAK: It's even more inaccessible where we hit it.

P: The Laotians are now asking for help.

HAK: I think if we could come to a decision on whether to shift the framework that then we ought to adhere to that, and then do it the week before we shift the framework so that word can get back to Moscow. One problem is Hanoi might not know how to translate it. Paris is cumbersome procedure even if you wanted to move fast.

P: Shifting of the framework poses a problem of what you do with Rogers, of course.

HAK: I think if we do it carefully, Rogers has to be brought along. It would take us about 3 weeks to set up, in my view. This is not something the Soviets would really have to think about.

P: My inclination is to crack this one, and crack another one—plenty of places to hit.

HAK: Say we crack them next week. Week after, we approach Dobrynin. But it would take him about two weeks to set up. When it is set up, we've got to bring Rogers in. By that time the talks in Paris might be stalemated and he might be eager to have a way out. The way everyone is talking in this country Hanoi is going to try to wait.

P: If they see everybody talking, that's going to make them wait. I can rectify it to an extent, by what I say next week at the press conference—that will hold the line.

HAK: Next week would be bad for a press conference, with NATO in town and a major speech. At any rate, whenever you have a p.c., you can rectify it. The NATO speech is on Thursday. Bill is going to have a p.c. on Monday[4]—he hasn't had one yet.

P: We may have to hit them one while we're here. The necessity for the North Vietnamese to know that there's still a lot of snap left in the old boys is very important. And I don't know any other way to do it.

HAK: I think that's needed. But also what is needed is a forum so they have a way out if they need it. I'd be in favor of doing it next week anyhow, even if we don't have change of venue, but if they could tie the two together—that's what made the other one so confusing to them.

P: OK, we'll see what happens. When do they expect the next private talk?

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[4] April 7; the text of Rogers' press conference is in Department of State *Bulletin,* April 28, 1969, pp. 357–363.

HAK: They will ask for it when Bunker is back in Saigon. In about a week.

P: I think we better get geared up to do this other one. So they're ready to hit that area. I won't tell anything to the Pentagon.

HAK: I'll hold it until Monday.

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56. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

The War in Laos and the Significance of the Fall of Na Khang

The war in Laos took a serious turn a month ago with the fall of the Na Khang guerrilla base in Northeastern Laos.

I attach a CIA study done at our request which concludes that the loss of Na Khang does not drastically alter the tactical situation, nor necessarily signal an intensification of the Communists' dry-season offensive.[2] The psychological damage to shake Government morale may be the most significant aspect of the event.

The study assumes that the RLG is likely to react to the fall of Na Khang with panicky withdrawals if other Government positions come under attack. In recent weeks, Souvanna Phouma has shown himself very seriously worried, but the Government forces have not panicked. They have made a series of probes to throw the Communists' timetable off. At Souvanna's request we have supplied the Lao troops with 4000 automatic rifles, widened the area of our air strikes and struck at Communist material supplies in the Plain of Jars. These actions have perhaps slowed the enemy, but it is still an open question whether he will

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 64, Memoranda to the President, February–April 1969. Top Secret. Drafted by Grant on April 8. Richard L. Sneider sent this memorandum to Kissinger under cover of an April 9 memorandum indicating that he had "recast" the study on Laos as a memorandum for the President at Kissinger's request. A handwritten note on the first page reads: "retd from P[resident], 4/15/69."

[2] Not attached; reference is to CIA's Intelligence Memorandum No. 0566/69, April 8, 1969, "The Current Communist Threat in Laos." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 545, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. 1, to 31 July 1969)

have advanced far enough fundamentally to affect the balance of forces in Laos, before the rains come in a few weeks and bring a halt to his advances.

The Two Struggles: There are two levels of conflict in Laos—the more limited conflict between the RLG and the Communists and the larger conflict relating to the Vietnam War. The smaller conflict is being fought in the shadow of the larger. The RLG would collapse without U.S. aid and FEOF. The Pathet Lao is dependent upon North Vietnam, which could take over Laos very quickly if it wished. The shaky equilibrium which has survived since 1962 has been at the sufferance of the outside powers, who have chosen to contain the Laos conflict rather than to attempt a fundamental shift in the balance of power within Laos.

The Communist Strategy: North Vietnam has been willing to tolerate the present balance because

—Its control of the "Ho Chi Minh trail" has not been threatened and it has been able to maintain generally effective control of the hill areas bordering North Vietnam.

—It has calculated that a move which put Communists in control of the Mekong plain or toppled the RLG would probably remove the restraints upon a more massive U.S. effort to interdict the Ho Chi Minh trail.

—It has probably calculated that, after a Communist victory in South Vietnam, Communist control of Laos could be brought about easily, and primarily through political means.

—To communize Laos would lose much third world sympathy for North Vietnam, would unalterably demonstrate that the Communists had chosen to tear up the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962, and might encounter resistance from the USSR, which probably favors the present situation as offering more leverage than it would have with a Communist Government in power.

The North Vietnam calculation may have shifted somewhat in recent months, since the balance of incentives and disincentives has been changed. Since the bombing halt in North Vietnam, the U.S. has spent much more effort on harassing the Ho Chi Minh trail, which may affect the Communist view of the usefulness of the present arrangement. At the same time, the Communists probably believe that the U.S. is less likely to escalate the war by massive intervention against the trail. Finally, North Vietnam may wish to institutionalize some arrangement which would give it continuing access to South Vietnam through Southern Laos in the event of an agreement in Paris.

The Communists, with Soviet help, seem presently to be orchestrating a major effort to restore the balance in their favor by forcing a halt in the U.S. bombing of Laos. Their point of pressure will be upon Souvanna Phouma, to whom they presumably have offered or will offer a combination of inducements (Communist participation in a revitalized

Government of National Union) and threats (Communist encroachments upon RLG-controlled territory) to persuade him to call for a halt in the bombing.

The Soviet and Chinese interests conflict, as usual. The Soviets probably have more leverage with Souvanna Phouma than they would with a Communist-dominated Government of Laos. The Chinese seek the establishment of a Communist Government responsive to the North Vietnamese and themselves. In this circumstance, we have a certain overlap of interest with the Soviets in maintaining the Souvanna administration.

The U.S. Strategy: We have tolerated the Laos equilibrium for these reasons:

—Control over the Mekong Valley, with its access to Thailand, has remained in friendly hands.

—We have been able, with Souvanna Phouma's agreement and support, to monitor movements along the Ho Chi Minh trail and to harass it by air and, to a lesser extent, on the ground.

—Most important, an effort to tip the Laos balance in our favor would require a major expansion of our war effort.

The "Little War": The internal balance has been remarkably stable since 1962–63 when the RLG effectively absorbed most of the Neutralists, and the Communists absorbed the remainder. We have defused threats from the Right by making clear that our support is for Souvanna Phouma, and he seems to face no immediate challenge for control of the RLG.

The two sides have tended to consolidate and expand their control in their own zones. However, Communist control of the uplands has been resisted by pro-RLG Meo guerrillas, which number some 40,000, which receive extensive CIA support, and which have also helped to man our roadwatch operations along the Ho Chi Minh trail. These guerrillas operate in Pathet Lao areas, and in some places have actually succeeded in winning and holding territory for the RLG.

On the other hand, the Communists have—within the strategic balance pictured above—regularly nibbled at RLG areas of control outside the Mekong plain. First, they took the Plain of Jars. In 1967–68 they took the Nam Bac Valley in Luang Prabang province and wiped out guerrilla bases in most of Houa Phan (Sam Neua) province in the Northeast. These gains have been achieved in dry-season skirmishes rather than a sustained campaign.

The Fall of Na Khang in the Strategic Perspectives: This incident is not vital to either level of conflict, but it may relate to both.

It certainly relates to the intra-Laotian struggle. The fall of the base and airstrip effectively seals off Sam Neua province (the Laotian "bulge" into North Vietnam) from all government operations. The commander of the guerrilla forces in the area, Vang Pao, is probably the ablest Laotian general. His Meo tribal forces have done more than

their part in preventing the Communists from consolidating control of this hill area, but they have suffered severe manpower attrition. The Government is talking of removing their dependents to the plains, which would remove the last incentive for them to fight in the hills. Vang Pao himself has had to recognize that he does not have the power to do more than harass the enemy and perhaps to hold off further offensives until the wet season stops the Communists.

A threat may now be more easily posed to the major "Neutralist" (friendly) base of Moung Soui. These forces are not distinguished fighters; and if they are dispersed, the Government's position will become shakier.

The RLG has suffered a psychological setback of serious proportions. The Pathet Lao hand will be strengthened if the Communists should elect to call for negotiations to reconstitute the three-way coalition envisaged by the Geneva Accords of 1962—a decision which would be a tactic to weaken and eventually destroy Souvanna rather than to help him.

The situation has become serious enough for Souvanna Phouma to have asked our Embassy that it extend our bombing to the Plain of Jars, and then to include the Communist administrative centers, a change of the ground rules which could lead to retaliation against Vientiane or other Communist responses. Our Embassy has complied, and a series of air strikes entitled "Operation Rain Dance" is being carried out to slow the enemy's momentum until the rainy season.

The incident could relate to the larger picture, and be part of the threat to Souvanna that he will lose more territory if he does not accede to pressures to call a halt to the American bombing.

Laos in the Paris Negotiations: The two levels of action point to the two principal problems which Laos will pose for us in the Paris negotiations. First will be the provision of adequate guarantees that lines of communication not be left open through Laos for the North Vietnamese to support continuing insurrection in the South, and for the Chinese and North Vietnamese to support the Communists in Thailand. Second, and related to this, will be the problem of arriving at some new balance in Laos itself which will protect Laos from being very quickly overrun by the North Vietnamese Communists with a facade of Pathet Lao participation. This will require international inspection and control of much greater weight and strength than the International Control Commission as structured in the 1962 Accords. Or it will require external forces to beef up the Laotians, or some threat of retaliation against stepped-up Vietnamese pressures sufficiently credible to persuade Hanoi to desist. None of these deterrents would be easily created.

57. Memorandum From President Nixon to Secretary of State Rogers[1]

Washington, April 10, 1969.

SUBJECT

Paris Negotiations

I have recently been given a very disturbing report by a member of the staff of our negotiating team in Paris, which came to me on a personal basis.

The report, an extract of which is attached, indicates that our negotiating team is fundamentally split on the issue of the conduct of U.S. negotiations and that there are members of the team who are actively involved in a disloyal campaign "to save the President from himself." Activities include the conduct of correspondence with elements in the United States who favor termination of the war under any conditions, informal and frequent discussions with the press and friendly and unfriendly embassies to which opinions and views contrary to official policy are expressed.

Allegedly this activity has been conducted for some time without the cognizance of the head of our negotiating team and in flagrant violation of my previously stated policy on the conduct of our negotiations.

As I have emphasized on several occasions, I expect and encourage the free exchange of conflicting views on any policy issue up until the time a decision is made. Following decision, however, viewpoints in conflict with stated policy should be silenced. I expect a complete adherence to this policy throughout the Department of State and our embassies abroad. Should deviations come to your attention, the individuals involved should be promptly replaced.

RN

Attachment

EXTRACT[2]

He told me in the strictest confidence that he wished to convey some views which, under ordinary circumstances, he would never voice but, in the light of his serious concern for conditions in Paris, he

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Richardson Papers, Under Secretary of State, William P. Rogers, Box CL 3. Secret; Personal; Eyes Only.

[2] Confidential; Eyes Only.

felt must be conveyed. With that introduction, he stated that he viewed the Paris negotiating team as in a complete state of disarray. It was split wide open on the issue of the U.S. conduct of negotiations and members of the negotiating team were actively involved in a disloyal campaign to "save the President from himself" by indulging in a "poison pen campaign" with elements in the United States who favor the termination of the war under "any" conditions. He stated that he was aware that correspondence was being carried on by members of the staff with elements in the United States which had already come out in direct opposition to President Nixon's policies. He also stated that many in the negotiating team were devoid of loyalty or discipline and that members of the staff were indulging in frequent and direct conversations with other embassies, with the other side, and with the press, and that these contacts were being conducted without the cognizance of the head of the U.S. negotiating team.

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58. National Security Study Memorandum 36[1]

Washington, April 10, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Vietnamizing the War

The President has directed the preparation of a specific timetable for Vietnamizing the war. He has asked that the Secretary of Defense be responsible for the overall planning and implementation of this process, in coordination with the Secretary of State and the Director of Central Intelligence.

The plan should cover all aspects of US military, para-military, and civilian involvement in Vietnam, including combat and combat support forces, advisory personnel, and all forms of equipment. The plan can draw on current studies, including those for T-Day planning and

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 365, Subject Files, NSSMs. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. Initialed by Haig. A copy was sent to General Wheeler.

RVNAF modernization and improvement. However, this timetable will be directed toward the progressive transfer to the South Vietnamese of the fighting effort with the US and other TCCs increasingly in support roles, assuming that the war continues and that North Vietnamese as well as Vietcong forces are in South Vietnam.

Assumptions for this timetable will include:

—a starting date of July 1, 1969;
—current North Vietnamese and Vietcong force levels, (i.e., we are not able to achieve mutual withdrawals); these levels should be continually adjusted in future months to ongoing intelligence estimates;
—current projections of RVNAF force levels;
—no deescalation in allied military efforts, except that resulting from phased withdrawals of US and other TCC forces which are not fully compensated for by the South Vietnamese;
—the highest national priorities for the equipping and training of South Vietnamese forces.

Based on these assumptions, timetables should be drawn up for the transfer of the combat role to the GVN and restriction of the US role to combat support and advisory missions only, with alternative completion dates of December 31, 1970, June 30, 1971, December 31, 1971, and December 31, 1972. For each alternative schedule the plan should identify the degradation in combat capability, if any, which would result, and the implications for the per cent of population under relatively secure GVN control. Each schedule should also estimate the budget and BOP implications.

Continual study, refinement and reevaluation of these problems will be necessary as the Vietnamization process proceeds. The President has requested by June 1 an initial overall report outline, as well as specific recommendations, with alternatives, for the first six months (July 1 to December 31, 1969), and a complete report by September 1. Further studies, recommendations, and progress reports will be requested subsequently.

Henry A. Kissinger

59. National Security Study Memorandum 37[1]

Washington, April 10, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Vietnam

As indicated in NSDM 9 of April 1, 1969,[2] the President has directed the preparation of certain studies on Vietnam. He has asked that the following papers be prepared by the interdepartmental Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam and submitted to the NSC Review Group by the dates indicated.

Phased Withdrawals

a. *Mutual Withdrawal*

This paper should examine the modalities of mutual withdrawal, whether agreed to publicly or privately by both sides, tacit, or de facto. It should cover timetables, phasing, types of personnel, regroupment, local cease fires and any other relevant subjects. Military, logistic, territorial and political factors and implications should be considered. (May 16, 1969)

b. *Vietnamizing the War*

This paper should examine the modalities of US withdrawals under conditions of our progressively turning over combat efforts to the South Vietnamese in the absence of reciprocal enemy withdrawals. It should cover timetables, phasing, types of personnel, regroupment, and substitution of South Vietnamese forces. Military, logistic, territorial, and political factors and implications should be considered.

This study should reflect the findings of the preliminary report of the Secretary of Defense on a specific timetable for Vietnamizing the war. (June 13, 1969) (See NSSM 36)[3]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–142, NSSM Files, NSSM 37. Top Secret; Sensitive. A copy was sent to General Wheeler.

[2] Document 51.

[3] Document 58.

Verification for Mutual Withdrawal

This paper should examine various means and mechanisms for verifying the process and completion of mutual withdrawals, whether agreed to publicly or privately by both sides, tacit, or de facto.[4] It should set forth the advantages and disadvantages of various types of verification machinery including joint belligerent commissions, reactivation of the ICC, and creation of new international groups (such as an Asian body). The paper should include a discussion of our unilateral capability to verify withdrawals drawing on all sources of information. It should consider how agreed arrangements can usefully supplement our unilateral capabilities. (May 16, 1969)

Political Settlement for South Vietnam

This study should explore various types of political settlement within South Vietnam and the possible US role concerning these questions. The paper should examine all feasible options, including elections at all levels, sharing of governmental power before and/or after elections, constitutional considerations, agreed or de facto territorial accommodations, decentralization of government power. The study should discuss the feasibility of each alternative and the likely attitudes of the GVN, the various segments of the South Vietnamese populace, the NLF, and Hanoi. It should evaluate the likely evolution within South Vietnam under alternative arrangements. Finally, the possible US role—in Vietnam as well as in the negotiations—in achieving a political settlement should be covered. (May 16, 1969)

International Guarantees

The paper should explore the subject of international guarantees for

—mutual withdrawal
—political settlement in South Vietnam
—the DMZ
—any other appropriate aspects of an overall Vietnam settlement.

In so doing, the study should be consistent with the separate papers on mutual withdrawal, verification for mutual withdrawal, political settlement for SVN, and our policy on the DMZ. This paper should

[4] In a May 1 memorandum to Rogers, Laird, and Helms, Kissinger amended NSSM 37 to read: "the specification for a paper on 'Verification for Mutual Withdrawal' should be amended by adding the following sentences after the first sentence: 'In addition, the paper should examine the requirements for verifying that there is no resumption of infiltration in the future, in a post-withdrawal situation. For both purposes, the means and mechanisms for verifying should include a careful discussion of manpower and logistic requirements. The paper should set forth. . .' " (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–142, NSSM Files, NSSM 37)

discuss the advantages and disadvantages of attempting to achieve international guarantees, and ways to negotiate them—e.g., at Paris, in a follow-on international conference, etc. (June 13, 1969)

Henry A. Kissinger

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60. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 15, 1969.

SUBJECT

Memorandum of Conversation with Dobrynin April 14, 1969

After an exchange of pleasantries and a somewhat lengthy discussion of the Middle East (reported separately),[2] the discussion turned to Vietnam. I asked Dobrynin whether he had had any reaction from Moscow to our last conversation. He said he had not, but that he was aware of a conversation Zorin had had with Lodge.

I then said that the President had wished me to convey his thoughts on Vietnam to Moscow. We had followed the discussions in Paris with great interest and considerable patience. As Lodge had already pointed out to Zorin, it was very difficult to negotiate when the other side constantly accused us of insincerity, when every private meeting so far had been initiated by us, and when every proposition was put forward on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The President had therefore decided to make one more direct approach on the highest level before drawing the conclusion that the war could only be ended by unilateral means. The President's personal word should be a guarantee of sincerity. After showing Dobrynin the talking points and the President's initials, I read them to him. He took copious notes, stopping every once in awhile to ask for an explanation. When I said we wanted to have the negotiations concluded within two months, Dobrynin said that if this proposal was feasible at all, we would be able to tell after the first week of negotiations whether they would lead anywhere. When I got through, Dobrynin asked whether I was saying that unless

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/HAK, 1969 [part 2]. Secret; Nodis. A handwritten note on the memorandum reads: "Back from President, 4/16/69."

[2] Attached but not printed.

the Vietnam war was settled, we would not continue our discussions on the Middle East and not enter the talks on strategic arms. I replied that we were prepared to continue talking but that we would take measures which might create a complicated situation.

Dobrynin said that whatever happens in Vietnam, the Soviet leaders were eager to continue talking. He then asked whether these new measures might involve Soviet ships. I replied that many measures were under intensive study. In dealing with the President, it was well to remember that he always did more than he threatened and that he never threatened idly.

Dobrynin then said he hoped we understand the limitations of Soviet influence in Hanoi. We had to understand that while the Soviet Union might recommend certain steps, it would never threaten to cut off supplies. He could tell me that the Soviet Union had been instrumental in helping to get the talks started. Moreover, Communist China was constantly accusing the Soviet Union of betraying Hanoi. The Soviet Union could not afford to appear at a Communist meeting and find itself accused of having undermined a fellow Socialist country. On the other hand, the Soviet Union had no strategic interest in Southeast Asia. The chief reasons for its support of North Vietnam have been the appeals of a fellow Socialist country. I could be sure that the President's proposal would be transmitted to Hanoi within 24 hours. Dobrynin added that often Soviet messages were never answered by Hanoi so he could not guarantee what the reply would be or indeed if there would be a reply.

Dobrynin then said that the North Vietnamese were using the following agreement with Moscow and he stressed that Moscow did not necessarily agree with it: The Saigon Government was composed of individuals committed to the destruction of the NLF. The NLF would not enter a political confrontation in which the administrative apparatus was in the hands of people who sought to destroy them. The NLF would not insist on participating in the Government but it would insist that the Government be broadened and that Thieu and Ky be removed. Dobrynin repeated that he was simply stating Hanoi's arguments, not endorsing them.

I replied that I was familiar with Hanoi's arguments since they were being made to us as well. Nevertheless, the best policy for the NLF would be to work out guarantees for its political participation *after* a settlement of the war. They would certainly find us forthcoming.

Dobrynin reiterated Moscow's desire to stay in negotiations with us whatever happened in Vietnam. He told me many anecdotes of Stalin as well as of Molotov. He added that the Soviet Union had intended to send Marshall Zhukov to Eisenhower's funeral but Zhukov had recently had two strokes and was partially paralyzed. He then

asked whether we understood that Communist China was attempting to produce a clash between the Soviet Union and the United States. If the war in Vietnam escalates, it would only service Communist China's interest. I replied that this was the precise point the President had tried to make to Kuznetsov on the occasion of the Eisenhower funeral. It was, therefore, incumbent on the Soviet Union to help us remove this danger. We felt that in this period, the great nuclear powers still have the possibility of making peace.

As he was preparing to leave, Dobrynin asked me whether he could read over the talking points once more. I handed them to him and he read them slowly and carefully. He departed saying "this has been a very important conversation."

Attachment

TALKING POINTS ON VIETNAM FOR DISCUSSION WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN

1. I plan to utilize the following points in discussing efforts to resolve the Vietnam conflict:

a. The President has just completed a thorough going review of the Vietnam situation in its fullest world-wide context.

b. He will not be the first American President to lose a war, and he is not prepared to give in to public pressures which would have that practical consequence.[3]

c. The President is convinced that it is in no one's interest to have an outcome that would encourage Mainland China's aggressive drive.

d. The President has therefore decided that he will make one more[4] effort to achieve a reasonable settlement. If it fails, other measures will be invoked.[5]

e. These measures could not help but involve wider risks. U.S.-Soviet relations are therefore at a crossroad.[6]

f. The President views this point in history with the utmost gravity, especially since he is eager to move into an era of conciliation with the Soviet Union on a broad front. He is willing to begin talks on strategic arms limitations. He has agreed not to threaten the status quo in Europe. He is willing to consider meetings at the highest levels.

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[3] Kissinger bracketed this paragraph.

[4] Kissinger bracketed the phrase "one more" and wrote above it "a major."

[5] Kissinger bracketed the final sentence of 1. d.

[6] Kissinger bracketed this paragraph.

g. However, the President believes that an acceptable settlement to the Vietnamese conflict is the key to everything. Therefore, concurrently, the President proposes to designate a high-level representative to meet with a North Vietnamese negotiator at any location, including Moscow, designated by the Soviet Union to seek agreement with a designated North Vietnamese negotiator on a military as well as a political settlement. The President visualizes that this negotiation would be conducted distinct from the existing Paris framework in order to avoid the sluggish and heretofore cumbersome mechanisms that have evolved in Paris.

h. The President will give this peace effort just six weeks to succeed.[7]

i. The President will ask nothing of the Soviet Union inconsistent with its position as a senior communist power. He expects that nothing will be asked of the U.S. inconsistent with its world-wide obligations.

j. If this negotiation is successful, the President will conclude that the major danger to war is being removed and he would expect progress in many areas.

k. The President is prepared to repeat this proposition to the Soviet Ambassador personally if there is any interest in the Kremlin.

1. Our proposal to Hanoi will be conciliatory embracing both political and military measures.[8]

2. The object of the Vietnam negotiations would be as follows:

a. *Definition of Objective:* To reach prompt agreement with the North Vietnamese on the general shape of a political-military settlement, specifically:

(1) *Military*—Agreement that there will be mutual withdrawal of all external forces, and a ceasefire based on a mutual withdrawal.

(2) *Political*—(a) Agreement that guarantees the NLF freedom from reprisals and the right to participate fully in the political and social life of the country in exchange for agreement by NLF and DRV to forego further attempts to achieve their political objectives by force and violence, and[9] (b) agreement that there will be a separate and independent SVN for at least five years.

(3) *Mechanism for supervising and verifying the carrying out of the settlement.* The agreement with the DRV should not attempt to spell out the manner in which the general principles agreed to will be implemented. That should be left for Paris.

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[7] Nixon added the following sentence by hand at this point: "perhaps 2 months is more realistic."

[8] Kissinger added the following phrase by hand at this point: "for ending hostilities."

[9] Nixon added the following phrase by hand at this point: "a date for new elections."

3. If the special U.S. and North Vietnamese negotiators can achieve an agreement in principle, the negotiations would shift back to Paris for final implementation. The whole process should be completed before the end of August. If the special talks prove unsuccessful, it is difficult to visualize the progress which we both seek and the outlook for improved U.S.-Soviet relations would be seriously jeopardized.

4. The President realizes that this proposal represents a most complex and difficult choice for all parties concerned, but because we are at a most significant crossroad, he is convinced that extraordinary measures are called for. Because they are extraordinary, he would anticipate that Ambassador Dobrynin would wish to discuss them in detail with his government[10] and is prepared to withhold critical decisions on future actions with respect to Vietnam until he receives the Soviet government's reply to this proposal.[11]

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[10] Kissinger bracketed the final phrase of point 4 beginning here.

[11] Nixon initialed the approve option. Attached was a half sheet of paper comprising three additional points. It reads: "1. The President wishes to reiterate his conviction that a just peace is achievable. 2. The President is willing to explore avenues other than the existing negotiating framework. For example, it might be desirable for American and North Vietnamese negotiators to meet separately from the Paris framework to discuss general principles of a settlement. If the special US and DRV negotiators can achieve an agreement in principle, the final technical negotiations can shift back to Paris. 3. The USG is convinced that all parties are at a crossroads and that extraordinary measures are called for to reverse the tide of war." Nixon prints these three points in *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon,* p. 391. He also states that Kissinger showed these three points to Dobrynin.

61. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 15, 1969.

SUBJECT

CIA Analysis of Hanoi's Outlook on Paris Negotiations

At my request, Dick Helms has had his people prepare an analysis of Hanoi's outlook on the Paris negotiations which I am forwarding to you as a matter of interest. The analysis concludes that Hanoi wishes to seriously explore the possibilities for a settlement, but is not yet prepared to accept one which does not, at a minimum, provide for withdrawal of all U.S. forces and guarantee the VC a fairly clear shot at political control in SVN. Other principal points in the analysis are as follows:

1. The determinants of Hanoi's negotiating position are its calculation of its military position in SVN, the GVN political situation there, and Hanoi's estimate of the political climate in the U.S.

2. Hanoi is probably satisfied that its forces are demonstrating an ability to maintain military pressure in South Vietnam over an extended period. It believes Communist military and political pressure can prevent the GVN from significantly improving its position in the near future.

3. It also calculates that the U.S. will soon be under mounting domestic pressure to get the Paris talks moving. Until there is some basic change in this assessment, Hanoi is not likely to be very forthcoming in Paris.

4. Signs of allied eagerness or haste in the negotiations will be read as indications that the political heat is mounting in Washington.[2]

5. Most distasteful to Hanoi would be signs that the U.S. was politically prepared for a long haul military and diplomatic involvement in Vietnam.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 182, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous/Memcons, Vol. III, 4/5–69. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. Sneider forwarded this memorandum to Kissinger on April 14 noting that it was "per your request" and recommending that he sign it. A note on the memorandum reads: "Pres has seen." Attached was an April 4 CIA memorandum entitled "Factors Influencing Hanoi's Behaviors at Paris Peace Negotiations." Helms sent it to Kissinger under a covering note of April 7, which states the paper was done at Kissinger's request and notes that, "we come down on the belief that Hanoi is influenced by strong positions on the United States side."

[2] Nixon highlighted paragraphs 3 and 4 and wrote: "H.K.—This shows urgency of getting out our peace plan—".

6. The DRV is nervous about any indication that the U.S. might be able to reduce its role in the war without cutting overall allied effectiveness. If the U.S. could do this successfully, Hanoi would probably feel impelled to work out a minimal settlement in Paris before the negotiations become irrelevant.

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62. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 22, 1969.

SUBJECT

B–52 Strikes Against Targets in Cambodia

At Tab A is the Joint Chiefs of Staff plan providing for the Cambodian B–52 strikes with specific targets in the Fish Hook area previously struck and two additional targets in the Tri-Border area with Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.[2] The plan would provide:

1. *Breakfast Bravo* 48 sorties against targets in the Fish Hook area with 12 cover sorties on South Vietnam. Time over target (TOT) between 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. on Thursday, April 24 Saigon time (1:00 p.m. Wednesday local time).
2. *Breakfast COCO* Restrike of Fish Hook with 20 sorties plus 4 cover sorties. TOT between 8:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., Thursday night, April 24 Saigon time (7:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m. Thursday April 24 local time).
3. *Operation Lunch* 32 sorties against targets in the Tri-Border area and 4 cover sorties. TOT between 2:00 a.m. and 4:15 a.m. Friday morning April 25 Saigon time (1:00 p.m. and 3:15 p.m. Thursday afternoon local time).

At Tab B is a summary of the intelligence on the target area which indicates that military considerations favor the Fish Hook target complex at being the higher priority.[3]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. 1, 8–69. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Drafted by Haig on April 22. The memorandum is not initialed, but handwritten notes on the first page indicate it was hand carried to the President and approved on April 22.

[2] Tab A, CM–4130-69, is a memorandum from Wheeler to Laird, entitled "B–52 Strikes Against Targets in Cambodia," April 21; attached but not printed.

[3] Tab B, CM–4101-69, is a memorandum from Wheeler to Laird, entitled "Authority for B–52 Strikes Against Targets in Cambodia," April 11; attached but not printed.

1. Post-strike analysis of the Fish Hook target area (COSVN) following the earlier strike indicates that there is a large North Vietnamese force in the area which has not moved.

2. Intelligence indicates that the two target complexes in the Tri-Border area contain elements of a major North Vietnamese logistics complex.

General Wheeler advises that the countermand order for authorizing all strikes should precede TOTs by eight hours; thus countermand for the operation should be prior to 5:00 a.m. Wednesday morning local time.

At Tab C is a draft instruction on the public affairs treatment of the plan.[4]

Pros and Cons of Plan

Pros	*Cons*
1. Strong military blow as manifestation of U.S. resolve to end conflict.	Could result in public outcry if strikes "blow."
2. Signals to Soviets and North Vietnam that EC–121 incident did not divert U.S. attention from Vietnam conflict.	Could prove counter-productive to on-going actions leading toward re-establishment of relations with Cambodia.
3. Timely and effective followup to Kissinger/Dobrynin conversation.	
4. Could complement Presidents' Peace Plan.	Could result in more North Vietnamese intransigence in Paris and even walkout.

On balance, I favor strike primarily because it represents a forceful U.S. action in wake of EC–121 incident and the message it conveys to the Soviets. It is probable that Laird and Wheeler will support plan on military grounds and that Rogers will oppose on political grounds.

[4] Tab C is an undated telegram from Wheeler to Abrams, McCain, and Holloway; attached but not printed.

63. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 25, 1969.

SUBJECT

History of Vietnam Negotiations

We have now completed a history of the Vietnam negotiations leading to the bombing halt (attached at Tab A).[2] We have also completed a special study on U.S.-Soviet negotiations relating to the bombing halt (attached at Tab B). We have underway a history of U.S.-North Vietnamese negotiations after November 1, 1968. These studies are not really what you are after since motives do not show up. However, this is the best we can do after an exhaustive review of all of the documents available.

Another possible study would deal with the internal U.S. Government consideration of the bombing halt decision. Such an internal history raises serious problems since it would probably require interviewing the key personalities involved and reopening the serious differences within the bureaucracy on the bombing halt decision. There is also a good chance that one or more of the personalities involved would leak to the press that your Administration was conducting this study.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 98, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam/U.S. Bombing Halt Understanding. Secret. Sent for action. A stamped note indicates the President saw the memorandum. Sneider sent this history to Kissinger on April 10, with two covering memoranda. In the first Sneider states: "Dean Moor has done an exhaustive history of the Vietnam negotiations leading to the bombing halt. . . . You requested an internal history of U.S. dealings after November 1, 1968. . . . I think you ought to seriously reconsider the request for the internal history. . . . It would raise immediate questions within the bureaucracy, which would get quickly to the press that the Administration is preparing a critical attack on LBJ's Vietnam policies. My judgment is that we have enough problems without this additional one." Kissinger indicated his desire for this internal history of U.S. and NVN dealings after November 1, 1968, by signing his initials next to the "approve" option. In the second covering memorandum, Sneider informed Kissinger that the attached draft narrative history covered "the bilateral talks between Washington and Hanoi, the US discussions with the GVN on the bombing halt, and the US discussions with the Soviet Union. . . . The draft makes use of all material presently available to the National Security Council staff." (Ibid.)

[2] Tabs A and B are attached but not printed.

Recommendation

That we not undertake an internal history of U.S. Government views.[3]

[3] Nixon initialed the approve option and wrote: "*But* I want all we trust who have recollections—(Wheeler, Goodpaster, Kissinger, etc.) to give me a memo (e.g., the anatomy of Clifford's turn around would be interesting—Frank Lenida's *plus* Wheeler's memos.) Also, Haldeman and Harlane should provide a memo of all we heard during campaign about bombing halt plans." Butterfield added the following note: "Henry: I have taken action on this request. Alex."

64. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 1, 1969.

SUBJECT

State Department Memorandum on Vietnam

The Department of State believes that Hanoi has adopted a more moderate tone in the recent plenary sessions in Paris. Following are some of the shifts which State detects:

1. The DRV spokesmen are dealing more readily with the actual issues raised by the U.S. and GVN.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 182, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous/Memcons, Vol. III, 4/5–69. Secret. Sent for information. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it. Attached but not printed was a retyped and undated INR Intelligence Note entitled, "Hanoi Adopts Moderate Tone in Paris." In an April 30 memorandum to Kissinger, Sneider informed him that Lodge wished to make a proposal using the DRV's Four Points of April 8, 1965, at the next private session in Paris as a means of getting a dialogue going. (Ibid., Box 181, Paris Talks/Meetings, Private Meetings, March–December 1969) In a second memorandum of the same date Kissinger informed the President that at the Paris Plenary session of April 30, despite a "comprehensive attack on U.S. policy in Vietnam," the DRV clearly wanted the United States to explore the NLF's offer made on March 20 to talk with "other parties," to address the DRV's Four Points, and hinted that they might be willing to work within the GVN's constitution if it was revised. Nixon saw this memorandum. (Ibid., Box 182, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous/Memcons, Vol. III, 4/5–69)

2. The DRV has had less to say about the necessity of a "peace cabinet" in South Vietnam in recent sessions. State concludes that they are beginning to recognize that they may eventually have to deal with the GVN in private negotiations.

3. In recent sessions, the DRV has focused on its four point position,[2] dwelling particularly on point three which asserts that the internal affairs in SVN must be settled in accordance with the NLF program. By elaborating on this point, State believes the DRV has been attempting to project a tone of moderation since it has been stressing the allegedly democratic, neutral, and peaceful nature of its proposition.

State concludes that the display of moderation has at least three purposes:

1. To make a favorable impression on U.S. public and political opinion.

2. To influence the South Vietnamese body politic, making sure that Thieu's recent statements do not go unchallenged.

3. To attempt to encourage U.S. political concessions during the current military "lull" in South Vietnam.

[2] For text of the DRV's Four Points, outlined by DRV Premier Pham Van Dong on April 8, 1965, see *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1965,* pp. 852–853.

65. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 1, 1969.

SUBJECT

Captured Document on Vietnamese Communist Strategy

At Tab A is a captured document[2] which you may find interesting. It appears to be a COSVN-level paper which assesses the successes

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 137, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. IV, 4/24/69–5/18/69. Confidential. Sent for information. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it.

[2] Attached was an undated and retyped captured document entitled, "Success of Spring Offensive."

of the recent Communist offensive and their goals in the upcoming summer campaign in a most candid and objective fashion. Following are some of the highlights from the document:

The Spring Offensive

—Communist military efforts in the cities and suburban areas were "not very successful." The guerrilla movement and the buildup of Communist manpower was poor and slow. More Americans were killed than in Tet 1968, however. (True)

—The most significant effect of the offensive, especially the death of U.S. troops, was to boost the anti-war movement in the U.S. Since the Communists did not conduct any offensive phase from September to February, President Nixon thought they had lost the initiative and that he could take a firm stance at the negotiations. The February offensive upset that plan.

—The internal situation of the U.S. is now critical and the Communists must seek victories through further campaigns to turn things decisively their way.[3]

The Summer Offensive

—The Communists must put a lot of subjective effort into the summer campaign and must avoid any tendency to relax or become demoralized.

[3] Nixon highlighted this paragraph and wrote the following note: "H.K. note—we may have to hit Breakfast on a regular basis."

66. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 3, 1969.

SUBJECT

Statement by Prince Sihanouk on U.S. Border Declaration

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. I, 8–69. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it.

Prince Sihanouk, at an April 30 press conference, has taken exception to the U.S. border declaration[2] as useless, valueless and deceptive, on the basis of interpretations of this declaration in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.[3] Secretary Rogers has sent you the attached memorandum (Tab A)[4] based on early versions of the Sihanouk statement. Later versions and a report from the Australian Ambassador in Phnom Penh (Tab B) would indicate that Sihanouk rejected our border declaration at the press conference.[5]

Sihanouk's basic complaint is that we have not accepted Cambodia's borders as defined by it in our border declaration. However, in explaining the U.S. border declaration to Sihanouk, the Australian Ambassador made clear that this was not our intention. Sihanouk has accepted border declarations by other countries on this basis.

The French Ambassador in Phnom Penh has also informed the Australian Ambassador that Sihanouk rejected the idea of resuming relations with the U.S. at the press conference. The French Ambassador, considered a shrewd judge of Sihanouk, has concluded that Sihanouk is using the border declaration as a pretext for not resuming diplomatic relations. He thinks that Sihanouk may have been influenced to change his mind on relations with the U.S. after seeing the extent of North Vietnamese control in the Northeast, in Ratanakiri[6] (see map at Tab C).[7] Sihanouk may have concluded that he was powerless to prevent North Vietnamese infiltration and the only course open to him was to seek

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[2] See footnote 3, Document 48.

[3] In a May 6 letter to Mansfield, Rogers informed him that Sihanouk was referring to an April 15 *New York Times* editorial that stated: "the message does not specify what frontiers are being recognized, and, therefore, does not depart from the long-standing United States policy of remaining noncommittal on Cambodia's border quarrels with South Vietnam and Thailand." Rogers also told Mansfield that Sihanouk had incorrectly cited *The Washington Post* for an offending editorial and that the correct source was an April 13 article in *The Evening Star* that reported on State Department Spokesperson Carl E. Bartch's press briefing given on April 12. The article reported: "U.S. officials insisted that this message does not in any way mean the United States is taking a position on the recurring boundary disputes, which Cambodia has with both Laos and South Vietnam. The message, they say, is essentially the same as Sihanouk has received from 40 other governments—but previously rejected from the United States." (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 32 CAMB)

[4] Tab A was an April 30 memorandum from Rogers to Nixon, attached but not printed.

[5] Attached but not printed.

[6] Nixon underlined this word and wrote: "Can we hit this area?"

[7] Attached but not printed.

an understanding with the Vietnamese Communists. Sihanouk had just returned on April 30 from a week's visit to the Northeast.[8]

[8] Nixon highlighted the last two sentences and wrote: "H.K. very significant" and "(pass to Mansfield?)". Kissinger called Mansfield to tell him he was sending the exchange of letters with Sihanouk and assured the Senator that "the President has gone out of his way to establish close relations." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) In a May 5 memorandum to Nixon, Rogers recommended no comments, explanation, or further action until Sihanouk's plans and motives became clear. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 505, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. I, 8–69) After further representations and considerations, Sihanouk accepted a revised U.S. statement that the United States would "respect Cambodia's independence and sovereignty with the present territorial boundaries." Diplomatic relations were restored on July 2. For additional information see ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 17 CAMB–US.

67. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 10, 1969.

SUBJECT

Analysis of the NLF's Ten Points

Attached at Tab A[2] is an excellent CIA analysis of the general implications and possible significance of the NLF 10-Point statement (text at Tab B).[3] This memorandum contains a point-by-point analysis and then lists the positive elements, the negative elements and the elements subject to negotiation.

The Ten Points

Point 1, calling for the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Vietnam, is standard NLF language and is acceptable to us.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 175, Paris Peace Talks, NLF 10-Points, May 1969, Folder 5. Secret; Sensitive. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it.

[2] Tab A, May 9, entitled "The Liberation Front's New Peace Proposal," is attached but not printed.

[3] Not attached. On May 8 at the session of the Paris Peace Talks, Tran Buu Kiem of the NLF put forward a 10-point peace plan for ending the war in Vietnam. The text of the proposal is printed in Council on Foreign Relations, Stebbins and Adam (eds.), *Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1968–1969,* pp. 249–252.

Point 2 calls for U.S. withdrawal, including all military personnel. This is standard and acceptable, except that we would, of course, insist upon the withdrawal as well of North Vietnamese forces.

Point 3 is new and states that "the Vietnamese people's right to defend their fatherland is inalienable. The problems of the Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam will be settled by the Vietnamese sides." The first sentence is a standard assertion to justify the right of the North Vietnamese forces to be in the south. The second sentence implies that the withdrawal should be settled among the Vietnamese including a South Vietnamese Government. If this government is meant to be an NLF-dominated coalition, this is, of course, totally unacceptable. If it is the GVN, it is a step forward in accepting negotiations on the North Vietnamese withdrawal with the US/GVN side. However, to ask the GVN to negotiate alone with Hanoi on withdrawals would put all the pressures on them and is unacceptable. We would not object to the GVN participating with us in negotiations about the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces.

Point 4 presents a plan for a political settlement involving elections, a constitutional assembly, a new constitution and then a coalition government. It needs to be read in conjunction with Point 5 which calls for an interim coalition government prior to the elections. With regard to Point 4, itself, if the point means that a coalition government must result from the elections, this is, of course, unacceptable. If it means that one possible result of an election is a coalition government, we would not object. We have not yet addressed the question of whether we are prepared to accept the need for a new constitution.

Point 5 deals with a period prior to an election. In stating that "no side is to force the South Vietnamese people to accept its political regime," it appears to imply that there is an interim period during which the GVN, the NLF and other groups in the south would negotiate about the setting up of a caretaker government. Hanoi's description of those who could participate in such a government appears to rule out the GVN, although the statement omits the NLF's usual assertion that the U.S. must remove the GVN government. Thus, the words, themselves, could permit GVN participation. They also could be read to exclude the NLF from the caretaker government, although this is almost certainly not the NLF's intention. Whatever arrangements are made, the actual political evolution in the south will depend on the actual balance of forces. The prevention of the NLF takeover will require an effective and functioning non-Communist political group.

Point 6 is a standard call for good relations with Laos and Cambodia and diplomatic relations with other countries. The only new point is the reference to the need to establish diplomatic and economic relations with the United States and the assertion that South Vietnam must be able to accept economic and technical assistance from any country. This point is acceptable to us.

Point 7 calls for a step-by-step move toward reunification on the basis of negotiation between the two zones and for normal relations between the zones in the interim. It accepts the military demarcation line but notes that it is only provisional in character and not a political border. Finally, it states that the two zones will decide on the status of the demilitarized zone and the measures for crossing the provisional demarcation line. Most of this language is standard and acceptable to us. The final sentence seems to call for a new agreement between the two zones about the DMZ. This is acceptable if it means negotiations between the GVN and Hanoi and if it leads to reestablishment of an effective demilitarized area.

Point 8 provides that prior to reunification, North and South Vietnam will not enter into military alliance and will not accept any foreign military personnel on their territory. This is standard language. We have not decided that we are prepared to agree to keeping no advisors in South Vietnam or to accept renunciation of the SEATO protocol by South Vietnam.

Point 9 deals with return of prisoners of war in more explicit terms than in the past. However, it also calls for reparations by the U.S. to both North and South Vietnam and implies a possible linkage between prisoner release and reparations. Reparations in either circumstance would be unacceptable to us.

Point 10 calls for all parties to agree on international supervision of the U.S. withdrawals. This is the first time Hanoi has proposed any international supervision. It could provide an opening for a discussion of international supervision for the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces as well.

Positive Elements

1. Acceptance by implication of the presence of North Vietnamese forces in the south and indication that this is negotiable even if only by the Vietnamese sides.

2. Presentation of a detailed plan for a political settlement with some new and potentially acceptable elements and without insisting explicitly that this government be in accordance with the program of the Front.

3. Implication that the GVN might participate in negotiations about a caretaker government and the absence of an explicit statement that the U.S. must remove the GVN.

4. Statement that there should be no retaliation against those who cooperated with either side.

5. Recognition of the DMZ as a provisional boundary and willingness to negotiate about it if only with the GVN.

6. Explicit reference to release of prisoners (although possibly linked to reparations).

7. Initial reference to international supervision, if only related to withdrawal of U.S. forces.

Negative Elements

1. Absence of an explicit statement of withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces.

2. Call for both an interim and permanent coalition government with refusal to accept the present constitutional structure of the GVN.

3. Language which implies that coalition government should be restricted to Communist or sympathetic elements.

4. Demand for U.S. reparations.

5. International supervision limited to U.S. withdrawals.

Elements Subject to Negotiation

1. Procedures for negotiating withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces and the relationship of this withdrawal to the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

2. Election procedures in South Vietnam.

3. Political arrangements prior to an election.

4. Status of the demilitarized zone.

5. Application of international supervision to North Vietnamese withdrawal.

If Hanoi and the NLF are now ready for serious, detailed discussion, there are many elements in the 10-Point Program which we could probe, perhaps finding the basis for agreement. If Hanoi has presented this on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, it is very far from being satisfactory.

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68. Editorial Note

On May 14, 1969, President Nixon made a television and radio address in which he outlined a major proposal for mutual withdrawal in Vietnam over a 12-month period. The text of the speech is printed in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pages 369–375. On April 24 Henry Kissinger sent Nixon a draft outline of the speech and a scenario of actions to be undertaken in relation to it. Nixon read and made notes on the proposal on May 8. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 285, Memoranda to the President, April 1969, Folder 2) Kissinger later recalled that on April 25, he urged the President to elaborate a clear cut position on a peace plan by mentioning North Vietnamese negotiator Xuan Thuy's remark that, "If the Nixon Administration has a great

peace program, as it makes believe, why doesn't it make it public." According to Kissinger's recollections, Nixon hesitated because he wanted to see the results of his proposal to the Soviet Union and because he was concerned about opposition to the peace plan from Secretary of State William Rogers and the Department of State. Nixon feared the Department of State would leak the plan and add so many concessions that the President would be viewed as a "hard-liner" if he turned them down. Kissinger states in his memoirs that Nixon waited until Rogers left for Vietnam on May 12 before asking Kissinger to prepare a major speech within the next 48 hours. (Kissinger, *White House Years,* page 270) Kissinger did send Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird a draft of the speech in a May 10 memorandum. (National Archives, RG 59, William P. Rogers Official Files and Papers: Lot 73 D 443, no folder title) Rogers telephoned Kissinger at 4 p.m. on May 12 on a non-secure telephone from Los Angeles (en route to Vietnam) to register "his very serious reservations." Kissinger promised to present Rogers' views to the President in detail. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) Laird responded to the draft in a May 11 memorandum to Nixon noting that his major concern was that the speech did not emphasize the previously cited three points for measuring progress in the war and U.S. troop withdrawals: 1) mutual withdrawals, 2) improvement in the military situation, and 3) improvement in South Vietnamese capabilities. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 76, Vietnam Subject Files, Speech Planning and Miscellaneous) Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge sent his comments on the speech in a background message from Paris, May 11, which stated "broadly speaking this is an excellent speech," but suggested multiple language changes. (Massachusetts Historical Society, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Reel 9) Bunker sent backchannel message 417 from Saigon, May 12, stating that a general cease-fire would be undesirable since it would be interpreted by the enemy and by U.S. friends alike as "throwing in the towel" and would favor the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong militarily. From a political point of view, a cease-fire in place implied a readiness to partition South Vietnam. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel)

In a telephone call to the President on May 13, at 7:30 p.m., Kissinger told the President that he had revised the speech on Laird's recommendation and "it was pretty tight now." The President stated that "Mel [Laird] thinks we are dong the right thing. What really pleases me is that Rogers thinks it is fine." Nixon asked why Rogers changed his mind and Kissinger responded that he had been given a role in the speech. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

The next day, May 15, from 10:08 to 11:44 a.m., President Nixon held a joint meeting of the National Security Council and Cabinet to brief his administration's leaders on the significance of the speech. According to the memorandum of meeting the briefing went as follows:

"[Kissinger] called it 'the most comprehensive statement made by an American President about Vietnam.' Kissinger said the principles, measures and details in the President's presentation could be summarized in two broad, basic principles. One: We will not collapse our effort; and two: We will be extremely flexible in trying to make a settlement.

"Discussing the new elements in the speech, Kissinger called it 'as forthcoming and comprehensive a proposition as the President could possibly have developed' and said that it went 'as far as we believe it was possible to go in testing the willingness of the other side to have serious negotiations.' Remarking on just one new element, Kissinger pointed out that 'we no longer will expect the North Vietnamese to admit that their troops are there so long as they stop being there.'

"One of the most significant points about the speech, the President remarked, was that the South Vietnamese government had agreed to its content. He said that no one would have predicted six months ago that President Thieu would approve the substance of that speech. The cooperation of the South Vietnamese is extremely important, the President added, because while 'some say it will be impossible to make a peace *with* them, it will surely be impossible to make a peace *without* them.'

"Commenting on the attitude of other nations in the area, the President pointed out that the reaction of Thailand is highly important. 'They are like rice in the wind,' the President said. 'If they think we are going to lose, they will go the other way.' And this suggests, the President added, that while some people scoff at the domino theory, the dominoes make it a reality because they seem to accept it as fact.

"Before the speech was in final form, it was necessary to get agreement among the various areas of the U.S. government that were involved as well as the agreement of the South Vietnamese. 'And if any of you think that writing your speeches is hard,' the President said with a grin, 'you should try to write one involving State, Defense and Henry Kissinger.'

"Under Secretary of State Elliot L. Richardson suggested that South Vietnam's President Thieu be added to the 'list of speech writers' since he was consulted, and made suggestions that were included. Richardson reported that the State Department had transmitted the basic elements of the speech through our Ambassadors to the governments of Australia, Thailand, New Zealand, South Korea and the Philippines. Such advance notice, he said, was most important in 'keeping our friends with us.'

"Defense Secretary Laird stressed the importance of the fact that 'there is nothing inconsistent in the mutual withdrawal plan in this speech and the Vietnamization of the war.' He noted that there was in the speech a veiled reference to reduction of U.S. forces. The question whether some of our forces will soon be withdrawn, said Laird, will be discussed when Secretary of State Rogers returns from Vietnam. To clarify the situation with regard to prospective withdrawal of some U.S. forces—the President explained that 'apart from any progress in Paris, we are considering withdrawals based upon the strengthening of the Vietnam forces.'"

The President asked Director of Central Intelligence Helms to gauge North Vietnamese reaction to the speech. Helms suggested it put them on notice that "we don't chicken out." Helms stated that Hanoi's strategy was based on the theory that U.S. domestic dissent would force a U.S. withdrawal. Helms concluded: "this speech tells them that we will stick to our principles and will not run out." Ambassador Lodge recalled that a week before the President's speech the North Vietnamese at Paris introduced a new package based on ten points without their usual rhetoric. Lodge saw the Nixon speech as a comprehensive answer to this proposal. He described the speech as "like manna from Heaven for me."

The briefing concluded with a summation by the President. He stated that the speech "provided the enemy a way out," but cautioned that North Vietnam was bent on conquest of the South so, "We need to threaten that if they don't talk they will suffer." The President then listed four principal factors in the U.S. position which he described as follows:

"One, we are for peace—we are reasonable. Two, we aim to convince the enemy that if there is no settlement, we have an option which is military action not only at the present level but at an expanded level. Three, we want to make clear that they can't win by sitting us out. Four, we want to convince them that they aren't going to get what they want by erosion of the will of the U.S. So, said the President, we have offered them a way out. We have tried to indicate that we will not tolerate a continuation of their fight-talk strategy. We have tried to convince them that the time is coming when South Vietnam will be strong enough to handle a major part of the load. Beyond all this, said the President, it was necessary to give the impression to the enemy that the people of the U.S. are going to support a sound peace proposal and not accept peace at any price. Then and only then will the enemy realize that the war must be ended.

"The President expressed the hope that Members of the Cabinet in their speeches and appearances will explain that the Administration has presented a sound, reasonable, coordinated plan for peace. How

the war will end, the President said, is not clear. It may not be by formal agreement, it may simply be by negotiations leading to gradual understanding.

"'What is on the line is more than South Vietnam,' the President said. 'It's a question of what happens to the balance of Asia and to the rest of the world. If we fail to end the war in a way that will not be an American defeat, and in a way that will deny the aggressor his goal, the hawks in Communist nations will push for even more and broader aggression. What concerns me more than anything else is what happens to the U.S. If a great power fails to meet its aims, it ceases to be a great power. When a great power looks inward, when it fails to live up to its commitment, then the greatness fades away. The road to peace will be difficult but we aim to get there.'

"When the Cabinet applauded his remarks, he said, 'I really didn't mean to make a speech to the Cabinet.'" (Memorandum of a meeting by Jim Keogh, May 15; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, Staff Member and Office Files, President's Office Files, Box 1, Memos for the President's File, 1969–1970, Beginning May 11, 1969)

The President called Kissinger at 10:50 p.m. on May 14 to ask him how he thought the speech had been received. Kissinger was very encouraged with the response. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 359, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) In a May 16 memorandum to the President, Kissinger sent a rundown of how the speech had been received internationally. Kissinger stated: "Throughout the Free World, your speech has been warmly praised as moderate, statesmanlike and a very constructive step toward peace." While there was no official reaction from the DRV or NLF, some of their spokespersons' initial comments on it were negative. Kissinger continued, "The response from the Soviet Bloc, although negative, has been relatively moderate and quite measured." Nixon saw this assessment. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 75, Vietnam Subject Files, Cables, Concerning Reactions to the Speech, All Posts) According to *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the White House*, page 58, the initial euphoria of the speech and its aftermath wore off as Nixon read the U.S. Sunday papers on May 18 and found that their response, unlike the foreign press, was either neutral or negative. Nixon told Haldeman that if John F. Kennedy had made the speech, the press would have been ecstatic.

69. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State[1]

Paris, May 18, 1969, 1535Z.

7234. Delto 1741.[2]

1. Now that we have introduced the President's proposal for peace formally into the plenary session, the negotiations between the two sides in Paris can be pursued in a rational way. In this cable, we outline our suggestions for the next moves designed to bring the other side to serious negotiations on the basic issues.

2. The 10 points introduced by the other side and our own proposals provide the logical framework for negotiation. The two sets of proposals provide issues which are subject to negotiation. A preliminary listing of these issues would contain at least the following:

A. Force withdrawal;
B. Political settlement?
C. DMZ;
D. Prisoners of war?
E. Respect for essential elements of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962;
F. Reunification;
G. International supervision and verification (in connection with force withdrawal, elections, ceasefire and other agreed purposes); and
H. Issues in the aftermath of the war—guarantees, bases, foreign military presence, alliances, neutrality, relations between North and South Viet-Nam, regional cooperation.

3. To define clearly the framework for negotiation—and to demonstrate again the reasonable and flexible nature of the President's proposals—we suggest that at the next plenary session we present a point-by-point review of the issues and positions taken on each side. We are submitting in a separate cable a draft statement along these lines—pointing up the extent of common ground—for the May 22 meeting.[2]

4. It would be helpful, at that point, if the GVN made clear its position, consistent with our own but with particular attention to the question of a political settlement, notable their willingness that free elections be held. This would complement our proposal and fill a gap. The GVN statement should be as large in scope as that of the NLF, and demonstrate willingness to negotiate. It need not give away negotiat-

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 176, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Meetings, May 6—State, Saigon, and Paris. Secret; Nodis; Paris Meetings; Plus.

[2] Not found.

ing positions, but it should be fully consistent with the general principles guilding self-determination set forth in the President's May 14 speech. We believe Embassy Saigon should be urging on the GVN the clear need for such a statement as soon as possible. In the event the GVN does not produce a new statement of sufficient scope, we should move on the basis of the President's proposals alone.

5. We would seek to engage the other side in negotiation in depth. We suggest that this is best done in private. But we must recognize that there are also ways to further this process in plenary sessions. There are a number of possible arrangements for us to consider. We suggest we keep an open mind, but with a preference toward privacy.

6. Thus we can consider a negotiation format that could include any of the following, or some combination of them:

A. Plenary sessions on an agreed restricted basis. There would be no public disclosure of the details of statements made on either side. The fact of the meetings and a mutually agreed description of their contents would be made public.

B. Plenary sessions would continue as they are, but restricted subcommittee meetings will be held to Lodge deal with specific issues. Rules of disclosure for subcommittees would be agreed as in (A) above.

C. Plenary sessions would continue as they are, but fully private, secret meetings would be held. These could be in any agreed combination of the parties present, only excluding the case where the US would meet with the NLF without the GVN present. We are inclined to believe that private meetings of all four reps will be necessary, but even if this is the case, we foresee holding supplementary bilateral US-DRV meetings as desired.

7. Before proceeding to one or a combination of the above arrangements, we believe it is necessary and desirable to resume our bilateral meetings with the DRV. These would have two immediate purposes: (a) to elaborate and debate our substantive position on specific issues in a more informal atmosphere; (b) to exchange views with the DRV on the best way to proceed in the negotiations, taking as an outline of possible arrangements the alternatives listed in para 6 above. For our purposes, it would be well to work out some mutually acceptable working arrangements for the future.

8. Immediately following the May 22 plenary meeting, we propose, therefore, to seek a private meeting with Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy. We will submit to the Dept, within the next few days, a suggested draft of our opening remarks at such a meeting.

9. If our plan of action is approved, it will require discussion with the GVN in Saigon and Paris. It is now becoming increasingly urgent for the GVN to be thinking more specifically of the negotiating position they will be taking in private sessions of one sort or the other.

From our experience to date, the GVN del in Paris does not have sufficient instructions to carry on the type of negotiations we envisage. In fact, Lam and Phong have embarrassedly pointed out to us that over the past week they have been suffering from a scarcity of guidance from Saigon. The thought expressed by Bui Diem to Green (State 79000)[3] that we have 4 to 6 weeks for GVN to formulate its position strikes us as much too long a time. We should be prepared to be in full-scale, detailed negotiations with the other side before then.

10. In such negotiations, we believe that it will be necessary to discuss military and political questions in tandem, if we are to seek a full understanding of what we can achieve. This will require a degree of GVN preparation beyond what we have had to date, with the burden of negotiation on political matters falling on them.

11. We would welcome comments and guidance.[4]

Lodge

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[3] Telegram 79000 to Saigon, May 17, contains an account of the discussion between Bui Diem and Green on reaction to Nixon's speech of May 14 and the future of the negotiations. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 176, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Meetings, May 6—State, Saigon, and Paris)

[4] In telegram 9878 from Saigon, May 20, Bunker stated: "While I completely support the objective of getting into serious negotiations . . . I feel I should sound a note of caution about trying to force the pace." Bunker noted that the Government of Vietnam had made progress in thinking about a political settlement, but they needed time to come to accept it. Furthermore, Bunker cautioned against seeming too eager for another private meeting. (Ibid.)

70. Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, May 21, 1969, 0933Z.

616. Ref: Saigon 605.[2]

1. I have given further thought to the President's consideration of desirability of announcing initial troop reduction after the Midway meeting, together with his expressed willingness to wait a few weeks longer. I have also discussed the message with General Abrams. As viewed from here my conclusion is that the more prudent course would be to wait, for the following reasons:

A. First, Thieu has set a date of June 30 for various goals. These goals include designated hamlets to be pacified, another round of village and hamlet elections in June, and the deployment of 68 newly trained regional force companies by June 30.

B. Despite the February and May attacks, steady and continued progress is being made in extending government control over the countryside. The high level of defectors under the Chieu Hoi program is being maintained in the 900–1100 range per week. The Phoenix program to eliminate the VC infrastructure is producing higher weekly returns despite the more stringent criteria—around 400 a week. Enemy killed are running between 3500 and 5000 a week.

C. In early July Thieu will have a good story to tell of progress made and goals achieved during the first half of this year. The evidence for this is not merely in the statistics but can be found in the increasing sense of confidence and recognition of progress among his military, civil and political leaders from the national level down to the village level, and among the people themselves in wider and wider areas of the country.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

[2] In backchannel message 605 from Saigon, May 20, Bunker provided Kissinger with an interim response to backchannel message WH90677, May 19, in which Kissinger informed Bunker that the President was considering making an initial troop withdrawal announcement at the end of the Midway Conference. Nixon thought that the announcement might give Thieu the initiative on the issue, but based on Bunker's advice he would be willing to postpone for several weeks if Bunker considered it necessary. Bunker wrote: "With regard to suggestion concerning desirability of making initial troop withdrawal announcement at conclusion of Midway Meeting, I can see both advantages and problems. Consequently, I should like to give the matter further thought and would prefer to delay my reply until tomorrow. I hope this will be satisfactory to you and the President." (Ibid.) Telegram 616 is Bunker's considered reply.

D. In this atmosphere, an announcement of a reduction of US forces sometime after July 1 could be taken in stride.

E. More important than the above, however, is the military situation. There are many indications that two more attack waves are brewing, with one possible in June and another in July. We expect these will follow the pattern of enemy's tactics this year, i.e. of short duration, with emphasis on indirect fire and limited ground attacks to economize losses, and aimed at US installations to increase US casualties. We have every confidence that these will be knocked back with heavy losses to the enemy. However, since General Abrams was in Washington there has been some increase in enemy deployments that could threaten I Corps, and General Abrams wishes to reserve on the order of withdrawal of the two increments until he can better assess the situation.

2. I think, and General Abrams concurs, that June 30 would be a good cut-off date for assessing situation, with the conclusions to be available in the second week in July, that is about one month after the Midway meeting. By then we would have the June record of enemy action in hand, and a clearer picture of their July and subsequent intentions. Unless there is a massive increase in the infiltration pipeline during May or June, for which we have no evidence as yet, the recent reduction in North Vietnamese infiltration groups moving South, along with the 2–3 months lag in arrivals in the South, suggest that the enemy offensive attacks will peak the first half of July.

3. This suggests that the announcement of the first troop reduction could be made sometime in July if our reading of the situation is correct. At Midway the communiqué might be able to say that sufficient progress is being made in pacification and the improved fighting capability of the military and para-military forces to warrant an initial reduction in US combat forces levels in the foreseeable future.

4. Since troop reductions will be on the agenda at Midway, I thought it desirable to obtain Thieu's view about an announcement at that time. When I saw him this morning (on various matters before my departure for Bangkok), without indicating my views I asked him if it would be desirable to announce the initial reduction, or replacement as Secretary Rogers preferred to call it, at Midway or wait a little longer, say until early July. There were advantages and disadvantages of an announcement on June 8. In any event the announcement would be in terms of his (Thieu's) initiative. I said he would probably want to think about it, but I would welcome his views at this time.

5. Thieu said a reduction in the US forces has now been a subject of open discussion for six months, the South Vietnamese people are accustomed to the idea, and it would not be a surprise if an announcement was made. It is accepted here that something like a reduction of

50,000 this year would be the figure, and both "the principle and a number of this size" would be understood here. A figure of 100,000 would not be understood. Essentially this problem was an American problem and if the President feels it is necessary in US terms, then there would be no objection to having an announcement of some kind made at Midway.

6. However, he went on, any announcement would have to be tied to one of the three conditions which the President has laid down, and this would probably be the improvement in the Vietnamese capacity to take over a greater share. He said "The timing and form of the announcement will need to be discussed and worked out, but the substance is understood and accepted here."

7. I interpret this to mean that he is prepared to agree to some reference at Midway to troop reductions, perhaps even some specific reference to numbers and dates.

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71. Backchannel Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)[1]

Washington, May 21, 1969, 2146Z.

WH90690. Reference your Saigon 616, DTG 210800Z, May 1969,[2] President believes we could meet Thieu's views by making announcement at conclusion of Midway meeting to the effect President Thieu has informed U.S. Government that the first ARVN division is ready to replace the Third U.S. Marine Division and that therefore the President has ordered the withdrawal of the Third Marine Division from South Vietnam commencing during the month of July.[3] President

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel. Top Secret; Sensitive.

[2] Document 70.

[3] Kissinger also informed Rogers, who was in Bangkok at the SEATO meeting, of this decision in WH90693, May 22. Kissinger wrote: "Thought you might like to know President is thinking of announcing withdrawal of third U.S. Marine division at conclusion of Midway Meeting June 9 (1st ARVN division would replace third U.S. Marine division (22,000 men) commencing in July). Bunker currently exploring this proposal with Thieu and has been cautioned on its extremely close nature. President considers it desirable that public speculation prior to meeting focus on U.S.–GVN efforts to coordinate respective positions on President's speech and associated Paris negotiating positions. From here your trip looks like great success. Best regards, Henry A. Kissinger." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel)

considers such an announcement would: (1) dampen growing speculation on troop withdrawals which if it continues much longer will deprive us of impact of troop withdrawal decision; (2) would greatly strengthen Thieu's image here (doves appear to be building case that Thieu and GVN are preparing to commence bickering campaign over political conditions for settlement with a view toward delaying progress); (3) would break the stride of those elements here who have been pressing for large and immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces.

In order to achieve maximum benefit from this tactic, President believes it essential that there be absolutely no leakage or discussion of troop withdrawal issue as a result of speculation which will surround preparation for meeting. Public attention on preparatory work in Saigon and Washington should be channeled toward preparations to: (1) finalize respective U.S.-GVN positions on negotiating strategy in Paris; (2) the formulation of details related to President's speech proposals.

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72. Memorandum From Dean Moor of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, May 22, 1969.

SUBJECT

Assessment of the 22 May Plenary Session on Vietnam

The Communist presentations at today's meeting in Paris appeared to represent a serious effort by the other side to engage in a substantive discourse on elements of the President's peace proposal. Although they uttered many of the routine propaganda bromides of the past weeks, the Communists had interesting and detailed things to say on the two central issues: withdrawal and a political settlement. They clearly appear to be interested and to be pressing for further elaborations or modifications of the U.S. stand.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 182, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous, Vol. III, 4/5–69. Secret; Nodis; Paris Negotiations; Plus. Sent for information. Sent through Sneider. Haig wrote on this memorandum: "HAK said good job." Kissinger had this memorandum reworked slightly and sent to the President, May 23. (Ibid.)

The DRV focused on the withdrawal question, while the NLF carried the main burden on a political solution. Following are the highlights:

Withdrawal: Xuan Thuy began by setting up the standard Communist argument for the necessity of an unconditional pullout of all U.S. troops. He pointedly tried to rule out the possibility that Hanoi might be interested in some formal, reciprocal arrangement involving a linking of the NLF Point 3 (the question of Vietnamese forces) and Point 10 (overseeing the withdrawal of U.S. forces).

However, his presentation was couched in a manner suggesting that Hanoi might be willing to undertake a tacit response to a U.S. pullout. Thuy did this in part by asserting that President Nixon's plan was the same as former President Johnson's in that the latter had called for reciprocal withdrawal before stopping the bombing. The implication was that another similar "understanding" might be possible.

The impression of DRV interest in President Nixon's proposal on withdrawal was strengthened by Thuy's remarks on the 12-month timetable. Thuy noted that this had been applied to only a partial and not to a complete U.S. withdrawal. He appeared to be asking by implication for the U.S. to set a time limit for a full-scale withdrawal. It seems possible that once such a timetable were set, the Communists might be willing to give us more assurances about the removal of NVA forces under point three of the NLF plan.

Ambassador Lodge picked up the interesting DRV comment on our 12-month time limit and, in the rebuttal period of the meeting, clarified our position. He noted that we were willing to discuss setting a time period for a full mutual withdrawal, if the other side would indicate its interest in negotiations on this subject.

A Political Settlement: The NLF handled this issue by a rather warped comparison of the President's proposal for general elections and its own proposition on elections and a coalition. Although expectedly one-sided, it at least amounted to a substantive discourse which definitely depicted interest in the U.S. proposal.

According to Tran Buu Kiem, the important question was how "political power is to be solved" in South Vietnam pending general elections. Kiem noted that the President had not spoken of this, but that it was clear he meant for the GVN to be paramount. This was unacceptable, he said. Kiem went on to explain what the Communists had in mind by their proposal that "neither party shall impose its political regime" during this period. This meant the formation of a "provisional administration" he said.

He then offered the NLF formula for the "peace-loving" forces in SVN to get together and set up a coalition. It was clear from his manner of presentation, however, that the Communists are definitely prepared to bargain on the details of the "provisional administration."

Interesting in this connection was Kiem's condemnation of the Saigon regime for wishing to "monopolize power" during this period—a kind of admission that the NLF is seeking only a share of the authority.

Kiem then introduced a new twist in the Communist strategy which could mark the beginning of a new campaign to undermine Saigon. He said that the NLF is now "ready to conduct talks with persons of goodwill who favor peace, independence and neutrality." This goes a little further than the standard NLF position that it is prepared to conduct talks with a "peace cabinet" which presumably has replaced the Saigon regime. Although Kiem called once again for the formation of a peace cabinet, he seemed to be suggesting that the Front is encouraging dissident groups to begin consultations with the NLF regardless of their political status and authority within South Vietnam. This could set the stage for a revival of the alliance.

POW's: Ambassador Lodge's demarche on the question of a POW list drew a completely negative response from the DRV. It seems clear that they are not prepared to give us any satisfaction on this score at this point, even though their hardline stand may cost them some propaganda points if carefully exploited by the U.S.

General Comment: We may be seeing an attempt by the Communists to sidestep private negotiations and to conduct an exploratory, probing type of negotiation at the plenary meetings. In any case, there would appear to be considerable room for the U.S. to tailor a response at the next plenary meeting to the specific points made today by the Communists in an effort to advance the process of movement by the other side.[2]

[2] At the end of the memorandum Sneider wrote: "I was also struck by the Thuy response to the 'essential elements' of the 10 pts—indicating greater flexibility."

73. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, May 25, 1969.

SUBJECT

The Possible Quarantine of North Vietnam

1. Per our conversation on Wednesday, 21 May, attached is a memorandum analyzing the impact that a quarantine of North Vietnam would have on that country's economy and logistic support capabilities.[2] This memorandum also outlines the probable reactions of various interested parties to the imposition of such a quarantine.

2. For reasons outlined in considerable detail in the attached memorandum, we are convinced that unless a quarantine of North Vietnam's seaborne commerce was accompanied by an interdiction of the land lines of communication (rail and road) to Communist China, the North Vietnamese could solve the problems such a quarantine would pose; i.e., Hanoi could make enough adjustments or alternate arrangements to ensure continuation of the level of external support necessary to permit Hanoi to continue present levels of North Vietnamese support to the Communist military campaign in South Vietnam.

Dick

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 207, Agency Files, CIA, Vol. I, January 1969–31 December 1969. Secret; Sensitive. According to an attached June 11 memorandum from Haig to Kissinger, Kissinger planned to discuss this memorandum with Helms that day.

[2] This 14-page paper with comments by Kissinger in the margins is attached but not printed.

74. Memorandum From Dean Moor of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, May 28, 1969.

SUBJECT

Status of the Phoenix and PRU Programs in Vietnam and the Thai Border Police

Currently, changes in management control are underway in all three forces. These changes will substantially reduce the CIA role. To a large extent, the shift will be to the U.S. military in Vietnam and to the U.S. operations mission in Thailand. In my judgment, the shifts are reasonably sound in concept and should not necessarily result in a drop in the effectiveness of the concerned forces. Following is the present status and the nature of the shifts proposed for each group:

The Phoenix Program[2]

This is the basic anti-VC infrastructure (VCI) program in Vietnam. It functions through a country-wide system of committees and centers down to the district level which supply the intelligence and direct anti-infrastructure operations by the police, the regional forces, the PRU, and the military security service. The TO and E of the Phoenix organization is around 6,000 with approximately 500 additional U.S. advisors.

In 1968, the Phoenix program accounted for between 10 and 20 percent of the VCI "neutralized". The bulk of the rest were accounted for in the course of regular military operations. The concept of the Phoenix program is considered sound, but its operation still leaves much to be desired. Problems are Vietnamese manpower shortages, lack of qualified Vietnamese, etc.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 69, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, The Phoenix Program. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information.

[2] Kissinger wrote the following note at the top of the first page: "Why the change?" and in the margin next to the Phoenix Program description: "What do they do? How do they neutralize them?" Moor answered these questions in a June 4 memorandum to Kissinger. Moor stated that CIA considered its role in starting up the programs was done and wanted to use its limited manpower in more productive work. He described how the anti-Viet Cong infrastructure program worked in Vietnam, and stated that the Phoenix committees tabulated what percentage of Viet Cong were killed or captured as a result of operations based on their intelligence (10 to 20 percent in 1968). The bulk of the Viet Cong killed or captured, however, were done so through regular military sweeps. (Ibid.)

Coming Changes in Phoenix

The CIA is currently in the course of withdrawing from the field management of the Phoenix program. The Agency considers its principal role fulfilled by the organization and start-up of the operation and believes its officers can be used more profitably elsewhere. MACV will take up the slack and the management role will be put under regular army personnel. MACV is slotting 450 personnel for this task. The switchover is already underway and will be largely completed by 1 July 1969. The top CORDS/Phoenix slot will continue to be held by a CIA man in Saigon.

Present Status of the Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU)

This is a covert program in which teams (companies) of 2 to 20 Vietnamese operate in the field to collect intelligence and as a quick reaction force to kill or capture specifically targeted VCI. Total force strength is over 5,000. The PRU is organized under joint MACV/GVN sponsorship [*1 line of source text not declassified*]. CIA province officers direct and supervise the targeting of the PRU. There is normally a U.S. NCO with each PRU element.

The PRUs have been effective in eliminating VCI. Each month, they account for about 10 to 20 percent of VCI neutralized. Since the VCI are individually targeted, they are often key enemy personnel.

Coming Changes in the PRU

The CIA is also divorcing itself of the management of the PRU and turning it over to the military, while urging the Vietnamese to increase their management cadre and directive role. In so far as the U.S. military are concerned, this will be largely a paper change, since the bulk of the advisory personnel are already military, while detailed to the CIA. The Vietnamese have agreed to take over more of the management duties, but this awaits the proper training of personnel. The Agency is pushing this now. Completion of the CIA/MACV switchover is set for 1 July 1969.

Status of the Thai Border Police

This is a 7,100 man force whose regular mission is border security, but which has also participated actively in the suppression of the Thai insurgents. Until about two years ago, its role in their latter operation was fairly extensive. Then, however, the Thai regular army moved in and the BPP role was considerably reduced.

The CIA at one time contributed over a million dollars a year to the BPP and was heavily involved in training and advising the force. Its contribution has been cut back during the past several years to the neighborhood of some $200,000 a year. The additional funds are largely still going to the BPP, but are funded through other elements of the

U.S. operations mission in Thailand. The Agency would like to further reduce its financial input as this is largely now the provision of equipment. The Agency believes that other U.S. elements can provide this. It is seeking to retain its present relatively small role in the training of elements of the BPP, mainly its para-military arm, the PARU. [*1½ lines of source text not declassified*]

So far as I can ascertain, the decisions on the CIA role with the BPP are not as fully set as are those in connection with the PRU and the Phoenix programs.

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75. Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State[1]

Paris, June 1, 1969, 1620Z.

8138. Delto 1800.

1. The May 31 private meeting with Le Duc Tho was the most significant meeting we have had with the DRV since my arrival here in January.[2] It provided the first serious indication from them of what issues particularly interest them and of how they want to proceed.

2. Herewith we submit our views on the highlights of Tho's statement at the May 31 meeting and the alternative courses of action open to us.

Part 1—The May 31 Meeting

3. During the May 31 meeting we made clear to the DRV that our side was ready to negotiate in the "dual track" format, in a quadrilateral format or in some combination of the two approaches, but that the GVN had to participate in the discussions involving the internal affairs of South Vietnam. Tho countered by rejecting secret negotiations involving the GVN at least at this time, in either dual track or quadliteral formats. He appeared very firm.

4. Tho changed the DRV's earlier position that the US had to deal directly with the NLF. Now he was saying: the DRV will talk about

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 177, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Meetings, May–June 1969, State Nodis Cables/Habib Calls. Secret; Priority; Nodis; Paris Meetings; Plus. Repeated to Saigon.

[2] The full report of the private meeting of May 31 is in telegram 8112 from Paris/Delto 1793, May 31. (Ibid.)

any issue at any time with the USG. Tho made no bones about the fact that the DRV would negotiate on behalf of the NLF on all matters, including matters relating to the South.

5. Tho emphasized that he wanted not only to discuss military matters but all matters covered by the 10 points. He agreed that in such discussions either party could raise any matter it desired. The DRV thus wants to discuss with us all aspects of a settlement including the political future of South Viet-Nam. By this Tho does not necessarily mean that he wants to resolve all substantive issues with us but that he wants us to agree that certain matters, such as withdrawals of North Vietnamese forces and political settlement, should be resolved by the Vietnamese parties as envisioned in the NLF's ten points.

6. Tho also referred to the fact that the settlement of some questions involved two parties, some involved three parties, and others involved four parties. By this he recognizes that there are matters that concern the GVN and that some time later the GVN will have to be brought in to the discussions. But Tho said he means a reconstituted GVN and not the individuals presently holding high office in Saigon, whom he wishes us to remove.

7. During the meeting Tho in general restated the DRV's standard substantive positions in the framework of the 10 points. But he spoke of a cease-fire in what to me was a new way, saying that an agreement on a cease-fire would be signed after a paper had been signed on the matters covered in the 10 points.

8. Evidently the DRV strategy aims to isolate the present GVN and destroy it. For this reason, Hanoi and the NLF are refusing at this time to meet with the GVN in any form other than the existing meetings at the Majestic. They hope to force us into an unpalatable choice—either negotiating with the DRV and then imposing the resulting settlement on the GVN; or trying to change the nature and composition of the GVN in a manner satisfactory to them so that it becomes a "peace government". In any case, the DRV strategy seems designed to create U.S./GVN frictions and to increase Thieu's internal political problems. It also appears to be designed to appeal to U.S. public opinion and to bring growing domestic pressure on the USG.

9. Tho asked us a number of questions during the meeting, some of them rhetorical. They indicate clearly the direction of DRV will be taking in the future. He asked these questions: (a) Who would organize the elections? (he asked this several times); (b) Does the U.S. agree to the sequence that Tho had outlined, in which in reality the U.S. and the DRV work out a settlement of all problems mentioned in the 10 point program, an agreement is signed, and then an agreement is made for a cease-fire? (*Comment:* we do not think we should respond to Tho's suggestion regarding the form of eventual agreements until we have a

better idea of what the substance is likely to be); (c) Does the U.S. agree to get rid of the present GVN?

Part 2—Alternative Courses of Action

10. Herewith are some alternative courses of action:

11. First, we could reject the proposal made by the DRV in the May 31 meeting and delay any further initiative for private meetings for an indefinite period in an effort to induce them to change their position. We and the GVN could use the plenary meetings to begin laying out the details of our positions and to attempt to draw out the other side on its positions.

12. *Comment:* I oppose this alternative. I believe that productive negotiations with the other side can only occur in private sessions. I see nothing on the horizon which would make the DRV change its position for at least several months. We would, accordingly, simply be postponing coming to grips with the issues, thus making progress more difficult.

13. Second, we could continue private U.S./DRV bilaterals with the sole objective of trying to persuade the DRV to accept GVN participation in private talks. The private meetings would thus be solely procedural. We would sit tight and wait for the other side to change its position.

14. *Comment:* I see no advantage in this. I would rather discuss both matters of substance and matters of procedure. I believe we would thus have a better chance of bringing about a changed attitude towards the GVN.

15. Third, we could tell the DRV at the outset that we are willing to discuss privately with it all subjects of mutual concern but that we cannot discuss political matters in the absence of the GVN since these are questions for the South Vietnamese to decide. On that basis we could then start discussing with the DRV matters we consider to be of mutual interest: Principally mutual withdrawals, but also such matters as the DMZ, POW's international supervision, etc. The DRV, in turn, could be expected to continue to seek to engage us in a discussion of political questions and to persuade us to accept their manner of proceeding in the private U.S./DRV bilaterals.

16. *Comment:* By following this course of action, we will continue to be faced with the same problem that confronts us now. In our judgment, the DRV would not at this time engage in meaningful substantive discussions of military matters with us if we tried to restrict the scope of bilateral discussions at the outset. We would consequently delay productive negotiations for a considerable time.

17. This brings us to the fourth alternative. We could, without accepting Tho's proposal, simply continue to hold bilateral U.S./DRV discussions. We would not seek to impose any prior conditions on the subjects to be discussed. Either side could raise anything it wishes.

They will want to discuss their 10 points, and we will want to discuss President Nixon's proposals. In the private talks themselves, we would take no initiative to raise political matters. When the DRV raises such matters, we would respond initially at least with our position that the political settlement is for the South Vietnamese to work out.

18. *Comment:* This course of action would not close out the possibility of GVN participation in private talks later.

We would, of course, have to maintain the closest consultation with the GVN both before and after each U.S./DRV meeting: and the positions we take in each meeting would have to be coordinated beforehand with the GVN. We would report to the GVN what the DRV said about political settlement in any particular meeting, and the U.S. and GVN together could then decide on a case by case basis what response, if any, other than the standard one, would be desirable. By consulting with the GVN on our responses to the DRV, we would always have the choice of giving the DRV a joint response at the next private meeting or not replying to Hanoi at all on a given point. If Hanoi pushes us on a political point, we could, if Thieu agrees, always fall back on the statement, "We have informed the GVN". This is the course of action which we believe opens up the most possibilities at this time for early substantive discussions. Admittedly this proposes a change in procedure which could change the handling of the "political solution."

19. Fifth, we could accept Tho's proposal and engage in bilateral discussion of all substantive questions involved in a settlement, including political matters.

20. *Comment:* This course of action seems to us unjustifiable both in terms of sound negotiating tactics and in terms of our relations with the GVN.

Part 3—Analysis

21. The position which the other side has now taken, and the proposal the DRV put to us in the May 31 meeting, will undoubtedly create difficulties for the GVN. The GVN will see, as we have suggested above, that the DRV tactic is designed to isolate the GVN and to destroy it. And the GVN will be very sensitive to the suggestion that the U.S. should negotiate on its behalf, particularly on matters involving internal political settlement which we have agreed are primarily for the GVN to negotiate. In this connection, we recall Ambassador Lam's statement to us of his understanding of the GVN position, namely, that there were no matters which did not concern the GVN and that the U.S. should not negotiate any matters without GVN presence. (Paris 8012)[3]

[3] Dated May 30. (Ibid.)

22. At the same time, we also have the problem of how to move ahead with negotiations and with smoking out the other side's positions on the substantive questions. We believe this objective of getting on with early productive talks can be achieved in a way that protects the basic position of the GVN. We think that the fourth course of action outlined above offers the best opportunity for doing this.

23. Under the fourth alternative, our approach to the negotiations would be to place the principal emphasis on the question of mutual withdrawals. We would seek serious indications that the DRV was willing to move ahead on the question of withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese troops.

24. In following the fourth course of action, we would continue in the plenaries and in public statements to criticize the communist refusal to accept Thieu's March 25 offer to talk bilaterally with the NLF. We would continue our warm support of Thieu's offer, both publicly and privately, hoping thereby to bring pressure on the other side eventually to accept it. Once the GVN is talking bilaterally, trilaterally or quadrilaterally with the other side, Saigon would, of course, play the principal role in these discussions of internal South Vietnamese matters.

25. Finally, we should not refuse in advance to hear what the DRV has to say. Not only is it in our interests to hear them, but our refusal to do so would surely become known and we would be in an incomprehensible position.

Part 4—Conclusion

26. The next step should be concentrated consultations with the GVN. Before GVN/U.S. discussions take place, however, the U.S. Government should determine which course of action we prefer to follow. Our preference should then be explained to the GVN. Meanwhile, we do not believe we should request another private meeting with the DRV until after Midway. Our response to the DRV's May 31 proposals depends on what we and the GVN decide to do. We would, of course, agree to attend a private meeting if the DRV asks for one.

27. Since he will have already been briefed on what happened at the May 31 meeting, the question of where we go from here on negotiations will probably be on Thieu's mind when he comes to Midway.

Lodge

76. Backchannel Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)[1]

Washington, June 1, 1969, 1844Z.

WH90761. Exclusively Eyes Only for the Ambassador (hold for arrival in Saigon).

The President has asked that you convey to Thieu the importance that he places upon the forthcoming Midway meeting. He is aware that press speculation here has probably aroused some concern on the coalition government issue, and wishes Thieu to be assured that we are determined to hold the line on this. I gave this message to Bui Diem yesterday. However, it is essential that we retain tactical flexibility. Our major problem here is to gain time and to enable us to combat the growing public pressures. This is why troop withdrawal announcement is so crucial.

Press is speculating that Midway meeting was convened to remedy a growing divergence between Saigon and Washington. Therefore, it is most important that troop withdrawal announcement be made in context of Thieu initiative in order to maintain his image here. It will strengthen our ability to help him on political front.

At Midway, we currently visualize that President and Thieu will meet privately from 11:30 until 1:00 p.m., and then issue a very brief joint announcement on troop withdrawal along lines of my earlier message.[2] This will produce a maximum impact especially if it is unexpected. Following lunch, the entire group will meet, then at 5:00 p.m., a formal joint statement will be made on other matters dealt with at the conference.

Because of the psychological implications of the troop withdrawal statement, it is absolutely essential that there be no leaks beforehand that announcement is to be made. For this reason, this matter has been held strictly to the President, myself, and Secretaries Rogers and Laird. It is equally important that similar restrictions be retained on this information at your end. You will note that some references have been made to troop withdrawal and Vietnamization in regular State traffic concerned with the formal joint statement at the conclusion of the meeting and preparatory coordination of respective positions. These references have been made by drafters unaware of the decision to proceed

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

[2] See Document 70.

with a separate announcement at Midway and serve as an additional cover to maintain the necessary security.

Request your views on foregoing, as soon as possible.[3]

[3] In backchannel message 802 from Saigon, June 2, Bunker reported that he did not expect problems with Thieu on troop withdrawals and Thieu would be reassured by Nixon's assurances on a coalition government. Bunker also reported that Abrams hoped to maintain flexibility in withdrawals. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel)

77. Memorandum of a Joint Cabinet and National Security Council Meeting[1]

Washington, June 3, 1969.

SUBJECT

Cabinet Meeting, June 3, 1969

This was a joint meeting of the Cabinet and the National Security Council called to hear Secretary of State William Rogers' report on his around-the-world trip.[2]

The first point of interest naturally was Vietnam. Secretary Rogers said he had listened to the President's address on Vietnam while at the American Embassy in Saigon. "Contrary to what you might have read in the papers," the Secretary told other Cabinet Members, "there are no differences between the U.S. and South Vietnam about what the President said." South Vietnam's President Thieu went over the speech

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Office Files, Box 1, Memos for the President's File, 1969–1970, Beginning June 1, 1969. No classification marking. Drafted by Special Assistant to the President James Keogh. In attendance were members of the National Security Council, the Cabinet, and 26 sub-Cabinet and White House officials. The meeting lasted from 9:07 to 11:28 a.m. (Ibid., President's Daily Diary)

[2] Rogers departed Washington on May 12 and arrived in Saigon on May 14 for a 4-day visit. Rogers met with Foreign Minister Tran Chanh Thanh on May 15 and they discussed the general situation in South Vietnam, the upcoming Seven Nation Troop Contributing and SEATO meetings, and Nixon's speech of May 14. Memoranda of conversation of these discussions, treated as separate discussions, are ibid., NSC Files, Box 137, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. IV, 4/29/69–5/18/69. Telegraphic accounts of these meetings are in telegrams Secto 49 to 51/Bangkok 6494–6496, May 21; ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, ORG 7 S. Rogers also talked with Vietnamese Prime Minister Tran Van Huong. A brief account of their meeting is in telegram Secto 18/9444 from Saigon, May 15. (Ibid., POL 27–14 VIET) A fuller account of their discussion is in telegram Secto 44/6489 from Bangkok, May 21. (Ibid., ORG 7 S)

in advance, made some suggestions that were accepted, and approved the final draft, Rogers said.[3] Here the President interjected, "As a matter of fact you were there when he made some changes."

Rogers found Thieu to be mature and intelligent and the one man in the Saigon government who has potential for national leadership. The Secretary said that the South Vietnamese are ready to take over a major part of the burden of the war, although they are fearful that if their casualty rate increases substantially, they may be in difficulty. They fully realize the problems that the war is creating for the U.S., he said.

One thing that the South Vietnamese do not understand, said the Secretary, is freedom of the press. "They lock people up for printing something they don't want printed and then later think perhaps they made a mistake." This caused Postmaster General Blount to comment: "Maybe they've got a good idea there."

The American press, said Rogers, was quite wrong in its speculation that the President's trip was arranged in a hurry for a meeting demanded by Thieu. Rogers said the meeting was suggested by President Nixon and that he, Rogers, was the one who proposed the timing. Relations between the U.S. and South Vietnam are very good, the Secretary reported, although South Vietnamese leaders "had some questions" about the U.S. position on elections. They found it hard to understand that all the U.S. was suggesting was an election that would permit all of the people of South Vietnam to express their view. They agree that there should be such an election but are uncertain about how it should be conducted.

Rogers called U.S. Ambassador Bunker and Military Commander Abrams both superb men for their positions. In travelling through some combat areas with Abrams, he found that the General "knew all about the military and also had a lot of humanitarian instincts."

The critical political problem in South Vietnam, said Rogers, is that there is no cohesiveness, no real national interest even in such things as national sports or national radio programs. He thought it would be a good idea to have a couple of men in the U.S. Embassy who are ex-

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[3] Rogers met privately with President Nguyen Van Thieu and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky on May 16. Thieu told Rogers he would like to hold elections after the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam and after receiving guarantees from the Viet Cong about freedom of the electoral process. Thieu was prepared to accept establishment of a mixed electoral commission to run the elections and would amend the GVN constitution if necessary for an agreement. Thieu was confident he could use the military and civil servants to expand the Government's political support and successfully contest the elections. Ky told Rogers that South Vietnam would be ready for elections by May 1970. (Telegram 9541 from Saigon, May 16; ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 7, President's Daily Briefs) Rogers discussed other issues with Thieu on May 16, including land reform as reported in telegram Secto 63/6559 from Saigon, May 16. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, ORG 7 S) Rogers also met with Thieu's cabinet on May 16; an account of that discussion is in telegram 9723 from Saigon, May 19. (Ibid., POL 27 VIET S) Additional documentation on Rogers' visit to Vietnam is ibid., Conference Files, 1966–1972, CF 356–364.

perienced in politics and who would help Thieu to build a national image. President Nixon asked whether "Thieu would accept political advice from us." Rogers' reply: "He would if we didn't label the people involved as political advisors and if we could just attach them to the Embassy without publicity."

The President commented that criticism of South Vietnam with regard to the condition of its democracy has become terribly distorted. Complaints that the South Vietnamese have defective elections and a partially controlled press are made without regard to the fact that North Vietnam has *no* elections and a completely controlled press. Two very basic questions involved in the South Vietnamese situation, the President continued, are whether a country like South Vietnam is really ready for a democratic system, and whether it is possible to have freedom of the press in a country at full-scale war. "Look back to our own society," the President said. "Lincoln didn't allow much freedom of the press in the Civil War. And in both World War I and World War II, we had a very tight press situation."

Vice President Agnew raised the question whether statements in the U.S. attacking this country's role in Vietnam—such as those made by Senator Edward Kennedy—have an effect on the South Vietnamese. Rogers said there was no doubt that all such statements were followed closely and studied for their possible effects on U.S. policy.

Moving on to other countries he visited, the Secretary of State said that at a meeting of the SEATO alliance partners he found that representatives of the countries which are contributing troops to the Vietnamese war thought the U.S. should reduce its forces there and all indicated that their countries would not reduce their own troop strength if the U.S. did so.

[Omitted here is material unrelated to Vietnam and Southeast Asia.]

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78. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 4, 1969.

SUBJECT

US Negotiating Team in Paris

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 183, Paris Talks/Meetings, Memos and Miscellaneous, Vol. XIV, 1969. Secret; Nodis.

Attached is a memorandum handed to me by Mel Laird which offers some additional insights into the problems within our Paris negotiating team. This memorandum was prepared by a high ranking officer detailed to Paris (but not the source of the previous statements).

Attachment

Paper Given by Secretary of Defense Laird to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[2]

Washington, May 27, 1969.

SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING OUR PARIS PEACE TALKS DELEGATION

1. General Frederick Weyand and Col. Paul Gorman (and possibly Herbert Kaplan, the press spokesman) seem to be the only realists on the delegation. The State Department people, especially Richard Holbrooke and Carl Salans, are taking positions and attempting to formulate policies and démarches that are not in keeping with—and in fact contrary to—the President's publicly-stated commitment on Vietnam. (Witness the "Lodge-authored" suggested démarche for 31 May, re our withdrawal of troops on the basis of "understanding" rather than concrete conditions.[3] Also the earlier message (para 16) re our withdrawal if North Vietnam "is going to withdraw." Sullivan apparently concurred in the Lodge cable.)[4]

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[2] Secret; Nodis; Background Use Only.

[3] In telegram 7755 from Paris, May 26, Lodge suggested that he meet alone with Tho at the end of the meeting and state: "I quite understand that public discussion of such subjects as troop withdrawal might create problems. Such problems can be avoided. We could try to establish the circumstances in which troop withdrawal takes place. This could be done by prior understanding rather than by prior conditions. Is there some de facto way in which troops could be withdrawn from South Vietnam which would not appear to be a result of negotiations between us—something which would just apparently happen as part of the normal course of events." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 181, Paris Talks/Meetings, Private Paris Meetings, Memos/Codeword) In telegram 10617 from Saigon, May 28, Bunker expressed misgivings about such a statement and suggested substituting "perhaps this could be done by prior understanding" for "prior understanding rather than prior conditions." (Ibid.) Lodge was instructed to follow Nixon's statement in his speech of May 14: "If North Viet-Nam wants to insist that it has no forces in South Viet-Nam, we will no longer debate the point—provided that its forces cease to be there, and that we have reliable assurances that they will not return." (Memorandum from Sneider to Kissinger, May 27; ibid.)

[4] Not further identified.

2. Ambassador (Judge) Walsh seemed totally out of it, not at all forceful, and with no firm views. He is not kept informed by junior members of the staff.

3. Ambassador Lodge appeared to be an old man who had been encapsulated by the bright young State Department boys.[5] His staff meetings are unfocussed, disorganized, and with no central direction. Of the regulars, General Weyand seems to be the only realist in attendance.

4. The GVN delegation, especially Ambassador Lam and Colonel Nguyen-Hui-Loi, evince doubts regarding the firmness of our commitment, mainly based, it seems, on the analyses they read in the US press. The South Vietnamese have little or no contact with the US delegation, aside from General Weyand's military component.

5. A matter of first priority should be to establish White House control over the delegation.[5] A statement of policy should be imposed on the delegation, and the machinery should be regularized. There are too many cut-outs (e.g., General Weyand did not see the Lodge cable before Phil Habib hand-carried it to Washington).

6. In short, the State Department members of the delegation seem bound and determined to fly in the face of historical experience and, if left to their own devices, to secure a peace at almost any price.[5]

7. Another extremely disturbing factor is whether or not the "advocates" have thought through the ramifications—*out-of-country* as well as within Vietnam—of the proposed démarche. It would be interesting to task them (if such was possible) with preparing a contingency paper gaming out a post-Vietnam Southeast Asia as they see it. If honestly played, the game would be a nightmare, both for US credibility and for future US initiatives (given the assumable domestic public opinion that would obtain).

[5] Nixon underlined this sentence.

79. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 4, 1969.

SUBJECT

Your Meeting with President Thieu at Midway, June 8

I. Arrangements for the Midway Meeting

You will arrive at Midway at 11:00 a.m. President Thieu arrives at 11:30 a.m. After an official welcome and military honors (draft statement attached at Tab A),[2] you will meet privately with President Thieu for about an hour and a half. The remaining members of both delegations will meet in a separate conference room during this period. (Delegation lists are at Tab E.)

After a brief break, there will be a business luncheon attended by members of both delegations. (Points for a toast are at Tab B.) Secretary Laird departs after this luncheon.

Your final meeting with Thieu will begin at 3:15 p.m. after a half-hour break. Secretary Rogers and other senior advisors will sit in on this meeting at which you and President Thieu will review the draft joint statement. (Current draft is at Tab C.) At 5:00 p.m. there is to be a joint press conference at which time the joint statement will be issued. President Thieu is scheduled to leave about 5:45 p.m. (A draft departure statement is at Tab D.) You are scheduled to leave shortly thereafter.

II. The Setting for the Midway Meeting

The Midway meeting with President Thieu comes at a crucial time. It has been preceded by months of concerted and effective efforts on the part of your administration to dissipate misunderstanding between us and the South Vietnamese Government and to place our relations on a solid basis of both full consultation and mutual confidence. The meeting, furthermore, follows the enunciation of your peace program in the May 14 speech and the issuance of the NLF's ten points, providing a potential basis for negotiations at Paris. Finally, in recent months, Thieu has taken key actions reflecting his greater sense of self-confidence, his recognition of the political problems facing you at

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 71, Vietnam Subject Files, Midway Meeting with President Thieu, 6/8/69, Briefing Book, Vol. I. Secret. Sent for information.

[2] All Tabs are attached but not printed.

home, and his sense that the Vietnam war is probably entering the decisive negotiating stage. These actions include:

1. His full support for improvement and modernization of the Vietnamese forces.
2. His agreement to a withdrawal of some U.S. military units during 1969.
3. His March 25 statement of the six-point GVN peace program and other public indications of some flexibility on a political settlement.
4. His even greater flexibility, privately, on political arrangements affording the NLF a guaranteed post-war political role.
5. His formation of a political coalition of supporters, whatever its deficiencies, on May 25.

III. Thieu's main purposes in his talks with you will be

—To establish a personal relationship with you which will serve both as a bridge for future consultation and as a focal point for strengthening his leadership position in South Vietnam.

—To reassure himself that the United States will remain committed to South Vietnam both during and after the war; from Thieu's viewpoint the key areas of reassurance (which relate in part to the eight-point plan in your speech) will be:

(1) Withdrawal of U.S. forces, whether unilateral or mutual, will *not* be at a rate likely to increase the vulnerability of the GVN to Communist military action.
(2) The Vietnam settlement will include guarantees against a renewal of the North Vietnamese military intervention in South Vietnam.
(3) The U.S. plan, particularly those aspects dealing with disengagement and local ceasefires, would *not* result in a de facto partition for South Vietnam.
(4) The U.S. is not seeking to impose a provisional coalition government or scrapping of the present constitution in the pre-election period.

—To establish for public consumption a close identity of purpose and action with you, while establishing for his Saigon audience his stature as an equal.

IV. Your main purposes in the talks with Thieu will be

—To establish a personal relationship with Thieu which provides him with both a necessary sense of confidence in your commitments to South Vietnam and reinforces his own sense of self-confidence.

—To reassure Thieu on two fundamentals:

(1) We will not be a party to an agreement imposing either a coalition government in the pre- or post-election periods, or any other political arrangement against the will of the South Vietnamese.
(2) Withdrawal of U.S. forces, whether unilateral or mutual, will *not* be undertaken at the risk of the military security of either South Vietnam forces or the remaining U.S. forces.

—To encourage a sense of urgency, vigor and joint U.S.-GVN purpose in the Vietnamization program.[3]

—To prod Thieu gently to articulate in more specific terms a political program for discussion at the Paris negotiations which affords the Communists sufficient guarantees of free political completion without conceding to their demands for a coalition government.[4]

(Thieu has privately suggested this might be done through a combination of international supervision, mixed electorate commissions, and amendment—rather than scrapping—of the constitution.)

—To encourage Thieu to continue his efforts to unify the nationalists on the political front and to strengthen the local governmental apparatus, while hinting judiciously about the utility of dealing gently with opposition non-Communist forces.[5]

(*Note:* The political situation in South Vietnam is more fluid than appears on the surface; Thieu and his principal non-Communist rivals are already maneuvering for position in the post-war political structure, and each in all probability also has some lines out to elements in the NLF. Thieu, therefore, could be tempted or prodded by his supporters to bear down hard on his non-Communist rivals.)

—To assure Thieu that you will not accept any settlement that does not provide assurances of North Vietnamese withdrawal to North Vietnam and against their future military intervention in South Vietnam.

—To establish publicly an image of unity with the GVN and a joint determination to seek a very early settlement of the Vietnam conflict which does not compromise basic principles.

V. Danger Signals

While it will be important for you to encourage forward motion on Thieu's part both with respect to Vietnamization and the formulation of a political program, there are risks in pushing Thieu too far, too fast. Thieu has been bolder in charting future policy on both withdrawal of U.S. forces and a political settlement than his supporters or his political rivals. He faces the constant necessity of bringing these elements along to his more flexible posture. Therefore, it will be neither to his nor to your interest for Thieu to get too far out ahead of other nationalists in Saigon or to appear to be acting on Vietnamization and a political settlement strictly at our behest.[6] Thieu's pre-Midway visits

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[3] Nixon highlighted this sentence.

[4] Nixon highlighted this sentence.

[5] Nixon underlined the phrase: "utility of dealing gently with opposition non-Communist forces" in this sentence.

[6] Nixon underlined this sentence.

to Seoul and Taipei, in any event, will probably strengthen his determination to resist any appearance of American pressure.

VI. Specific Issues Likely to Arise (Talking Points at Tab F)

A. Thieu is likely to raise, or should be encouraged to raise:

1. His views on a program for a political settlement.
2. Progress in organizing political support among the non-Communists.
3. Modernization of the GVN forces.
4. Progress on the pacification front.
5. Land reform.

B. Issues you should raise:[7]

1. U.S. plans for a reduction of U.S. forces.
2. Reassurance on the U.S. position opposing either partition or the imposition of unsatisfactory provisional arrangements before the elections.
3. Our view on the current status and the prospects of the Paris negotiations.
4. Your overview on Asia, including the importance of a steadfast U.S. commitment to the non-Communist countries in the region.

VII. Thieu Personality

Thieu is a career military officer who has proved his political astuteness both by surviving successive coups and by demonstrating growing qualities of leadership since taking over as President in 1967. Cast in the traditional Vietnamese mold, Thieu is reserved in manner, moves cautiously, and keeps his own counsel. However, as he has gained greater self-confidence, he has increasingly shown himself to be more perceptive and sensitive to the needs of his country—and more flexible—than his potential rivals. He has worked in close harmony with Ambassador Bunker and has developed a real sensitivity toward the domestic problems faced in the United States. He accepts our advice, but at every crucial instance has made it clear that he is his own master. Unostentatious in manner, he is devoted to his wife and family. His single known "vice" is a passion for fishing.

VIII.

The State and Defense Departments have prepared a number of background papers, in the attached briefing book. A scope paper is attached at Tab G.

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[7] Nixon underlined issues 1 and 2.

80. Editorial Note

On June 7, 1969, President Nixon arrived in Honolulu in preparation for his meeting with President Thieu on Midway Island the next day. According to the President's Daily Diary, Nixon met with Secretary of State Rogers, Secretary of Defense Laird, Assistant to the President Kissinger, Generals Wheeler and Abrams, Admiral McCain, and Ambassador Bunker. The meeting was held in the conference room of the Kuala Hilton Hotel in Honolulu from approximately 2:15 to 6:15 p.m. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) Although not listed as a participant in the diary, Ambassador Lodge also attended. Kissinger's recollection of this meeting stresses that the military participants accepted the decision to withdraw 25,000 U.S. troops "with a heavy heart," but with resignation. (*White House Years,* pages 272–273) When Laird described this Hawaii gathering at his staff meeting on June 16, he called it a "really significant meeting," but provided no details. (Washington National Records Center, OSD Files, FRC 330 76–0028, Laird Chronological File, June–August 1969) Laird prepared a June 7 briefing for the President on Vietnamization. (Ibid., ISA Task Force Files, FRC 75–0013, Chron Action, Ltc Williams, June 6) Lodge was asked to brief the group on events in Paris. According to notes he made, Lodge gave an account of the May 31 private meeting with Le Duc Tho as follows:

"1. I was asked to report on the situation in Paris.

"2. I said that Le Duc Tho, on May 31, had made this proposal:

"a) The DRV would talk with us on all matters and on behalf of the NLF. In essence, he also advanced these ideas:

"b) Remove the present personnel of the GVN and destroy them;

"c) Seek a US–DRV agreement within the framework of the 10 points of the NLF, and another agreement on a cease-fire. In other words, the cease-fire was put at the very bottom of the list.

"3. I said that I did not think we could refuse to talk with the DRV. If political questions were brought up, we should be authorized to refer them to Thieu. I suggested that the President should seek to achieve such an understanding with Thieu at the Midway conference the next day." (Notes on the Midway Meetings by Lodge, Massachusetts Historical Society, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Reel 25)

On June 8 Nixon and the same group flew from Honolulu to Midway, from 7 to 10 a.m. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) According to H.R. Haldeman there were "Meetings all the way." No record of these discussions on the aircraft have been found. (*Haldeman Diaries,* page 64)

81. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Midway Island, June 8, 1969.

PRESENT

President Nixon
President Thieu
Henry Kissinger
Nguyen Phu Duc

President Nixon began the meeting by stressing that he preferred to have private talks. He assured President Thieu that what he would say would be in confidence. They could agree on that.

President Thieu said that speculation as to differences between them is untrue; that he was very glad to have this opportunity to talk with the President.

President Nixon stated that the press is trying to drive a wedge between the two Presidents with respect to reports about American pressure. Unless President Thieu heard something from him directly, he should disregard it. There is currently a lot of speculation regarding American pressures for a coalition government and it is entirely unfounded. (The President called on Henry Kissinger to confirm that fact.) The President gave a general appraisal of the situation, stating that the war in Vietnam concerns not only Vietnam but the entire Pacific. The people of South Vietnam, however, have the greatest stake. If the peace is inadequate, there will be repercussions all over Asia. There can be no reward for those engaged in aggression. At the same time, self-determination is not only in the Vietnamese interest, but in the American interest as well. It would improve the prospects of peace throughout the Pacific.

The President mentioned that we have a difficult political problem in the U.S. and that he appreciated Saigon's understanding for his domestic problems. At the same time, he understood President Thieu's problems. It is not our wish for President Thieu to get too far ahead and wind up with no country to lead. President Nixon described the Congressional situation and the importance of the 1970 elections. The U.S. domestic situation is a weapon in the war. (At this point the President asked Henry Kissinger to explain the Cambodian strikes.)

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Office Files, Box 1, Memos for the President's Files, 1969–1970, Beginning June 8, 1969. Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. Drafted on June 13. Kissinger prepared brief individual scenarios for Nixon meetings with Thieu in the morning and afternoon. (Memoranda from Kissinger to Nixon, June 4; NSC Files, Box 71, Vietnam Subject Files, Midway Meeting with President Thieu, 6/8/69, Briefing Book, Vol. I)

President Thieu felt that the intentions of the enemy are crucial; the issue is the spread of Communism. Any false peace will affect all of Asia. Both the Vietnamese people and the world need peace. He recognized the U.S. desire for peace. He knew that the U.S. had no desire to occupy Vietnam but that its sole objective was to achieve peace. The Vietnamese should be reasonable and must consider not only Vietnamese opinions but those of the U.S. as well. The war in Vietnam is not a military one and neither side can win militarily. Therefore, there must be a reasonable compromise. President Thieu understood the difficulties of the President with a large army abroad incurring constant casualties. He felt that his country must make progress in order to help us to withdraw.

Thieu stated that Hanoi deliberately creates a deadlock in Paris and attacks the GVN as the chief obstacle to peace. The Communists are weaker, but Hanoi can continue the war at a reduced rate of casualties for many years. Hence, a negotiated peace is essential. Thieu said he was trying to make progress in winning the political war. Even if Hanoi continues the war, the GVN will win the population.

The President next turned to the subject of troop replacements. Thieu stated that troop replacements, if not handled carefully, could be misunderstood by the North Vietnamese and their allies. He pointed out that we have kept saying the war is going better. We must now prove it; it is important for both U.S. and Vietnamese opinion. Even though the war is going on, we must use the troop replacement to fight Communist propaganda.

By July 15, Thieu said, it should be possible to phase out one-third of the Third Marine Division and six battalions from the Delta. At the same time, he wanted to emphasize a difference of opinion with General Abrams. His aim was to extend administrative control over 100% of the population next year. Therefore, the regional and popular forces are crucial. As they improve, they can replace mobile U.S. forces and ARVN combat divisions. The regional and popular forces can free regular forces to fight a mobile war. This was better than building up new combat divisions.

President Nixon said that we have confused the press by not denying any conflict between us. It would be obvious after today that no conflict existed. The two Presidents then discussed plans for the communiqué.

Turning to the negotiations, President Nixon asked how we should respond to Le Duc Tho's proposal for bilateral talks.

President Thieu misunderstood the President's question about the Tho proposal and said the GVN would object to any U.S. attempt to talk to the NLF. After Mr. Kissinger clarified the issue, President Thieu said that he agrees to bilateral talks unless the U.S. tries to settle directly with

the NLF. The United States should introduce the military subject and listen to the political projections of the other side. Before replying, the GVN would have to be fully consulted.

President Nixon asked several questions regarding Vietnamese political institutions, commenting that Thieu knew his people and required timing. He emphasized that there was no wedge between the U.S. and GVN nor between Thieu and his people.

Break for Lunch

Thieu asked about how we should respond to Communist strategy in Paris. President Nixon replied that we should not seem overanxious.

Thieu asked about military operations. President Nixon said he thought the Communists were suffering badly and intelligence indicated there was very little in the pipeline to the South from Hanoi. Thieu felt that the reason for the latest attacks was to maintain an impression of strength for the Communist world conference and to bring pressure on U.S. public opinion. The Communists faced a dilemma: they wanted to economize their human resources but also wished to maintain U.S. casualties. Thus they continue the tactics of pressure. The Communists pretend that the current deadlock is our fault. The only way to overcome this strategy is to set a deadline. Hanoi knows that delay is to their advantage. Thieu suggested we make our most conciliatory proposal and then establish a deadline for a response, so that time does not work for the other side.

President Nixon asked whether Thieu planned to go on in his political program from his March 25 speech.[2] Thieu replied that we must not be put into the position of always making new proposals. At some early point, we must state (a) that the U.S. and Saigon agree, and (b) that our proposals are as far as we can go. President Thieu stated that he did not want to be pushed from one position to another—as was the case with the shape-of-the-table issue. If he could have the assurance that we would back some set of Saigon proposals, he was certain that we could work out a common position. But he did not want to have an escalation of proposals. Hanoi tended to take 15 small concessions and parlay them into one major concession.

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[2] On March 25 President Thieu announced a six-point peace plan that he later reiterated on April 7 at a joint session of the two Houses of the South Vietnamese National Assembly. The points were: "1. North Vietnam must give up attempts to conquer South Vietnam by force, 2. all Communist forces must be withdrawn from South Vietnam, 3. Laos and Cambodia could not be used as bases for attacks on South Vietnam, 4. South Vietnam would adopt a policy of national reconciliation, 5. unification must be decided through a democratic process, and 6. international controls and guarantees against Communist aggression must be adopted." (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1969–1970,* p. 23554)

Thieu asked for assurances that we would not use every concession by the GVN as a signal for new demands. There must be an end to it. Mr. Kissinger asked, "But how do you play the political game?" Thieu replied that if there were a withdrawal of forces and an end of terrorism, the GVN could consider the NLF as another party in elections. If the NLF wants guarantees, the GVN was ready to discuss it with them in generous terms. Thieu said he was ready to accept an international body. It could not interfere in the GVN's area of sovereignty but it could organize and supervise elections. The GVN was willing to accept as many as 10,000 international inspectors and frontier guards. He was prepared to implement free choice and self-determination; in other words, a free vote and free candidature. Thieu felt that everyone was aware that political competition was inevitable.

President Nixon urged Thieu to do everything possible and asked if it would be any help to him if we provided a political organizer. The U.S. had done this with Magsaysay and it had been helpful. It is up to President Thieu if he wants this kind of assistance. Thieu responded that more support for cadres was necessary.

President Nixon mentioned that Hanoi has never had real elections and is thus employing a double standard. Thieu pointed out that 56% of those "elected" in North Vietnam were women. This shows the magnitude of their manpower problem. He reiterated that there would be elections after the withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces. Thieu was prepared for good international supervision—even without troops.

President Nixon wondered whether the GVN could siphon off the political forces in the center to weaken the Viet Cong. Thieu responded that when we have a common position on our side, we can have a united front. What made the middle ground in Saigon so uncertain was the fear that the U.S. would withdraw support. Hence, many politicians were holding themselves available for a coalition government with the NLF.

President Nixon asked why not a united front now; the GVN is going to win and that is a great asset. Thieu stated very frankly that there was a sagging of spirit in Saigon. Many still believe that the Viet Cong can have political concessions. The intellectuals are waiting for political concessions imposed on Saigon by the U.S. They were encouraged in this by loose statements from U.S. cabinet members. Mr. Duc interjected that the Saigon population was very worried.

President Thieu asked what had been meant by local elections in the early drafts of the President's May 14 speech. The President replied that he meant that elections could be held in provinces where ceasefires had been arranged. Thieu said that this was an interesting possibility.

President Nixon said that the fact that the people in Saigon were jittery worried him. Thieu returned to his view that territorial forces had to be strengthened. General Abrams wants to train divisions. Thieu wants to train 130,000 Regional Forces and Popular Forces. Abrams doubts the manpower resources are available. Thieu thinks it easier to form RF and PF than regular forces. If the GVN has more RF and PF, it can phase out combat divisions. Thieu wants the U.S. to reconsider his plan regarding the RF and PF, and for someone to talk to General Abrams.

President Nixon mentioned the stories in the press about the poor performance of the 5th and 18th Divisions. Thieu said it is a question of leadership. President Nixon recalled the story of when General Pershing's desire to attack was thwarted by a classmate who said the morale of his divisions was shot. Pershing replied, your morale is shot and fired him. There are no tired divisions, only tired commanders.[3]

[3] After their meeting on June 8, Nixon and Thieu released a previously agreed upon joint statement; see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 445–557.

82. Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Sullivan) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, June 10, 1969.

SUBJECT

Laos

[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 LAOS. Secret; Exdis. In a June 10 covering memorandum to Walsh, Sullivan stated that Kissinger asked for this memorandum "on a private basis." Sullivan told Walsh that his recommendations reflected his opposition to CINCPAC's and other military commanders' urgings for a major increase in U.S. military activity on Laos. Sullivan discerned from Nixon and Kissinger that the military hoped to assign a U.S. major general as military commander for all activities in Laos and take over at least part of the role that the U.S. Ambassador to Laos currently fulfilled. Sullivan stated that he had shown this memorandum to Godley and suggested that Rogers, Richardson, Johnson, and Green receive copies.

You asked for my opinion concerning the utility of additional United States military action in Laos.[2] As I told you previously, and as I told the President during the trip back from Midway to Honolulu, I consider that there is very little more we can do than we are currently doing. I also consider that the net result of additional effort would be marginal.

In reaching this assessment, I start from the premise that Laos, as a landlocked nation of less than three million people, can never be a military match for North Viet-Nam, a nation of nearly twenty million. I also assume that it is not in the United States interest to commit our own forces to a ground war in Laos. Therefore, the limits of perfectibility in the defense of Laos must be defined by the capabilities of Lao ground forces, aided by United States training and equipment, and augmented by United States air support. Additional United States assistance is given in the form of intelligence and clandestine operations.

Currently, we train and equip regular Lao armed forces of about 60,000 men. Additionally we train, pay and direct a tribal guerrilla force of about 40,000 men. We have furnished a small tactical air force of T–28 aircraft, which we attempt to keep at air operating level of 48 aircraft, with Lao pilots. Due to a shortage of Lao pilots, we pay for the services of about a dozen Thai "volunteer" pilots. Moreover, by contract with two U.S. operated companies (Air America and Continental Air Services) we provide airlift support for the Lao military and our own guerrilla forces.

About 60 USAF sorties per day are flown from Thailand in direct support of Lao military activity. U.S. Forward Air Controllers (about 10) also operate from Thailand and from strips in Laos. Communications are handled by U.S. military and civilian personnel to assure the efficiency of these operations.

To run the foregoing effort, there are less than 200 U.S. personnel in Laos who are "in violation" of the 1962 agreements. It has always been my policy to hold this number to a minimum and to position them in such a manner that they could be immediately extracted if political considerations dictated. It is important to note that the United

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[2] Kissinger sent a copy of this memorandum to Nixon on June 16, stating in the covering memorandum it was in response to Nixon's request "to look into the possibility of doing more to improve the military situation in Laos." Kissinger summarized Sullivan's view that there was little more that the United States could do, but added: "I believe the key factor in Laos is the enemy's ability to concentrate its forces there and overrun the remainder of the country at any time it would appear advantageous to do so. Additional U.S. assistance to Lao forces could not alter this fact, although it could make a difference in the current situation." Kissinger recommended that the Under Secretaries Committee look into the issue and Nixon approved on April 18. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 286, Memoranda to the President, June 1969, Folder 2)

States has accepted *no* commitments whatsoever in association with these military operations and that they could, in principle, be terminated unilaterally by us at any time.

In addition to these arrangements, but in no sense as a quid pro quo, the Lao government permits the U.S. to carry out bombing operations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, an area of Laos that has very little strategic interest to the Lao government itself, but which is directly related to our interests in South Viet-Nam. We fly about 400 tactical air sorties a day and about 20 or 30 B–52 sorties per day in this area. The only conditions attached to this permission are (a) that we should not publicly admit our bombing, and (b) that we avoid killing Lao civilians who may be haplessly in the same area as the North Vietnamese infiltrators who are targets of our bombing raids.

Without the permission of the Lao government, and in the light of Souvanna's advice to me that he would refuse such permission if we asked for it, we also conduct cross-border raids from South Viet-Nam into the Lao panhandle. These raids are run by platoon-sized units of South Vietnamese irregulars, encadred by U.S. Special Forces men.

This combination of effort has kept the military situation in Laos more or less stabilized for the past five years. The Lao have suffered relatively heavy casualties and have had nearly one quarter of their population displaced as refugees. But there has been *no* significant loss of terrain, and indeed, a net gain, over the situation which obtained in 1964.

When one is asked what more can be done, it is first necessary to consider what the objective is, where and how it is to be done, and who will do it. Let us start with the least desirable proposal—the introduction of U.S. ground forces overtly into the enemy sanctuary area in the Panhandle. These sanctuaries contain from a regiment to a division of enemy forces, depending on current deployments. Therefore, an operation against them would have to involve regiments or divisions.

Not only would such a venture be of dubious military success (it would probably at best be a second Khe Sanh), but it would raise major political considerations. If we asked the Lao for official permission, they could reasonably be expected to accede only if we made some explicit commitments to them. It is doubtful that we wish to extend our commitments at this time. If, on the other hand, we did it against the specific wishes of the Lao, we would face an uproar internationally and domestically. We do not wish that sort of reaction.

Assuming, then, that broader ground action is out of the question, we might consider additional air action. Again, the question is where and by whom. The air operation in the Panhandle is frankly already saturated. There is little more that can be done there except against populated areas. We could probably get Lao agreement to such attacks

if we agree to give the population adequate warning to leave the towns before we attack. Such warning would also result in the evacuation of military objectives and, hence, the value of the proposed attacks would be nil.

Similar considerations prevail for most other direct U.S. military efforts which might be proposed elsewhere in Laos. The only exception to this statement might be the possibility of augmenting the daily USAF effort allotted to direct support of Lao troops. This suggestion would have to be measured against the limited communications, forward air control, and targeting capabilities available to the Lao.

Hence, my only suggestions for augmenting our effort in Laos come down to a few proposals associated with improving the inherent capabilities of the Lao forces. These are as follows:

(a) Provide the Lao army with more M–16 rifles. (They currently have less than 6,000 and most of their opponents have AK–47 weapons. I would increase this total up to 20,000 rifles.)

(b) Provide the Lao air force with more AC–47 aircraft. (These planes, with side-firing guns, are excellent for the defense of small outposts. I believe there is now a program to convert four of the C–47 inventory to this configuration. I would convert others or supply new ones up to a total of ten—two to each military region.)

(c) Finally, I would provide the Lao air force with T–41 trainer aircraft to improve their pilot training program.

All of these proposals have either been made, or are being made, by our Country Team in Laos. If there is an indication from you that the President favors these rather modest suggestions, it would make a long story much shorter.

83. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 11, 1969.

SUBJECT

Paris Private Talks

At the May 31, private meeting with Ambassador Lodge, the Hanoi representative, Le Duc Tho, took a new tact proposing to negotiate bilaterally with us on all questions, political as well as military. Hanoi no longer insisted that we negotiate with the NLF, but refused flatly to talk privately to the GVN.

Tho also raised three questions of major substance:

1. Does the United States agree that it and the DRV should work out a settlement of all problems mentioned in the 10-points, that agreements should be signed, followed by an agreement for a ceasefire?
2. Does the United States agree to have the present GVN leadership replaced by a peace cabinet willing to conduct serious talks with the NLF?
3. Who is to organize elections after the restoration of peace?

Two principal issues are raised by Tho's proposals:

1. How do we proceed with the private talks?
2. If we move ahead with another round of private talks, how do we respond to Tho's three questions?

Ambassadors Lodge and Bunker, in commenting on our possible response to Tho, agree that the basic objective of Hanoi's strategy is to isolate the Thieu Government and produce strains between us and the GVN—as might result if we and the DRV negotiated seriously on a political settlement. Lodge, however, believes that Tho's approach merits further probing to determine if there is a basis for serious negotiation.[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1319, Unfiled Material, 3 of 19. Secret; Nodis. Sent for action. Originally dated June 7, then redated by hand June 11. Sneider sent this memorandum to Kissinger on June 2 with the recommendation that he sign and send it to the President. The second page was redone, apparently at Kissinger's request. A note on the first page presumably by Sneider reads: "President was shown this by HAK on trip to Honolulu, RS." This note is apparently in response to an attached note by Haig, June 11, that reads: "Dick Sneider, Dick—Pres did not see this [.] it's now OBE in some respects—should we update and refloat? Al."

[2] Lodge's comment and recommendations are in telegram 8366 from Paris/Delto 1805, June 4. (Ibid., Box 177, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Meetings, May–June 1969, State Nodis Cables/Habib Calls)

Bunker is essentially less optimistic.[3] Nevertheless, Bunker has not disputed Lodge's proposal that we request a further private meeting after Midway on a basis which would neither accept nor reject Tho's proposal for talks on political, as well as military, issues. Lodge would not initiate any discussion of political issues and would respond initially to the DRV that these should be discussed with the GVN. Bunker would prefer to take the offensive in the next round of private talks and is concerned about the GVN reaction if we are drawn into extended political talks with the DRV. Lodge shares this concern but thinks we can avoid this trap.

With respect to Tho's three questions, Lodge and Bunker are not far apart:

1. Both would rebuff, for the present, Tho's suggestion for discussing a draft agreement, and emphasize our interest in substance and not form.
2. Both would reject Tho's proposal to replace the GVN with a peace cabinet, but Bunker would take a tougher line.
3. Both would respond to the question on organizing the elections, by suggesting that elections can be organized without changing the GVN or jeopardizing the NLF and that the GVN and NLF work the problems out.
4. Finally, both would try to focus the discussions with the DRV on mutual withdrawal.

My own view is closer to Bunker's appreciation of the situation. I would go ahead with another round of private talks but with greater care to avoid any misunderstanding with the GVN about our undertaking political talks with the DRV. I believe Lodge will agree and intend to discuss this with Lodge and Bunker.

Lodge and Bunker have also suggested that you might review this problem of further private talks with Thieu during your morning meeting. You may prefer to leave those details to Bunker, and instead discuss the private talks in general terms with Thieu indicating our intention to probe the DRV position although we see as yet little ground for optimism.

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[3] Bunker's comments and recommendations are in telegram 11261 from Saigon, June 5. (Ibid., RG 59, Winston Lord Files: Lot 77 D 112, Box 338, Vietnam Private Talks)

84. Editorial Note

On June 11, 1969, Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin met with Henry Kissinger prior to returning to Moscow for consultations. The discussion on Vietnam follows:

"Dobrynin then turned to Vietnam. I told him that we were following a very careful policy. We had our moves for the next few months fully worked out. I reminded him of what the President had said when we gave him an advance copy of the Vietnam speech. He should not be confused by the many statements that he heard. We were not interfering with much that was being said. But the President reserved the final decision on essential items. Dobrynin replied that he had noticed that we moved on about the schedule we had given him a month ago.

"Dobrynin then asked about our ideas for settling the war in Vietnam. He inquired especially on our views on a coalition government. I said that he and I were both realists. He knew very well that in order to bring about a coalition government we would have to smash the present structure of the Saigon Government while the NLF remained intact. This would guarantee an NLF victory sooner or later. We would never accept that. We would agree to a fair political contest—not to what the President had called a disguised defeat.

"Dobrynin made no efforts to defend Hanoi's position. He replied that Hanoi was very difficult. He said I could be sure that the Soviet Union had transmitted our discussion of April and added a recommendation. However, Hanoi believed that they knew their own requirements better than the Soviet Union. I said, on the other hand, the Soviet Union supplied 85% of the military equipment. Dobrynin asked whether we wanted the Soviet Union to give Hanoi an ultimatum. I said it was not for me to tell the Soviet Union how to conduct its relations with its allies. I said that we were determined to have the war ended one way or another. Hanoi was attempting to break down the President's public support. It was too much to ask us to hold still for that. I added that what we needed was some strategic help, not just negotiating devices for settling particular problems as has been the case until now. Dobrynin, who was very subdued, said I could be sure that they are looking into the question.

"Dobrynin then asked me about US-Soviet relations in general. I said that while some gradual progress was possible even during the Vietnam war, a really massive change depended on the settlement of the Vietnam war. Dobrynin said we always seem to link things. I replied that as a student of Marxism he must believe in the importance of objective factors. It was an objective fact that Hanoi was trying to undermine the President. It was an objective fact that we had to look to every avenue for a solution. Dobrynin then said supposing the war were settled, how would you go about improving relations."

The end of the conversation follows:

"Dobrynin returned to the theme of US-Soviet relations and asked what he could tell his principals when he returned. I said that everything depended on the war in Vietnam. If the war were ended, he could say that there was no limit to what might be accomplished. You would like to be remembered as a President who ensured a permanent peace and a qualitative change in international relations." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/HAK, 1969 [Part 1]) The full record of this conversation, which Nixon saw, is in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, volume XII, Soviet Union, 1969–October 1970.

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85. Intelligence Memorandum[1]

No. 05730/69 Washington, June 12, 1969.

STRESSES IN NORTH VIETNAM

As the leaders of North Vietnam enter the eleventh year of their attempt to seize control of the South by force, they face a rising level of war-weariness among their people. In addition, as a result of the cessation of the bombing last year, the regime is having to combat a relaxation on the part of the North Vietnamese generally. Once the bombing stopped, many North Vietnamese, even in the armed services and in the vital areas of transportation, appear to have suffered an emotional letdown in[2] the belief that the war was over as far as they were concerned. Now, the regime is having difficulty convincing the people that they must continue to endure deprivations and that many must continue to go South to fight what by now must seem to them to

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 137, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. VI, 5/26/69–6/17/69. Secret; Spoke; No Foreign Dissem. Prepared in the Office of Current Intelligence of the Central Intelligence Agency and coordinated with the Office of Economic Research, the Office of National Estimates, and the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it. Nixon wrote on the title page: "K—What can we do to accelerate the morale decline?"

[2] Nixon underlined the previous portion of the sentence and drew an arrow to his handwritten comment: "K—what will effect on this morale be of our anticipated action?"

be an interminable war. Although these problems do not appear to be so grave as to impair significantly the regime's ability to prosecute the war, they are causing the politburo concern, and it is reacting.

[Omitted here is the 7-page body of the paper.]

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86. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 13, 1969.

SUBJECT

Study on Laos

You raised the question whether a full-scale study of Laos is not required, in view of newspaper reports of a deteriorating military situation.

State has been working for some time on a paper on Laos in the context of a Southeast Asian settlement. The study is nearing completion, and will be forwarded to the Review Group when completed. I think that this will meet our requirements.

The military situation in Laos is indeed cause for real concern, although major shifts in the strategic balance seem unlikely before next autumn.

As I stated in a memorandum in April,[2] the Communists have the military power on the scene to take Laos when they want. They refrain because of uncertainty about our reaction, and because Laos is only a part of larger concerns in the area.

The Communists' winter offensive created a very serious crisis of confidence in the RLG, though it did not take in so much new territory as the Communist gains of the year before. It slowed up in April,

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 545, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. I, to 31 July 1969. Secret. Drafted by Lindsey Grant and sent by Sneider to Kissinger under a June 10 covering memorandum in which Sneider recommended that Kissinger sign it and send it to the President. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates the President saw it.

[2] Document 56.

probably in part because of our aerial reaction in "Operation Rain Dance," a spoiling operation. The Meo guerrillas counterattacked with considerable success, even occupying the Communist administrative center of Xieng Khouangville for a time.

The rains have come. If experience is a guide, pro-Government guerrillas will re-establish themselves in some contested areas during the rainy season. The enemy will attack again in the autumn dry season. Because of the attrition in forces and morale on the Government side over the years, this next dry season offensive may be dangerous to RLG stability.

The Communists are engaged in leisurely negotiations with Souvanna Phouma, and are probably dangling before him the prospect of a Laos political settlement and a reduction of military pressures, in exchange for some arrangement which will limit U.S. bombing and provide the Communists with continued access to South Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand through Laos.

These negotiations are not likely to progress far this summer, since Souvanna still plans to leave for Europe on June 20, returning only in August.

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87. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 23, 1969.

SUBJECT

Vietnamizing the War (NSSM 36)

Secretary Laird has forwarded to you the outline plan (Tab A) prepared by the Joint Chiefs for Vietnamizing the war.[2] This plan has been

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–142, NSSM Files, NSSM 36. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action. Sneider sent this memorandum to Kissinger under an attached June 19 covering memorandum recommending that Kissinger sign it and send it to the President.

[2] Tab A, attached but not printed, was an undated 57-page JCS report entitled, "Plans For Vietnamizing the War."

coordinated with the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency. The plan covers two areas:

1. Alternatives for U.S. force reductions during the period July 1, 1969–December 31, 1969;
2. An outline for the final report on longer-term Vietnamization which you are requested to approve.

Five options for 1969 redeployments are offered in NSSM 36, ranging from withdrawals of 50 to 100,000. The first increment has already been decided at Midway and Secretary Laird recommends in his report an additional increment, with a total up to 50,000 for 1969 depending upon evaluation of the reaction to the first withdrawal. In a separate memorandum, the Secretary of State expresses a preference for an alternative involving a total of 85,000, but again depending upon further consideration after the initial withdrawal.[3]

The longer-term plans on Vietnamization provide a series of alternatives for U.S. troop reductions with varying timetables from 18 months to 42 months, and varying ceilings for the residual American troops in South Vietnam ranging from 260,000 to 306,000. Secretary Laird feels that even a 42 month timetable with withdrawals up to 290,000 forces would probably result in interruption of pacification progress. A much faster withdrawal could result in more serious problems for pacification and allied military capabilities, as well as possible adverse effects on the GVN, in the absence of reciprocal North Vietnamese withdrawals.

The problem now facing us is a decision on procedures for consideration of Secretary Laird's report. There are two principal options open:

1. Circulating the paper as a normal NSC document for regular NSC consideration (which has not yet been done); this would involve increased risks of leakage.[4]
2. Treating the paper in a meeting of NSC principals only; in this case my staff would prepare an issues paper for consideration of the principals *only.*

Secretary Laird would prefer the paper be handled on a tight-hold basis and, therefore, would probably prefer the second option. I would concur.[5]

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[3] Attached but not printed was a June 2 memorandum from Under Secretary of State Richardson to Laird in which Richardson stated that Rogers favored this figure "for reasons of political impact in this country, in North Vietnam, and on the negotiations in Paris."

[4] Nixon wrote "No" next to this paragraph.

[5] Nixon wrote "Yes" next to this paragraph.

Recommendation:[6]

That NSSM 36 be considered at a meeting of NSC principals only

That NSSM 36 be circulated as a normal NSC document for regular NSC consideration

Other

Attachment

Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon

Washington, June 2, 1969.

SUBJECT

Vietnamizing the War (NSSM 36)

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have prepared an outline plan (enclosure 1)[7] for Vietnamizing the War, with specific recommendations and alternatives for the remainder of 1969. This plan has been coordinated with the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency. As I shall indicate below, I believe we can plan *tentatively* to withdraw 50,000 men in 1969, with the first increment of 20,000–25,000 men to start redeployment in July. For reasons I shall outline, I believe we must keep our planning *flexible* and not commit now beyond the 20,000–25,000. The State Department believes the withdrawal package for 1969 should consist of 85,000 men (Alternative C below).

I indicated in my report following my trip to South Vietnam that I was disappointed in the progress made by the South Vietnamese in assuming more of the burden of the war. Nonetheless, they are improving and with the right kind of help from us, continuing improvement can be expected. There are a number of unknowns, however, affecting the rate and absolute level of improvement in the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). These unknowns include, inter alia, the quality of leadership, the motivation of the armed forces, the psychological reaction of the South Vietnamese to US redeployments, and the ability of the South Vietnamese to find a stronger organizational structure. These unknowns, collectively, can be at least

[6] None of the options is checked.

[7] See footnote 2 above.

as important to the over-all situation in South Vietnam as the more tangible and measurable elements. With such unknowns, we must recognize the possibility that even with additional training, improved equipment, and increased combat support, the RVNAF will not be able soon to stand alone against the current North Vietnamese and Viet Cong force levels. Our timetable for withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam should take such conditions into account. We should strive for a sensitive balance between too much, too soon and too little, too late.

I believe this is best done by making an early announcement of the withdrawal of a modest number of troops (20,000–25,000) and then carefully weighing the situation, to include various reactions (NVN, SVN, US), before making the next move. If this announcement is made in early June, withdrawal of this initial increment could begin in July and be completed in August.

The reaction to such a move could be favorable to us in several ways:

—The North Vietnamese would be very hard pressed to counter it. Our military position would still be strong. Together with our allies, we would have high confidence of being able to put down an enemy offensive. Such a posture should produce a most desirable and widespread psychological impact.

—The South Vietnamese would have further opportunity to understand that we are indeed serious about Vietnamizing the war. At the same time, they would not be likely to feel that we were rejecting our commitment. A successful defense against an enemy offensive could help to condition them for succeeding incremental withdrawals.

—Those Americans who have been most vocal against the war probably would not be silenced by this action, but important elements of the US public would be encouraged.

If this assessment of initial reactions proves to be correct, you could then decide to withdraw a second increment later in the year. A decision in early August would permit redeployment to begin in September and, depending on size and composition, be completed in October or November. If conditions were favorable, a decision on a third increment could be made in October or November for additional withdrawals to begin before the end of the year and be completed in early 1970.

1969 Redeployments

There are several alternatives as to the over-all size and composition of the forces which might be withdrawn from South Vietnam this year. Five of the alternative packages that I consider feasible for implementation in 1969 are:

1969 REDEPLOYMENT ALTERNATIVES—SVN[a]
(Strength 000)

	Element	
Alternative A		
50,000 troops mainly combat	1 Marine Division, Aviation Units & Support	26.8
	1 Army Division and Support	19.6
2 divisions	Air Force Elements	1.3
	Navy Elements	2.3
		50.0
Alternative B		
50,000 troops	1 Marine Division, Aviation Units & Support	26.8
1 Div plus support slice	Support Elements, All Services	23.2
		50.0
Alternative B[1b]		
50,000 troops	Combat forces (2 Regiments/ Brigade from I Corps and 2 Brigades from III/IV Corps)	22.0
4 Rgmt/Brgd plus support	Support Elements, All Services	28.0
		50.0
Alternative C (Revised)		
85,000 troops	1 Marine Division	22.5
2 Divisions	1 US Army Division	18.7
plus support	Division Support Trains	25.0[c]
	1 Marine Air Group	1.5
	Hq & Logistics & Other Support Forces not Associated with Divisional Support	17.3
		85.0
Alternative D		
100,000 troops	1 Marine Division, Aviation Units & Support	27.7
2 Divisions	1 Army Division and Support	19.6[c]
and Support	Support Elements, All Services	52.7
		100.0

[a] Alternatives A, B and D correspond to those in the JCS plan. Alternative C (3⅓ Division) of the JCS plan is not recommended; a revised C has been substituted. Within each alternative the actual mix of units may vary somewhat in final implementation. [Footnote in the source text.]

[b] Alternative B[1] is in Appendix C of the JCS plan. [Footnote in the source text.]

[c] Support spaces have been removed from each Army support slice to provide support to RVNAF. [Footnote in the source text.]

The South Vietnamese are prepared for A, B, or B[1]. Alternative C (Revised) probably would be acceptable if adequately explained, although both it and D exceed their expectations in terms of quantitative reductions in US strength this year.

In the United States, Alternative D, closely followed C (Revised) probably would best mitigate pressures to curtail our involvement in the war. Alternatives A, B, or B[1] are probably about what the US public expect. It should be recognized that an enemy offensive which caused heavy American casualties during implementation of any alternative—particularly C or D—could result in seriously adverse public reaction.

Alternatives B, B[1], C (Revised) and D withdraw mixed packages of combat and support personnel. The JCS consider the support units should remain in Vietnam to support RVNAF and the subsequent withdrawal of additional US forces. However, in these more balanced packages, the support forces to be withdrawn will be carefully selected from among those which will have minimum impact on RVNAF effectiveness.

Longer Term Plans

The outline plan of enclosure 1 considers tentative timetables to Vietnamize the War during the period 1970–1972. They redeploy US forces over alternative periods of time and leave residual American troops in South Vietnam ranging from 260,000 to 306,000. Although it appears feasible mechanically to withdraw up to 290,000 US forces from South Vietnam by the end of 1972, even this 42 month timetable would probably result in an interruption in pacification progress. The interruption might range from only temporary reductions to a long-term degradation. To withdraw much faster (such as by the end of 1970), in the absence of some North Vietnamese withdrawals, could result in serious setbacks to the pacification program, a significant decline in allied military capability, and the possibility of a GVN collapse.

Recommendations

I believe we should stay as flexible as possible in our planning. I do not believe it is advisable to adopt a *firm* plan now to redeploy beyond the first increment of 20,000–25,000. Rather, I believe we should take the initial step [to] assess the situation fully, and then decide on the size and timing of the next step. In the meantime, and in concert with other agencies of the government, we will exert a major effort to expand, train, and modernize the RVNAF, and do whatever else may be required to transfer progressively to the South Vietnamese greatly increased responsibility for all aspects of the war. In summary:

—A first increment of about 20,000 to 25,000 troops should be withdrawn, starting in July 1969.

—The composition of the first increment should be determined by

the JCS in coordination with CINCPAC, MACV, the US Mission, and the GVN.

—The size, composition, and timing of a second increment in 1969 should be based on a careful evaluation of the reaction to the withdrawal of the first increment.

—Current planning should be based on not more than 50,000 troops being withdrawn in 1969, as recommended by the JCS, unless an early agreement is reached with North Vietnam on mutual withdrawals.

—Planning should stay as flexible as possible, so that rapid and appropriate additional responses can be made to further RVNAF improvement, the negotiations situation in Paris, and the military situation in Southeast Asia.

Melvin R. Laird

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88. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, June 25, 1969, 7–8:20 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Ambassador Bui Diem, Republic of Vietnam
Henry A. Kissinger
William A.K. Lake

Ambassador Diem called on Mr. Kissinger at the former's request. The major subjects discussed included the substance of the forthcoming proposal by the GVN on a political settlement in South Vietnam,[2] the timing of that proposal, our strategy for the period after the proposal is made, and the desire of the South Vietnamese for close consultation

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 268, Memoranda of Conversation, 1969 January–July. Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. The meeting was held in Kissinger's office. According to an attached July 2 memorandum, Kissinger sent this memorandum to Nixon for information. Also attached was a 2-page outline summary of the Kissinger–Diem discussion.

[2] On July 11 Thieu proposed that the NLF could take part in elections in South Vietnam to be held under international supervision. Thieu outlined the following principles: all political parties and groups could participate as long as they renounced violence and pledged to agree by the results of the elections; an electoral commission made up of all groups participating would conduct the elections and ensure that they were fair; there would be international supervision; the GVN would be willing to discuss the timetable and modalities for the election with the NLF; no reprisals or discrimination would follow the elections; and the GVN would abide by the results and it challenged "the other side" to declare the same. (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives,* 1969–1970, p. 23657)

with us on those subjects. The effect of the Midway meeting and Diem's personal feelings about the future course of events in Vietnam were also mentioned.

GVN Proposal

Ambassador Diem noted the necessity for President Thieu's achieving the greatest degree of unity possible among Vietnamese nationalists in support of his proposal. Mr. Kissinger expressed his appreciation of this fact. Ambassador Diem then discussed a number of different ideas which President Thieu and the GVN are considering with regard to the substance of the proposal. Their premises in considering these ideas are that the proposal would have to challenge the other side to participate in the elections, that it would have to be demonstrably realistic and forthcoming, and yet that it must not prejudice the basic interests of the Vietnamese people.

The Ambassador said that after careful consideration, "the people at home" were inclined to judge that there are more cons than pros with regard to amending the constitution in order to remove the obstacles posed by Article 4.[3] They therefore are studying ways of proposing elections that would get around this problem.

For example, a referendum might be held on the constitution (including Article 4) as a whole. Such a referendum would, however, pose real dangers, as some nationalists might vote against the constitution on grounds not directly concerned with the struggle against the Communists. DeGaulle's experience with his recent referendum provided a warning.[4] Mr. Kissinger expressed personal doubt about the value of a referendum on the whole constitution, rather than on Article 4. Ambassador Diem agreed, stating that such a referendum would not be practical.

Of the many other alternatives being studied, Diem said, one of the boldest proposals is that general elections be held for the Presidency, the Vice Presidency, Senate and lower House. Any general elections proposal would have to include the Presidency, or it would appear that Thieu wanted others in the GVN to take more risks than he. Thieu would therefore be willing to run against the Communists. Mr. Kissinger agreed that this would be the most spectacular proposal, especially if Thieu resigned before the election. He suggested that this offer could be made conditional—Thieu would not resign unless the

[3] Article 4 of the GVN Constitution prohibited citizens from being Communists or promoting communism.

[4] In April 1969 the French people rejected President Charles de Gaulle's referendum on regional autonomy and he resigned.

other side agreed to the elections. Ambassador Diem noted that a drawback of the idea of proposing general elections is that it could lead to a period of confusion. They were considering ways to avoid this problem.

Ambassador Diem noted that this was simply one of the ideas under consideration, and stated it should be part of a package including the withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces. Nor would it need include Thieu's resignation. Mr. Kissinger agreed that his resignation was not the key element.

Mr. Kissinger asked who would run these general elections. The Ambassador replied that the GVN could give all sorts of safeguards and agree to some sort of joint control over them.

In response to Mr. Kissinger's question, the Ambassador said he personally thought people in the countryside would vote for Thieu rather than NLF leader Tho. They would prefer the "grey" to the "black" choice.

Mr. Kissinger returned to the question of the withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces. Ambassador Dim said the presence of North Vietnamese troops in the south is the GVN's greatest concern. If the elections were held while they were still there, they could influence the voting and there would be a risk that they would never be withdrawn. Mr. Kissinger stated that we would still be there. Ambassador Diem said that if there were assurances of that, the possibility of elections while the North Vietnamese (and the U.S.) maintained forces in the country "could be debated." Mr. Kissinger confirmed that the Ambassador was saying that if we were to assure the GVN that we would not withdraw our forces until the North Vietnamese had withdrawn theirs, the GVN might be willing to hold general elections. Mr. Kissinger said that he would have to take this up with the President. We might be able to give such an assurance.

The Ambassador and Mr. Kissinger agreed that all the ideas they had discussed should be very closely held, and that it should be clear that they were only ideas.

Timing of the Proposal

Ambassador Diem said that Ambassador Bunker had suggested July 1 as a target date for announcement of the GVN proposal. Mr. Kissinger agreed with the Ambassador's remark that there is no reason why there must be one specific date. The Ambassador said that Secretary Rogers and Deputy Assistant Secretary Sullivan had suggested a target of July 10 because of the Paris meeting at that time and the Apollo flight soon thereafter. The latter would take public attention away from the proposal if they took place concurrently. Mr. Kissinger agreed that these were important factors. The proposal would

receive maximum publicity if it were announced before the 16th. If it were announced concurrently with the Apollo mission, it should be during the flight, rather than on the days of the take-off, moon landing, or splashdown. We would support the GVN's efforts to publicize it in every way possible. We would like then to make a catalog of concessions by the U.S. and the GVN, and use it in a publicity campaign calling on the other side to follow suit.

Mr. Kissinger stated that we would not wish, however, to give a deadline to the GVN. It would be better that they make a positive proposal that they had examined carefully and could believe in rather than something less meaningful. He asked what Ambassador Diem personally thought would be a realistic date. The Ambassador replied that, speaking personally, he wished there were more time to achieve a political regrouping—nationalist unity. This would take at least a month. How, the Ambassador asked, could they best line up political support for a proposal by July 10–16? The ideal would be to have gained the support of all nationalists. At the least, they should have prepared them for the proposal. They could then work on gaining their support after the proposal was made.

Mr. Kissinger asked if U.S. support for the proposal would help in this regard. Ambassador Diem said that he doubted it. Saigon politicians are not anti-American but they have lingering doubts about the U.S. which are difficult to define. They know that the U.S. will not withdraw completely. They recognize that 25,000 troops is a small withdrawal and they would accept even 75,000 to 100,000. However, there are rumors and a general feeling in Saigon that the U.S. has a fixed plan for maneuvering Thieu into a political settlement. Much could be done to dispel these rumors in the next three weeks.

Ambassador Diem had told Ambassador Bunker that the U.S. could help dispel these rumors if our people in Saigon could get in touch with the main political factions and discreetly spread the word that while the South Vietnamese should help themselves, they needn't worry about "black designs" by the U.S. Mr. Kissinger said that he would look into how we could offer such assistance discreetly, particularly if it were to lead to a next stage. We would have to consider how well such assistance might succeed.

Mr. Kissinger reiterated his statement that the announcement would have the best effect if it were made sooner rather than later, but that we understood their problems and were not putting pressure on them. It is a GVN decision.

Nor, Mr. Kissinger said, is it our intention to wreck the whole political system. President Nixon wants President Thieu to succeed. But we have to show U.S. public opinion that we are forthcoming.

Mr. Kissinger said that President Thieu had impressed President

Nixon when he said that every GVN concession should not lead to a further concession by the U.S. In the abstract, Mr. Kissinger said, there will be some point at which the GVN can with justice say that it has made all the concessions possible. Mr. Kissinger's personal view was that if the GVN proposed general elections and a mixed commission, it could not be asked to go farther. He would check this point with the President. Ambassador Diem then noted that the idea of general elections is only a tentative plan.

Strategy for Period After the Proposal

Ambassador Diem said that President Thieu is concerned about what we should do after he had made his proposal, which could represent the maximum possible concession. The proposal would have a good effect on public opinion, and the other side would be on the defensive. They would probably refuse the proposal, however, at least for a few months. What would be the attitude of the U.S. in that case? The GVN did not have specific recommendations for the U.S., the Ambassador continued, or ask too much. The South Vietnamese would fight on for their own survival. They would assume more of a burden through the Vietnamization program. But they would still need American help, if at reduced levels and different in kind. These are the lines along which Thieu is working.

In reply, Mr. Kissinger recalled the President's statement of May 14 that he was determined not to allow an endless negotiation and not to lose the war. What exactly we would do needn't be discussed now. He noted that if the GVN were to make a forthcoming, unconditional proposal, it would show that we had made all the concessions possible. This would make it easier to reappraise the situation in three months.

Consultations

Ambassador Diem said that President Thieu had asked him to stress Thieu's desire for coordinating our strategy both with regard to his forthcoming proposal and for the following period. We need better communication between us. Mr. Kissinger agreed, and supported the idea of close consultation between Ambassador Diem and Deputy Assistant Secretary Sullivan. He would also always be available himself should Ambassador Diem wish to discuss sensitive problems or messages from President Thieu to President Nixon. If Ambassador Diem ever felt that things were getting out of hand, Mr. Kissinger would always do what he could to help. Ambassador Diem said that Mr. Kissinger was a special friend, and that he had been instructed by President Thieu to discuss all possibilities fully with Mr. Kissinger. President Thieu had been impressed with Mr. Kissinger at Midway as being a serious and systematic man.

Effect of Midway Meeting

Mr. Kissinger asked for Ambassador Diem's personal appraisal of the effect of the Midway meeting. The Ambassador said that he frankly thought it was very useful, particularly as it helped Thieu to knock down rumors in Saigon about U.S. intentions. Mr. Kissinger recalled the President's statement at Midway that the GVN should believe only what the U.S. Government tells them, not what the press says. Ambassador Diem stated that the suspicions of Thieu himself were allayed by the Midway meeting. The Ambassador only regretted that the meeting was too short.

Ambassador Diem's Views on the Future

Speaking personally, the Ambassador expressed the opinion that international and U.S. public opinion might not allow enough time for the GVN to succeed in doing all it would have to do. He noted that the GVN had failed to accomplish some of the things that one might have hoped it would, but that it faced real problems also. He had realized the other day, standing on a beach at Nha Trang, how much would be lost if they failed to win the struggle. Without concurring in the Ambassador's implied pessimism, Mr. Kissinger emphasized his understanding for the problems the GVN faces, and his great sympathy for Ambassador Diem's emotions at Nha Trang. He regretted that the U.S. may sometimes unintentionally do things which might hurt the GVN. He had no patience with those Americans who proposed political actions by the GVN without regard for the complexities of the situation. We should not presume to tell the GVN what to do.

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89. Memorandum From Dean Moor of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, June 25, 1969.

SUBJECT

CIA Memorandum on GVN Manpower Shortages

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 138, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. VII, 6/17/69–6/30/69. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. Sent through Sneider. A note on the first page of the memorandum reads: "HAK saw."

CIA has prepared a detailed assessment of the RVNAF ability to obtain the manpower necessary to fill gaps and expand its armed forces in the near future (Tab A).[2] It concludes that, at present rates of loss both through casualties and desertions, Saigon will not be able to do the job with the available personnel. Its only alternative would be to raise the draft age to a level which would significantly impair the quality of the manpower. Among the factual highlights of the memorandum are:

—In 1968, losses from all causes amounted to about two-thirds of total accretions in manpower.

—Desertions, after dropping somewhat in late 1968, have remained above the 1968 average during 1969.

—Desertions from regular units are running at an annual rate of about one-third the strength of those units.

—Given the available manpower pool, it appears that Saigon will be 50,000 men short of filling its needs during 1969.

—As the combat role of the RVNAF increases, the manpower problems are likely to worsen rather than improve.

[2] Tab A, Intelligence Memorandum ER IM 69–86, June 1969, "South Vietnam: Growing Manpower Squeeze" is attached but not printed.

90. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 26, 1969.

SUBJECT

Appointment with Ambassador Lodge[2]

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 78, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, Memos to President/HAK on Lodge. Secret. Sent for information. A note on the memorandum reads: "The President has seen." Haig also prepared talking points for Kissinger for this meeting and sent it to him in a June 24 memorandum. (Ibid., Box 183, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous, Vol. XIV, 1969)

[2] According to the President's Daily Diary, Nixon met with Lodge from 3:20 to 4:07 p.m. on June 24. Kissinger also attended and Byrce Harlow, Assistant for Congressional Affairs, joined the meeting for the last 3 minutes. (Ibid., White House Central Files) No memoranda of conversation of this discussion has been found, although Lodge made notes of what were apparently peripheral issues: statements by combat officers which could be misinterpreted by journalists, Lodge's desire to change guidelines for MACV, and some light discussion between Lodge and Nixon about Lodge's next assignment "once this is over." (Massachusetts Historical Society, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Reel 25)

Ambassador Lodge will call on you at 3:15 p.m., Tuesday, June 24. He is currently on leave from his post in Paris. He will return this week.

Ambassador Lodge will wish to review the status of the Paris negotiations with you and will be seeking your guidance on strategy to be followed after his return.

Status of the Talks: At Midway you and Thieu agreed to new bilateral talks with the North Vietnamese. We would raise only military issues in these talks but would be willing to listen to proposals on political issues concerning South Vietnam. We would not, however, reply to political proposals concerning South Vietnam without consulting the GVN. You also promised Thieu that there would be no private meeting before July 1. You might review this for Lodge.

Following the Midway meeting, you agreed that we should seek another private session with the North Vietnamese early in July in order to probe their intentions. Instructions for that meeting are in the process of preparation.

Lodge's View: Ambassador Lodge believes we should begin an active round of private meetings now with the North Vietnamese. We would avoid taking any verbal stand on our willingness to discuss "all" the questions, but would not hesitate to respond to any North Vietnamese probes on political issues. We would, if the opportunity offered, seek to probe the DRV reaction to some of the ideas which we have discussed with Saigon for a political agreement, i.e., mixed electoral commissions, etc.

Talking Points:

I recommend that:

1. You authorize Lodge to seek another private session with the North Vietnamese to explore their position, but that you make no commitment at this point on further meetings and their agenda. It would be worthwhile to stress that we must consult the GVN before making substantive comments on internal South Vietnamese political questions.

2. You emphasize your desire that Lodge stress as his main theme the fact that we have made a number of concessions now, and it is time for the other side to respond.[3] We have:

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[3] In a June 27 letter to Nixon, Lodge stated he had to comment on "the suggestion made in our presence last Tuesday [June 24] about breaking off the peace talks." Lodge stated that on further reflection, "this would be a very bad idea and would put us hopelessly in the wrong as far as public opinion is concerned." Lodge suggested instead that he absent himself—perhaps return for consultations to Washington—and have Habib attend the plenary sessions in his place. Lodge admitted: "that this remark was made solely in your presence and mine, and that it did not represent at all a settled opinion, but merely an idea which was tossed up." Still, Lodge considered that he had to present his views opposing the idea. (Massachusetts Historical Society, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Reel 9)

—stopped the bombing of North Vietnam;
—withdrawn 25,000 combat troops;
—expressed our willingness to submit the conflict to internationally supervised free elections; and
—expressed our willingness to mutually withdraw all forces from South Vietnam within a year.

The interview with Le Duc Tho indicates that we must play a harder line in Paris for the present.[4]

[4] On June 19 Le Duc Tho told journalists in Paris that no settlement in Vietnam was possible as long as the Thieu–Ky–Houng administration is in power because the Provisional Revolutionary Government would never accept them. (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives,* 1969–1970, p. 236657)

91. Memorandum From the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam (Sullivan) to the Chairman of the National Security Council Review Group (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, June 27, 1969.

SUBJECT

NSSM 37[2]

In accordance with NSSM 37 I submit herewith, on behalf of the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Viet-Nam, final draft papers on internal political settlement, phased mutual withdrawal, verification of mutual withdrawal and international guarantees.[3] In order to assist the NSC Review Group in focussing its attention on the principal issues raised by these papers, we have prepared a broad analysis of the major issues, together with individual summaries of each paper.

Major Issues

1. The central question of all those presented by these papers concerns the future internal political system of South Viet-Nam. The type

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–039, Review Group/Senior Review Group Meeting Folder, 7/10/69. Top Secret; Sensitive.

[2] Document 59.

[3] Not printed. (Department of State, S/S–I Files: Lot 80 D 212, NSSM 37)

of political settlement achieved in South Viet-Nam will, to a great degree, determine how mutual withdrawals will take place, how effective verification will be, and the factors to which international guarantees will be applicable or required.

In these papers, two types of political outcomes are discussed:

a. Maintenance of the present constitution essentially intact, retention of essentially the present GVN leadership, with NLF participation in elections as a political party.

b. An interim distribution of local political power which would offer the Viet Cong, without necessarily having to stand for elections, a degree of territorial and political control in those areas of the countryside where their present strength is primarily concentrated, in exchange for at least interim Viet Cong acceptance (agreed or de facto) of GVN national authority.

2. The principle recommendation emerging from the paper is that we continue to examine all the feasible options, but focus our consideration on a possible settlement which lies between Alternatives A and B, i.e., one which emphasizes division of political power at the local rather than the national level, but which requires such division to be made on the basis of elections (probably local elections). For negotiating purposes we should start from the position of Alternative A, but recognize that positions already taken more or less publicly by President Thieu lead in the direction indicated in the preceding sentence.

3. The alternative political outcomes have different implications for mutual withdrawals, supervision, and international guarantees.

4. The first case (paragraph 1 a) would be most advantageous to the US/GVN. It would offer a reasonable prospect for continuing political stability through a settlement based on self-determination and framed in terms that would give the Viet Cong a fair chance to compete for office under elections in whose administration they might have a part. Mutual withdrawals could proceed under optimum conditions. An international supervisory organization could be established and would be assured of maximum freedom of movement within South Viet-Nam. International guarantees would relate primarily to insuring that the political elements of the settlement were faithfully executed and that there were no repressive measures taken against NLF members who took part in the political process.

5. Because such an outcome would appear to be so favorable to the US/GVN, it is unlikely that the DRV/PRG would accept it. On the other hand, the case described in paragraph 1 b omits the element of elections, to which we and the GVN are committed.

6. It is likely, therefore, that the United States will have to consider an option which involves an interim distribution of local political power on the basis of elections as described in paragraph 2. This so-

lution would legitimatize areas of Viet Cong control so as to involve the Viet Cong in the political process and still preserve the overall structure of the GVN. The major emphasis would be on local level political competition and accommodation; the question of ultimate political participation at the national level could be left unresolved for the time being.

7. Assuming this situation, it is almost certain that the Viet Cong would not accept, initially at least, GVN officials or services in their areas. The GVN intent as to extension of control of territory during this period would be to extend GVN political control by administrative procedures, economic integration, local arrangements within the GVN political context, and eventual consolidation. This, of course, would be a long-term process.

8. Such a solution would complicate the other issues of a settlement. There would have to be regroupment of forces to conform with the results of local elections. It is unlikely that we would be able to verify by unilateral methods North Vietnamese withdrawals from these Viet Cong areas, particularly if they were along withdrawal routes or contiguous to the borders of South Viet-Nam. Similarly any international verification machinery would probably be denied access to these areas and could therefore not detect or confirm violations of any withdrawal agreement in those areas. In the absence of this verification of North Vietnamese withdrawals, the completion of our own withdrawals would be called into question. Any international system established to guarantee the political settlement could also be expected to be less effective in NLF controlled areas than in the territory directly controlled by the GVN.

Summaries

1. Political Settlement

This paper outlines the basic factors involved in an internal political settlement, including U.S. troop withdrawals, elections, the constitutional process, assurances and guarantees of personal security, political participation, international supervision, territorial accommodation, integration of forces, and national political leadership. It discusses the substantive and tactical positions of the United States the GVN, and the DRV/NLF. (This paper was prepared before the announcement of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and hence uses the term NLF throughout. The specific issues posed by the emergence of the PRG will be addressed in a separate paper.)

The paper analyses three broad alternative means of settlement. Alternative A would maintain the present constitution essentially intact, retain essentially the present GVN leadership, provide for elections within general constitutional limits, and permit the NLF to participate

as a political party, with NLF representation on a joint electoral commission as a possibility. There would be no explicit territorial accommodation, although some de facto division of local political power might result from local elections held under the GVN electoral system. The advantages of this alternative include offering a reasonable prospect for continuing political stability in South Viet-Nam and proposing a settlement based on self-determination and in terms that would allow Viet Cong participation in the electoral process with a fair chance to compete for office. Its major disadvantage is that it would probably be unacceptable to the other side since it falls far short of Communist demands of replacement of the present top GVN leadership and formation of a peace cabinet or coalition government, within the NLF Ten Point framework.

Alternative B would involve an interim distribution of local political power. In exchange for the NLF's acceptance, agreed or de facto, of GVN national authority, the NLF would be offered a degree of territorial and political control in the countryside without necessarily having to stand for elections. The major emphasis would be on local level political competition and accommodation; the question of ultimate political participation at the national level could be left unresolved for the time being. The advantages of this alternative are that the GVN would retain its national authority and constitutional legitimacy, and that it might serve as a flexible basis for negotiations, since the Viet Cong would be offered a large measure of local control of at least part of the country. Its disadvantages are that it risks de facto partition of the country and thus could undermine the GVN's national authority from the start.

Alternative C, a peace cabinet, would involve changing the present GVN leadership and substituting non-Communist figures who would be more acceptable to the other side. This peace cabinet would negotiate directly with the NLF and, depending on the outcome of these negotiations, the new government might hold new elections and set up a new constitutional system of its own. This alternative has the advantage of flexibility, including the chance of gaining the support of certain South Vietnamese groups who are not now aligned with the GVN, and it might attract some international support as a more "representative" government interested in negotiations. Its disadvantage is that it would run an extremely high risk of creating serious political instability in South Viet-Nam and would be opposed by major organized non-Communist groups as well as by the armed forces. By conceding to the Communists their major immediate political demand, it would result in weakening the GVN, risking overt anti-Americanism, and reversing our long-standing support of the constitutional process in South Viet-Nam.

The principal recommendation emerging from the paper is that we continue to examine all the feasible options, but focus our consideration on a possible settlement which lies between Alternatives A and B, i.e., one which emphasizes division of political power at the local rather than the national level, but which requires such division to be made on the basis of elections (probably local elections). For negotiating purposes we should start from the position of Alternative A, but recognize that positions already taken more or less publicly by President Thieu lead in the direction indicated in the preceding sentence.

2. *Phased Mutual Withdrawal*

This paper examines North Vietnamese and GVN attitudes toward withdrawal, the eight major considerations affecting withdrawal decisions, and then evaluates four specific alternative scenarios for phased mutual withdrawal. The paper is essentially a technical paper flowing from the policy decisions set forth in the basic NSC decision.

Of the alternative scenarios examined, Scenario A, assuming the most favorable conditions, envisages a 19-month withdrawal period following negotiations of a publicly announced agreement for phased mutual withdrawal and agreement on either general or local cease-fires, disengagement and regroupment of forces, and safe conduct of forces in the process of withdrawal. It also provides for an international mechanism to verify and supervise the disengagement, supervision, assembly and withdrawal of forces. This scenario, however, recognizes that in one respect the assumed conditions are less than optimum: the improvement and modernization program for the RVNAF. If withdrawal were begun much before December 1970, we would be faced with the choice of either leaving an inadequately balanced force in South Viet-Nam or completing our withdrawals within the 19-month period knowing that the RVNAF might not yet be capable of handling the residual threat.

Under Scenario B, assuming minimum acceptable conditions, we would specify that all U.S. and allied forces would be withdrawn within one year providing that North Vietnamese forces were withdrawn within 9 months. This scenario has the advantage of a rapid withdrawal of forces on both sides, but because of the speed of our withdrawal it would give little assurance that the other side was complying, and it would seriously risk the stability of the government.

Scenario C, providing for tacit or reciprocal de facto withdrawal, has major advantages in that we would have freedom to schedule our own withdrawals and we could apply military pressure on the enemy should his performance be deficient, without provoking major public criticism. Moreover, theoretically at least, South Viet-Nam might not have to trade political concessions for North Vietnamese withdrawals. Its disadvantages are that Hanoi would not be committed to any

specific timetable, nor would there be provision for adequate verification or supervision of withdrawal. Moreover, the implementation of such an arrangement, because of its secret or de facto nature, might create differences between the United States and the GVN.

Alternative D, agreed mutual withdrawal of major portions of non-South Vietnamese forces over a 12-month period, expands upon that element of the President's proposals of May 14. At the end of the 12-month withdrawal period there would be a force equivalent to two divisions numbering approximately 100,000 and a MAAG support element of about 60,000 remaining in South Viet-Nam. The decision to withdraw these forces would depend upon such factors as an analysis of enemy withdrawal into North Viet-Nam, the level of hostilities in South Viet-Nam, and the status of the RVNAF improvement and modernization program. As an integral part of the President's May 14 proposal, an international supervisory body would also include participation in arranging supervised cease-fires and in supervising elections—functions which lie outside the scope of this paper and hence have not been addressed here.

3. Verification of Mutual Withdrawal

Given the limitations on our unilateral capability to verify North Vietnamese withdrawals—in the best case a 25% margin of error; in the worst circumstances, at least 50%—we should seek agreement on effective verification machinery. The major value of such machinery in both the withdrawal and post-withdrawal periods will be its ability to investigate, confirm, and give public credibility to complaints by host governments of North Vietnamese violations of agreements. (The host governments themselves must be primarily responsible for *detecting* violations.) The numbers required to man such an international organization would vary from 400–600 personnel in South Viet-Nam and a similar number in Laos, for a minimum sized organization, to as many as 5,000–10,000 men for a largely self-sufficient organization capable of extensive patrolling of all key border areas of South Viet-Nam. The three major options for international verification in South Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia are:

(a) a UN-sponsored body, which would have some advantages but little prospect of being accepted by Hanoi, Peking, or Moscow and, if it required the admission of both Viet-Nams to the UN, would be strongly opposed by the ROK, the GRC, and the FRG;

(b) a new body established by an international conference, with a "line" organization under a single commander on the UN pattern and with stronger Asian representation, e.g., India, Japan, and Indonesia; and

(c) an improved ICC with a council of interested states to replace the co-chairman, additional members (e.g., Japan, Indonesia), majority

vote, rotating chairmanship, increased personnel, and a new operational charter spelling out such matters as freedom of movement and access to territory.

The difficulties of verification in Viet-Nam and the obstacles to getting agreement on an international verification organization acceptable to both sides suggests that we should not rely too heavily on such an organization to insure a stable settlement. Consequently, we should employ more of our negotiating chips toward attaining a settlement which provides for strong governments in Viet-Nam, Laos, and Cambodia which are not inhibited in the exercise of the right of self-defense or in the right to call on outside assistance, rather than expending these negotiating assets on getting a fully satisfactory verification body.

4. International Guarantees

International guarantees, as defined in this paper, are those supporting undertakings by international organizations, or by one or more states, which would improve the chances that the basic obligations assumed by the parties would be carried out. South Vietnamese leaders consider international guarantees to be an important element of an overall settlement, but in their consultations with us they have not been precise as to what specific arrangements they envisage. The GVN has stressed international recognition of South Viet-Nam's unlimited right to call for outside assistance and if necessary for the placement of international military forces in Viet-Nam to prevent the resumption of hostilities. However, it seems likely that in the eyes of the GVN leaders the most important kind of international guarantee would be a full military commitment by the United States to assist South Viet-Nam with armed forces should the other side resume hostilities. However, since we would not be willing to undertake any commitment which would obligate the United States in advance to use our military forces, we should point out to the GVN that the concept of international guarantees includes a wide range of undertakings not involving direct military commitments, such as:

—Endorsement of the basic settlement agreements by a conference of interested states along the lines of the 1954 Geneva Conference.

—Endorsement of these arrangements by the United Nations.

—International commitments to consult on appropriate measures to be taken in the event of violations.

—Creation of an international body with the powers to impose sanctions.

—UN membership for both zones of Viet-Nam.

—Other UN involvement in implementation of a settlement.

These possibilities call for serious study as negotiations proceed, particularly the concept of UN membership for both zones of Viet-Nam. Nevertheless, we should recognize that the protection and additional

stability such alternatives might contribute to a settlement would be subject to the difficulties inherent in all international decision making.

William H. Sullivan

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92. Memorandum From Dean Moor of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, July 1, 1969.

SUBJECT

Growing Economic Problems in South Vietnam

During the last few weeks we have been getting an increasing number of reports from a wide variety of sources indicating that the problems of inflation, budget deficit, mismanagement and other economic woes have sharply increased in intensity over the last few months. Already, these problems are beginning to sap some of the Government's vitality in attempting to build a competitive position against Communists in a future post-war environment.

The cable at Tab A[2] is a rather good summary of the current scene. It sets out the views of an International Monetary Fund expert who made a study of the situation. His views are based on several previous IMF studies. Following are some of the highlights:

—The overall price stability maintained this year has cost the GVN some $80,000,000 in reserves. Loss of similar magnitude can be expected during the rest of 1969.

—Even so, maintenance of price stability is questionable in view of the recent GVN wage increase, probability of extra heavy military expenditures and other factors.

—The only solution is a massive new tax program. Both IMF and GVN officials, however, believe it impossible for the GVN to implement a significant tax program.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1320, Unfiled Material, 7 of 19. Secret. Sent for information.

[2] Tab A, telegram 13078 from Saigon, June 28, is attached but not printed.

—The situation is of such concern to the GVN that a shakeup in the economic leadership of the regime is contemplated, but few believe that this will do much good.

—The U.S. economic advisors in Saigon generally agree with the IMF view.

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93. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, July 7, 1969.

SUBJECT

Sequoia NSC Meeting on Vietnam

As you know, you will be meeting on the *Sequoia* this evening to discuss Vietnam with Rogers, Laird, General Wheeler, General Cushman, Mitchell and me.[2] The following people have been advised that

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 74, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, Memos to the President for NSC, 1969. Secret. The date is handwritten on the memorandum. On June 24 Rogers suggested to Nixon creating a policy group on Vietnam chaired by the President and composed of Rogers, Laird, Wheeler, and Kissinger. In a July 2 memorandum Nixon informed Rogers that "I welcome the opportunity for periodic meetings of this group" but demands on his time precluded fixed meetings. Instead Nixon suggested convening the group as the need arose "in lieu of the full NSC and as part of the NSC process." Nixon also wanted Attorney General Mitchell as part of the group and instructed Kissinger to arrange a meeting for the next week. In his memorandum to the group Kissinger described the meeting on the *Sequoia* as a "NSC Executive Committee." (Memorandum from Nixon to Rogers, July 2, and memorandum from Kissinger to Rogers, et al., July 3; both ibid., Box 1008, Haig's Special Files, Haig's Vietnam File, Vol. 2 (Apr.–Oct. 1969) [2 of 2])

[2] The meeting on the *Sequoia* apparently lasted the entire cruise, from 7:31 to 11:29 p.m. (Ibid., White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) No memorandum of this discussion has been found. In a telephone conversation on July 8 at 10:40 a.m., Laird told Kissinger that the meeting was "very good; it helped him tremendously." Kissinger then told Laird, "for his *own* use, the President has not excluded the possibility that he could take an option to the right in order to end the war quickly." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) Kissinger recalled in *White House Years* that the "principal topic of discussion was the apparent lull in the fighting. Did it result from Hanoi's exhaustion, from a new negotiating strategy, or from an attempt by Hanoi to achieve de-escalation by tacit understandings?" Kissinger also recalled that there was "unanimity that we should respond by a reciprocal slow down" and agreement on changing MACV's mission statement from defeating the enemy and forcing his withdrawal from South Vietnam to assisting South Vietnam to strengthen its forces, pacify its territory, and reduce the flow of supplies to the enemy. (p. 276)

you may wish to call on them for a brief introduction to the subjects as listed:

General Cushman—The Current Situation in Hanoi and the Enemy Strategy.
General Wheeler—The Military Situation in South Vietnam.
Secretary Laird—Vietnamization.
Secretary Rogers—Paris Negotiations.

The main issues that are likely to arise are as follows:

(1) *Enemy Intentions.* The lull in the fighting is continuing: there have been few enemy initiated actions in the past several days and some NVN units have moved out of the Northern provinces into NVN. Hanoi has not begun to introduce new people into the pipeline. There is general agreement that the lull stems primarily from the enemy's need to regroup and resupply and his desire to conserve manpower. It is not yet clear whether he also intended a political signal. The empty pipeline—whatever its motive—will mean that Hanoi soon will be forced to drastically cut back its level of operations, at least for several months, even if it starts refilling the pipeline now. CIA has concluded from the empty pipeline, the 10-Point Program and the creation of the PRG, that Hanoi has decided that the time was ripe for a period emphasizing "talk" instead of "fight" (Tab A).[3]

Hanoi faces a dilemma with regard to inflicting casualties. The enemy wants to inflict enough U.S. casualties to keep up domestic pressure to end the war but not so many that we will halt our withdrawals. Similarly if they inflict too many casualties on ARVN we might cease our withdrawals. And the enemy wishes to conserve its own manpower. These factors may be leading Hanoi to concentrate on inflicting civilian casualties.

There are several possible general explanations of Hanoi's recent actions:

a. Hanoi is hurting badly.

1. There is no question that Hanoi is hurting and wants to conserve manpower.

2. I doubt that Hanoi is hurting badly enough not to be able to continue and, if necessary, accentuate her military effort.

3. If we were to conclude that Hanoi was hurting badly we should keep up our military pressure and maintain our current position in Paris.

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[3] Tab A, attached but not printed, is a July 3 CIA intelligence memorandum entitled "Hanoi's Short Term Intentions." The President saw this memorandum.

b. Hanoi is moving to a new negotiating strategy.

1. Hanoi may have concluded that reduced military operations combined with a new political strategy—perhaps a call for a ceasefire—is most likely to produce US concessions.

2. If we reach the judgment that this is Hanoi's intention we should keep up military pressure but modify our instructions to Gen. Abrams to reduce public criticism.

3. We should be forthcoming in Paris regarding election procedures and other concessions of high public impact.

c. Hanoi is signalling de-facto de-escalation in response to our troop withdrawals.

1. It is too soon to reach a firm judgment of whether Hanoi is signalling a move in this direction but we cannot exclude it.

2. If we were confident that this was Hanoi's intention we would want to respond by curtailing our operations in some way and accelerating withdrawals to see if a process of mutual de-facto withdrawals and de-escalation can be set into effect.

Recommendation

I believe that we need to change in some way the instructions to General Abrams. Domestic criticism will mount if we can be accused of not responding to enemy de-escalation. Moreover we cannot exclude the possibility that Hanoi is signalling a willingness to de-escalate. I have spoken to General Wheeler about providing new instructions to General Abrams but have not yet received his recommendations.

Until you make a decision on this question I believe that we should keep open our options with the following public line:

(a) We are of course watching the situation to determine if a political signal is involved.
(b) Since General Abrams' instructions are to minimize U.S. casualties, if the enemy avoids combat, casualties and the level of fighting will decline.
(c) If the lull continues this will affect our decisions on the rate of U.S. troop withdrawals.

Lodge might also be instructed to ask the other side privately and quietly about whether it intends any political signal.

(2) *Vietnamization.* The immediate issue which we face is the number of additional troops to be taken out this year. Secretary Laird has previously recommended the withdrawal of up to 25,000 men; Secretary Rogers has recommended the withdrawal of an additional 60,000. At this evening's meeting General Wheeler will probably support a relatively restrained rate of withdrawal. Secretary Laird, while privately prepared to support a higher figure, will probably support this

cautious approach. Secretary Rogers will press for the full 60,000, with a decision to be announced now.

We should certainly move as fast as possible with Vietnamization, but we must weigh in the balance the favorable impact on the U.S. as against a possibly unfavorable one on Saigon and Hanoi. A too-rapid withdrawal might seriously shake the Thieu Government, particularly if coupled with pressure on Thieu for a political settlement. It might also create excessive optimism in the United States and make the withdrawal irreversible. An additional factor is the effect on Hanoi: the Communists probably cannot be fooled as to the rate of progress which the GVN is achieving in taking over the military burden. Hanoi's reading of the domestic U.S. political implications of an accelerated U.S. withdrawal is likely in addition to be quite accurate.

Recommendation

I believe that you should defer judgment on further withdrawals until early August. This is when you have promised another review, and, by then, the enemy intentions should be much clearer and we will have fully analyzed them. If you make a decision now, it will leak.

(3) *President Thieu's Statement.* We have just received Thieu's draft (Tab B).[4] It is forthcoming on elections but makes them conditional on mutual withdrawal. It offers full participation to the NLF in its name and participation in an election commission. It also proposes international supervision.

Secretary Rogers wishes to have much of the discussion focus on Thieu's statement and will undoubtedly talk to it in his remarks. As you know, he feels that Thieu should be very forthcoming and offer the other side a whole range of possible election alternatives, as well as an election commission and a ceasefire. He will probably urge that we go back and press Thieu to add greater detail.

I doubt that Thieu can be moved off his position without a firm U.S. guarantee that we will not withdraw our troops unless Hanoi does.

Thieu's patience with us is wearing thin. He had promised a draft outline of his statement by July 3 but delayed it after reading initial press accounts of Secretary Rogers' press conference last week.[5] He provided the draft only after being reassured from reading the full text of the Secretary's remarks that he was not being pressured. He also ap-

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[4] Attachment Tab B was the draft central portion of Thieu's speech given on July 11 and transmitted in telegram 13655 from Saigon, July 7. The final text is in telegram 13916 from Saigon, July 10. (Both National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 69, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, Thieu's Speech Material)

[5] Reference is to Rogers' press conference on July 2. (Department of State *Bulletin,* July 21, 1969, pp. 41–49)

pears to be reacting against jogging cables from Washington. I think we must realize that if we move too hard and too fast with Thieu we run the very serious risk of alienating him and causing his government to collapse. At the minimum we will make him uncooperative.

Recommendation

I believe that we should ease up on our pressure and see what we can make out of his present statement with minor modifications.

(4) *Vietnamization and Political Settlement.* Until now we proceeded on the assumption that our Vietnamization program was supporting our efforts to get a political settlement. U.S. troop withdrawals and the strengthening of ARVN was designed to press Hanoi to negotiate now before Saigon capabilities increased. These moves were also designed to reduce domestic criticism and to pressure Saigon into taking a reasonable position.

The safest course would be to proceed slowly both with Vietnamization and effort to get a political settlement. However this course might well fall between two stools causing us to lag far behind the expectations of our public opinion. We may be accused of not being forthcoming enough in Paris and not withdrawing quickly enough. I believe that we cannot accelerate both efforts.

I believe that the point is approaching where we may be forced to choose between Vietnamization and political negotiations. If we are really depending on Vietnamization and do not expect a political settlement Thieu should not be pressured to make a conciliatory political offer and to broaden his government to include neutralist elements. Such actions strengthen the belief in South Vietnam that the Thieu government will have to go and make it less likely that anti-Communist opposition groups will rally to the GVN.

If we are to concentrate on Vietnamization we should use our leverage to force changes in the ARVN command structure which General Abrams believes are critical to successful Vietnamization. Conversely if we are negotiating for a settlement we should proceed slowly with Vietnamization and use our leverage on Thieu to broaden his government and to make a forthcoming political offer.

If we do have to choose I would recommend proceeding with an accelerated Vietnamization program. However, there are several risks to this course.

1. We would still be charged with not making progress in Paris.
2. The enemy may succeed in embarrassing us by stepping up attacks on our forces keeping our casualties high, or by inflicting serious defeats on ARVN units.
3. Accelerate Vietnamization even if not accompanied by pressure on a political settlement could lead to a collapse in ARVN forces drastically reducing GVN territorial control.

4. Withdrawal, at some point becomes irreversible even if Hanoi steps up upon its efforts.
5. Hanoi may now be ready for a negotiated political settlement which would be foreclosed by our failure to exhibit greater flexibility on political issues.

Accelerating political negotiations would appear attractive if we conclude that Hanoi is ready for serious negotiations. In that case we would have either to move towards accepting a coalition government or, perhaps, proposing a ceasefire designed to lead to a formalization of the shared control of the countryside which now exists. The risks of this course are:

1. Hanoi may not be ready for serious negotiations.
2. We would have to put great pressure on Thieu which could gravely weaken the GVN for Vietnamization if negotiations fail.
3. Time may run out forcing us into ever greater concessions or a sudden major withdrawal.
4. We would have to assume responsibility for a settlement which could easily turn sour in a few years.

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94. Memorandum From Morton Halperin and Dean Moor of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, July 8, 1969.

SUBJECT

Review Group Meeting July 10, SVN's Internal Security Capabilities—The Basic Issues

The study[2] prepared in response to NSSM 19[3] is the first done in the Government which takes a really hard look at the capability of the

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–039, SRG Meeting, 7/10/69. Secret.

[2] A summary of the response was attached; the full report is ibid., NSSM Files, NSSM 19.

[3] NSSM 19, February 11, directed the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State, and Director of Central Intelligence, to prepare for the President a "report on current plans and programs for the improvement of South Vietnam's internal security capabilities." The President was particularly interested in plans for developing indigenous police forces, how to improve them, and how to improve U.S. support of them. (Ibid.)

South Vietnamese to hold their own against the Communists at the grass roots level now and after the fighting has "officially" stopped.

By fully exploiting well-known data, the Study convincingly demonstrates that the present state of security is far from satisfactory and is unlikely to improve sufficiently to permit the GVN to counter fully the Communist para-military threat, if Saigon remains dependent on its present security apparatus. The basic difficulty is that the apparatus is badly organized, poorly manned, supplied, and trained, and has little real empathy with the GVN.

None of the participants in the Study takes serious exception to the finding on the situation.

The Study implies that, if the fighting ends soon, the GVN will probably gradually lose many of its gains in rural security over the past two years, particularly as the Communists rebuild their guerrilla, cadre, and underground organizations, which while badly battered remain as forces in being.

It is the need for drastic improvement now in the GVN security apparatus which underlies the recommendation in the Study that a wholesale reorganization of all the Vietnamese security forces be immediately undertaken with the U.S. mission developing the specific proposals for implementing this reorganization. The changes would be very drastic and would involve wholesale alterations in unit mission, manpower priorities, funding, and management.

The JCS, acting on the advice of MACV and CINCPAC, is totally opposed to any major reorganization at this point. They contend that it would create massive disarray and that the cut in the effectiveness so laboriously obtained over the past few years would greatly outweigh any presumed benefits. The JCS proposes working within the present framework of plans for Vietnamization of the war in what would be an evolutionary, rather than a revolutionary, manner.

Our View

We agree that the recommended changes are too drastic to be successfully carried out at this point in the war. Following are some of the problems:

—the GVN is trying to strengthen its security apparatus by working within the present framework. It has recently proposed a substantial strengthening of the present GVN security elements to MACV (Tab A).[4]

[4] Tab A, attached but not printed, was a July 1 memorandum from Rear Admiral Tazewell Shepard, Jr. (Director, East Asia & Pacific Region, DOD/ISA) to Moor that summarized GVN requested increases in military and paramilitary forces as presented at the Midway Island conference. The GVN requested support for 65,000 regular forces, 10,297 regional forces, 103,915 popular forces, and 15,000 additional National Police.

It would strongly resist the drastic changes recommended in the Study.

—The impact of pushing for such changes would probably be counterproductive on our overall relations with the GVN, especially on our efforts to get Thieu to take a forthcoming political stand.

—U.S. officials in Saigon, particularly MACV, would almost certainly drag their feet in implementing the suggested changes, and little would probably be done.

The urgency of the problem is such, however, that some middle ground is probably needed between the recommendation for a directive from Washington to go ahead with the plan and the JCS desire to shelve it. We believe that the U.S. mission in Saigon should be instructed to develop for Washington approval plans and programs based on the study for giving higher priority to internal security taking into account the possible disruptive political and administrative effects of such changes. This should result in some constructive thinking, if not action, on the problem in Saigon. It would also fit in acceptably with present GVN requests for additional help in the internal security field.

NSC consideration does not appear to be necessary at this time. The Review Group might be asked to agree to forward the study to the President. If the President accepts the need for further action the Saigon mission could be directed to prepare an implementing report. Further NSC action would then await the receipt of proposals from the U.S. mission in Saigon.

Washington Monitoring of Internal Security Operations

The other central finding of the Study is that there has been inadequate cooperation and integration of effort in Washington in support of security programs in South Vietnam. The study concludes that Washington responsibility is fractured among several agencies including Defense, CIA and AID. It recommends that a new organization be created, or that an existing one be delegated to monitor security programs and improve management and the use of resources.

Although the JCS opposes the creation of any new bureaucratic structure at the Washington level, there is clearly a need for greater Washington coordination in this field. The best solution would probably be to have a small group in the NSC system with representatives from all participating agencies. This group would be chartered to review ongoing programs and developments, suggesting where overlap could be eliminated. It would be empowered to report directly to the NSC on problems which could not be ironed out through normal consultation and coordination. Such a group probably could not function effectively if chaired by one of the agencies with an active stake in the current programs. Thus the choices are to assign the task to the NSC Ad Hoc Vietnam Working Group giving some staff to Sullivan for this

purpose or creating a new group chaired by the NSC staff or BOB. We recommend the former.

Washington Monitoring of Other Non-Military Aspects of Vietnam

BOB feels and we agree that a study is needed of the implications of Vietnamization for the South Vietnamese economy, for U.S. AID and MAP programs and levels and for GVN revenue, exchange rate and tax policies. Our declining expenditures and likely inflation in SVN will probably create a need for far more AID than we are now programming. There is also a need for better continuing coordination in Washington on these issues. If Sullivan's group is given responsibility for internal security it should also deal with these economic matters and be asked to do an initial study. If Sullivan is not given this mandate an ad hoc group should be created to examine these issues.

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95. Memorandum From President Nixon to Secretary of State Rogers[1]

Washington, July 9, 1969.

In thinking over the meeting on the *Sequoia,* I thought I should sum up my thoughts on Lodge's concluding speech at the next private meeting.[2] I would like the private meeting to take place as soon as possible. I should like the speech to be given—barring a major Hanoi concession—in the same way as the opening statement. I agree with you that the paragraph indicating a possible walk-out should be deleted.[3]

Richard Nixon

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, William P. Rogers Official and Personal Papers: Lot 73 D 443, no folder title. Secret. Rogers wrote the following note at the bottom of the page: "Bill Sullivan—In view of Thieu's statement due in a day or two—let's not ask for a private meeting until Friday [July 11] at least. P.S.—The President did not know the date of Thieu's speech when this memo was prepared. W.P.R."

[2] Nixon is referring to telegram 109763 to Paris and Saigon, July 2, in which Sullivan and Rogers agreed with Bunker's suggestion that at the next private meeting Lodge should "give Le Duc Tho the full treatment." The cable contained a text of a final statement by Lodge giving a frank and realistic view of the U.S. unwillingness "to ever consent to a dishonorable withdrawal." (Ibid., EA/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 47, Paris Meeting & Plus Outgoing to Paris and Saigon, July 1–31, 1969)

[3] The paragraph on a possible walk out reads: "It adds up to this: all you have done in response to our many actions in the interests of peace is to intensify the war and escalate your demands. In these circumstances, I really don't see that we can accomplish anything by sitting here and talking any more today." (Ibid.)

96. Minutes of Review Group Meeting[1]

Washington, July 10, 1969, 2:25–3:40 p.m.

SUBJECT

Vietnam: Negotiations and Internal Security

PARTICIPATION

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
Richard F. Pedersen
William Sullivan

Defense
G. Warren Nutter

JCS
LTG F.T. Unger

CIA
R. Jack Smith

OEP
Chris Norred

NSC Staff
Morton Halperin
John Holdridge
Winston Lord

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

With regard to the papers on Vietnam Negotiations (NSSM 37),[2] it was decided that the Ad Hoc Vietnam Interagency Group would draft certain follow-on studies. On *political settlement*, there would be papers on the nature and operations of a mixed commission for elections and on territorial/political accommodation as a means to a settlement. The latter paper would include an examination of alternative routes toward territorial/political accommodation. On *withdrawals*, there would be a fuller study of de facto mutual force withdrawals. The paper on *verification* would be modified somewhat and would include discussion of the option of using the International Control Commission in its present form. The study on *international guarantees*, which had received extensive comments from Embassy Saigon, would be put aside for the time being.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–111, SRG Minutes, Originals, 1969. Secret; Nodis. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] For a summary, see Document 91.

With regard to the study on *Internal Security* (NSSM 19),[3] it was decided that a new summary paper would be drafted to treat the problem in terms of optional courses of action. This study would be an interagency effort, headed by OSD (Mr. Nutter), and would be completed prior to the President's departure on his trip. In addition, CIA would submit, within about 10 days, an assessment of the current internal security situation in South Vietnam, and more precisely, the degree of confidence which we have in our present indicators.[4]

VIETNAM NEGOTIATIONS (NSSM 37)

Kissinger noted that there were two subjects to be discussed: a study on internal security in South Vietnam which the President requested some months ago, and four papers on Vietnam negotiations submitted by the Ad Hoc Vietnam Interagency Group. He suggested starting with the negotiating paper on political settlement. He believed that this paper and the one on withdrawals were excellent, although somewhat overtaken by events.

He noted that the *political settlement* paper laid out three broad alternatives—elections, territorial/political accommodation, and peace cabinet. Our present emphasis was on elections and our approach would be shaped by the forthcoming Thieu statement. The advantage or limitations of the elections route would become apparent within the next few months. He wondered whether NSC treatment of this subject at this time would be fruitful and asked Sullivan's opinion.

Sullivan responded that the President's May 14 speech committed us to elections rather than a coalition government. That is Administration policy unless some change occurs. He believed that both the imminent Thieu speech and the paper under discussion fit into this policy framework. He commented that if we get nibbles from the other side on our call for elections, we may see emerging de facto partition of the country.

Kissinger wondered whether there should be further treatment of the questions of an international body and election commission. Sullivan said that they had tried to treat the former subject but found it very difficult to do so at this time. Kissinger wondered whether we would be ready to respond if the other side accepted the suggestion of election supervision by a mixed commission and an international body. Sullivan acknowledged that we would not be ready, but pointed out that the other side has rejected international supervision. He believed we should concentrate on what a mixed electorial commission might

[3] For a summary and analysis, see Document 94.

[4] Not found.

look like or do. He and Kissinger agreed that it would be useful to address such issues as the powers and functions of an election commission. There followed a brief discussion of the treatment of a mixed commission in Thieu's forthcoming speech.

Kissinger raised a second issue in the political settlement paper that he believed deserved further examination, territorial accommodation or the local distribution of power. He noted that Sullivan had foreseen through the elections route the possibility of some provinces falling under the control of the other side. He suggested a paper might treat the following problems. It could give us some idea of what would happen in the case of local political accommodation, what we really mean by this term, and which authorities would be permitted to exercise which functions. Finally, the paper could look at alternative routes toward this type of settlement. Sullivan had mentioned elections as one possibility; if the other side responded to the President's speech, there could be supervised local ceasefires which might constitute another route. Sullivan noted that this is what the other side had in mind when it talked about "how elections ought to be organized." They are thinking of getting sanctification of the legitimacy of local elections carried out by their (PRG) committees. In response to Kissinger's query, Unger believed that the paper that he had suggested would provide helpful information.

Sullivan then briefly described the essence of Thieu's elections offer. In commenting on probably South Vietnamese reactions to Thieu's speech, Sullivan said that for many elements in SVN the important thing was to keep the army intact.

With regard to the political settlement paper, Unger said that hopefully something could be negotiated between Alternative A (elections) and Alternative B (Territorial Accommodation). Sullivan noted that the paper suggested some softening of Alternative A, with Alternative B being left as a prospect for negotiations. We assume the other side would stick with Alternative C (peace cabinet), but they might show some interest in exploring how far we might go within the framework of Thieu's proposals.

There followed some more discussion of the Thieu speech and its implications. Sullivan said that Thieu knew that the other side would not buy a winner-take-all proposition like national elections under the present constitution. By not limiting his proposal to Presidential or general elections, Thieu was in effect leaving open territorial accommodation options for possible response by the other side. However, this implication was *not* being stated either publicly or privately for the time being. Pedersen noted that Thieu was saying that all elements could participate in the election process.

Kissinger summarized the situation as being that the present emphasis on elections could lead us toward a territorial/political accom-

modation type settlement and that we should be ready for this possibility. As for Alternative C, this depended on how one interpreted phrases like "peace cabinet". He repeated that a new study on local territorial accommodation could examine what the current situation is and therefore what the distribution of power would look like, and alternative routes toward such a settlement. The latter subject would include electoral commissions, local elections, and perhaps ceasefire or other means. It would be useful to have a scenario for the next few months based on the President's speech, the Midway meeting, and Thieu's proposals. These elements would confirm our position for the next three months. Sullivan said this was true, barring a dramatic move by the other side which we could not rule out. For example, they might call for a ceasefire along with a coalition government. In response to Kissinger's question, Sullivan said that a separate and somewhat tortured paper on ceasefire was being developed. He believed it was better to treat this subject separately because of its many implications and complexities. One of the problems was that it was artificial to extract a ceasefire from the political context. Kissinger said it would be useful for him to get a better idea of what precisely is meant by a general ceasefire, e.g., what orders are given to which authorities. Unger and Sullivan noted that the Joint Staff would help with this question and would look at such elements as the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos, permissible logistic and military movements during a ceasefire, and terrorist activities. Kissinger noted the importance of having a clearer picture of who had units where in the country, who would stand still in a ceasefire, what each side could and could not do, etc.

Unger noted that the position of the Chairman, JCS was that there should be no ceasefire without mutual withdrawals. There was a basic gut feeling that the advantages of a ceasefire would lie with the other side. Kissinger noted that the President's instincts were generally in line with General Wheeler's. However, if faced with a ceasefire proposal we must be prepared. Unger agreed that this subject should be studied, especially its relationship to election proposals. Sullivan felt that a ceasefire proposal would probably not surface in such a benign fashion. The other side was more likely to combine it with a coalition government and play the whipsaw game between Washington and Saigon. Unger said that a combination of ceasefire and coalition government would be difficult to resist on the home front. Sullivan agreed but noted the difficulties for Saigon. Halperin commented that we could be in an even worse position if the other side simply announced a unilateral ceasefire. He believed it would be harder to refuse such a move. Kissinger believed that such a move would strengthen the ceasefire proposal, but it would be the suggestion of a coalition government that would whipsaw the GVN and ourselves. Halperin noted that Saigon would not even accept a ceasefire by itself. Sullivan said that

the Thieu speech would mention the subject, and Holdridge commented that the key factor for Saigon was the circumstances surrounding a ceasefire. Kissinger summarized that the group agreed that a paper should spell out various approaches to territorial/political accommodation and that there would be a separate paper on ceasefire.

The group agreed with Kissinger that the issue of *negotiating* procedures, e.g., US-DRV bilaterals or four-party discussions, was largely overtaken by events and did not need further treatment. He mentioned that at some point we would need to discuss the possible conflict between the Vietnamization process and the Paris negotiations. Sullivan suggested that we see reactions to the Thieu speech and that further down the road this issue might be discussed.

Kissinger then took up the paper on *withdrawals.* He noted the problem of the other side's forces coming back into South Vietnam after having been withdrawn. He did not believe that we had ever spelled out precisely what we mean by de facto withdrawals, how we would recognize them and at what point we would reciprocate beyond what we were already doing. Unger commented that our information on the other side's withdrawals would be gleaned from our unilateral intelligence efforts. Kissinger asked whether by withdrawals we meant that they would proceed into North Vietnam. Unger noted that withdrawals into Laos and Cambodia would be into havens, but that we could not rule out consideration of this prospect. Kissinger noted again the need for criteria on this question. He said that mutual withdrawals were a process beyond the troop replacement program, which is largely independent of the other side's actions.

Sullivan suggested the example of withdrawals by attrition. He said that 70% of the enemy's forces were not North Vietnamese. If they continue to suffer casualties like they have had the first six months of this year, and yet no troop replacements were sent through the pipeline (this should show up in South Vietnam at about the end of the month), then we would have a developing situation where the North Vietnamese proportion of enemy forces was dropping. This would add up to withdrawals by attrition. He had talked to Joint Staff personnel working on Vietnamization and they were considering this aspect. They were assuming a residual force of a 40,000 filler base of North Vietnamese.

Kissinger asked what the latest information was about enemy infiltration. Smith said that the figure for the next few months of 11,200 represented forces that we believe had already been counted before. Holdridge noted that it usually takes four months for personnel to arrive in South Vietnam after entering the top of the pipeline. Thus, most of those who had started out should be arriving in Vietnam by now. Smith said that the intelligence community was still intensively study-

ing this question. For the moment, he cautioned against people reacting to a figure of 11,200 as a sign that infiltration was starting up again. There was not yet enough evidence to draw any conclusions on this issue. Sullivan said that if infiltration does continue to stay down, then the other side would be heading toward the base force that had been mentioned, perhaps in a matter of months. Kissinger noted the basic concept that Sullivan had raised that de facto withdrawals were not only a function of replacements, but also could come about through attrition. Sullivan noted the related factor of the level of combat which brings one back to the potential of a ceasefire. Kissinger suggested that we needed some definition of de facto withdrawals and believed that the one added by Sullivan was very helpful. We needed criteria to help us decide at what point we could take reciprocal action. Sullivan noted that one response could be troop replacements but in greater degree. Kissinger concurred, saying that such reciprocal action would be beyond what we ordinarily would do under the Vietnamization program.

Kissinger then raised the issue of the *verification of withdrawals.* He believed that the three possibilities in the paper (UN body, improved or expanded ICC, and a new organization) covered the basic possibilities. Smith agreed. Kissinger asked whether everyone concurred that we should not expend too many negotiating assets on a verification body but rather rely on what we could do unilaterally. He noted to Smith that the CIA had a big task in handling both SALT and Vietnam. Smith responded that the paper did say that, given limitations on our unilateral verification capabilities, we should seek agreement concerning a verification body. In response to Kissinger's query whether everyone agreed with the formulation of our approach in the paper, Nutter noted that it fell between insistence on a verification body and not raising the issue at all. The fundamental question was whether one should insist on such a body if our chances of getting one appear hopeless.

Kissinger assumed that everyone had seen the cable from Embassy Saigon on the *international guarantees* paper.[5] He wondered what the reaction was to this cable which proposed substantial restructuring of the paper. Sullivan felt that international guarantees were such an esoteric and marginal possibility that the subject matter did not merit the effort that would be required to restructure the paper and take account of the Embassy's suggestions. The cable did contain some useful points, but may have mixed the subjects of guarantees and verification. Guarantees could be nebulous and beyond the control of individual parties. Nevertheless, the US might wish to go back into the country if agreements were disrupted. Otherwise we could be left with nothing but

[5] Not found.

pious expressions of concern. Smith noted that even if we took this line, it did not mean that we would actually be able to go back in.

Kissinger returned to the question of the verification of withdrawals and asked about the relationship between our unilateral verification capability and the number of forces we had in Vietnam. Smith and Holdridge noted that this depends largely on where our forces were and what type we had. Kissinger wondered how much our unilateral capabilities were degraded by a decreasing US presence. Unger said that Saigon and MACV had looked at this question and that some 4,700 troops were directly involved in maintaining our present capabilities for unilateral verification. He confirmed that this included not only cryptographic personnel but those needed to fly reconnaissance planes etc. Smith noted that there was a 25% margin of error in our estimates which rose to 50% if we lose all SIGNINT.

Nutter suggested that the verification paper should assess the ICC in its present form. Sullivan noted that this was not one of the three alternatives; we did not consider the ICC in its present form to be what we should aim for. Nutter thought that it would be better than nothing; Pedersen commented that it would not be much better. Nutter believed that these views were not really stated in the paper. Sullivan read the paper's segment on the ICC's value and said that he believed that Nutter was saying that if all other alternatives fail, we might wish to fall back on the current ICC. Holdridge noted the possibility of increasing clandestine operations to monitor withdrawals. Sullivan added the factor of improvements in South Vietnamese capabilities; this was related to the subject of internal security (NSSM 19). He acknowledged that the alternative of the current ICC as a verification body was only in the paper implicitly, not explicitly as a last resort. Nutter thought that it would be a next to last resort and that in any event there was something to be gained by insisting on the principle of international verification. Pedersen suggested that this was more in the nature of guarantees which we would assume we could not negotiate. Nutter suggested that perhaps we could trade this objective for something else in the negotiations.

Kissinger summed up the results of the discussion. Sullivan's Ad Hoc Group would draft papers on the operations of a mixed electoral commission; the nature of territorial/political accommodation, including alternative routes to this outcome (for example the relationship to a ceasefire); de facto mutual withdrawals; and whatever modifications were needed in the verification paper, including the option of the ICC in its present form. It was agreed to put aside the paper on international guarantees and the Saigon Embassy comments.

Nutter suggested that it would be useful for the Ad Hoc Group to spell out more fully the paper's recommendation which fell between

Alternative A (Elections) and Alternative B (Territorial Accommodation). This mixed alternative should be treated as fully as the original alternatives themselves. Sullivan noted that a fuller treatment of this in-between option would come largely from the two political papers that Kissinger had suggested on mixed electoral commissions and territorial/political accommodation. It would also partly be a by-product of reactions to Thieu's elections proposal.

INTERNAL SECURITY (NSSM 19)

Kissinger then introduced the subject of the internal security study.

Smith did not believe the paper was ready for higher level consideration. He was surprised that it was before the Review Group for discussion. He was not speaking out of intimate knowledge or out of any parochial interest. He thought that it was out of key with the other papers under consideration and did not parallel their basic framework or concept. When asked by Kissinger about his principal objections, he said that it was partly a matter of not having had enough time to review the paper, and partly also his belief that it should be made consistent with other Vietnam studies. He suggested that he might submit a constructive critique in a day or two suggesting how the paper might be improved.

Unger noted that OSD and the JCS were on opposite sides of this question. He had gone into the paper in great detail. He had found it very complicated and not ready for NSC consideration. There was a significant split here between the views of the JCS and OSD. His people had made an effort to delineate the differences of view through a charting effort and even this had proven complicated. He was referring to the different missions to be performed by various forces, command and control arrangements, etc. He added that beyond the differences between OSD and the JCS, there were also different viewpoints among other agencies, like State, CIA and AID, who had agreed to the report in principle. Given these many differences, he did not believe that we should impose this study on Saigon at a time when Saigon would say that the recommendations would complicate our efforts in this field. Our South Vietnam mission would say that this study would derail our pacification programs, and would urge an evolutionary rather than revolutionary approach.

Kissinger commented that before the report goes to Saigon it must go to the President, who asked for it at one of the early NSC meetings. His interest had been triggered by the remark that most of the country was "relatively secure". This could also mean that most of the country was relatively insecure. He wished to know precisely what we meant by our estimates. This paper being discussed need not necessarily be the response to his questions, but something was needed. He

did not believe that this study lent itself to NSC treatment but perhaps there could be a paper based upon it. The President had indicated that he wants a study on this question before he leaves on his trip.

Kissinger then mentioned some of his own concerns on this subject. During his visits to Vietnam, and when he looked at charts on the situation in the villages, he saw the enormous premium placed upon the judgment of the reporting personnel. When he asked these people their criteria for judgment of village security, their answers ranged from the highly sophisticated to the appallingly crude. It was a difficult task, given the rapid turnover of personnel in Vietnam. He believed that we needed some feel for the range of confidence we have in our security estimates. He had received many letters from people who were worried about how we arrived at our estimates. We needed to know where and why there were disagreements. These questions were closely related to the problem of local accommodations. We could conclude that the present internal security programs were less than satisfactory, but that we would not wish to touch them because of all the other objectives we have in Vietnam. Smith concurred that our estimates were troublesome.

In response to Sullivan's question, Kissinger said that the President wants as a minimum information and judgments about the situation. However, beyond that he would want to consider greater internal security efforts. There had been some inconclusive discussion of this subject at Midway. On the other hand, Thieu might think that major recommendations by us would add to his problems. In any event, the President would like recommendations on how to improve the internal security situation.

Unger commented that some of the recommendations in the paper had already been accomplished in part, thanks to the study. He noted the various plans that had been drawn up and some of the recommendations that had been put into effect. In response to Kissinger's query, he said that the major problem with the study was its change in organizations, its switching of ministries and assignments of forces. There would be competition for talent and money among the RVNAF, Territorial Security Forces and Internal Security Forces. Kissinger said that any objections to various recommendations would certainly be placed before the President.

Nutter said that he too had had some problems with the paper. He had sent it back for redoing after seeing an earlier version. The study basically reflected OSD, State and CIA views. The emphasis was on the need for reorganization, both in Vietnam and in Washington. There was the essential factor that the internal security situation had not improved enough—he was never happy when the answer to such a problem was to reorganize the system. He noted that much of the

paper had been done some time ago. He acknowledged that it was very bulky and for that reason he had requested a summary. He thought that the study could be treated in either one of two ways. A summary could be sent to the NSC and simultaneously transmitted to MACV for their response. Meanwhile, the group which drafted the paper could be asked to spell out the kind of Washington organization that they felt was necessary. Alternatively, the study could be sent back to the group for re-examination in light of the critiques being made upon the paper. He noted that there is some urgency to this problem, and that considerations related to constabulary forces and troop replacements were coming more and more to the fore. Kissinger concurred that internal security was becoming an increasingly important subject. Pedersen noted that all reports indicated that efforts in this field were not progressing well. Sullivan added that the manpower squeeze was becoming acute. Decisions on allocation of manpower were already a problem for us, and between us and the South Vietnamese. Nutter suggested that the working group could add specific issues which had not been treated, e.g., the possible use of over-age people for the constabulary force.

Kissinger noted the problem of deciding what MACV is supposed to do with this study. He would like to see a paper showing where we are currently in internal security; recommendations on how to improve the situation in a general way (e.g., force strength); and specific examples, (e.g., manpower priority).

Sullivan noted that one of Smith's problems with the paper pertained to what situation would prevail in the event of an agreed or de facto cessation of major hostilities involving RVNAF. In this situation one would assume that internal security forces took on even more importance. Smith agreed and noted the many ramifications to this problem, e.g., what the RVNAF could do in such a situation.

Unger believed that all types of forces were involved in the question of internal security. It was difficult to differentiate between missions. Abrams had already undertaken many of the study's suggestions, e.g., giving more control of forces to provincial districts. Thus, if there was a settlement based on local accommodation, these local levels would have their own forces. Sullivan noted the additional concept of using regular forces for internal security.

Pedersen believed that this problem presented a classic situation for an options paper. Kissinger thought this was a very constructive idea. He did not believe that the paper needed to make agreed recommendations. This would meet many of Unger's points. Unger agreed and repeated that the paper as it stood was too complicated. JCS/MACV views would lend themselves to options in a shorter paper.

Kissinger then asked Nutter to take responsibility for directing an interagency effort on a new paper drawing upon all the relevant agencies. This paper should be in the form of options and could include an assessment of where we currently stood as regards internal security. Smith interjected that the latter subject could be done more rapidly. He said that his agency would do a paper on the confidence level in our assessments of the internal security situation and coordinate it with other agencies. In response to Kissinger's query he said that he believed he could circulate this paper within a week or so.

Kissinger said that the President shared Nutter's feeling that reorganization does not solve problems. Smith added that his agency thought that NSSM 19 would be like NSSMs 36 and 37.[6] He wondered if NSSM 19 was designed to be a planning vehicle. Kissinger said that this was not what had been intended originally. It was designed to relate the internal security picture to the war situation. Now however it would be useful to make it consistent with NSSMs 36 and 37 (Vietnamization and negotiations) for planning purposes, as well as to relate internal security to on-going hostilities.

[6] See Documents 87 and 91 for summary of responses to NSSM 36 and 37.

97. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, July 14, 1969.

SUBJECT

Your Meeting with Sainteny, Tuesday, July 15, 1969 10:30 a.m.[2]

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 106, Kissinger Office Files, Country Files, Far East, Vietnam. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. A stamped note on the first page reads: "The President has seen." Attached as Tabs B and C were brief talking points for Kissinger and the President.

[2] The meeting was a secret one and is not included in the President's Daily Diary. From the diary it is possible to conclude that Kissinger and Nixon met with Sainteny from 10:32 to 11:10 a.m. (Ibid., White House Central Files) Kissinger recalls that he was forced to act as interpreter even though his French was "shaky." No record of this discussion has been found. Kissinger describes the meeting in *White House Years,* pp. 277–278, and Nixon in *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon,* pp. 393–394. Nixon recalls that they told Sainteny that unless some breakthrough occurred in the negotiations, he would be obliged to have recourse "to measures of greater consequence and force."

You will recall that during your last meeting with Mr. Sainteny you:

—asked Sainteny to go to Hanoi to deliver a letter to Ho Chi Minh which reiterated that a just peace is achievable;

—subsequently, Sainteny spoke to Hanoi's representatives in Paris and they advised him to transmit the communication in Paris which we declined to do.[3]

We then decided to bring Sainteny to Washington to get his assessment of the situation and to suggest that he help arrange a meeting between me and Le Duc Tho.

—I now think I should deliver the letter to Ho Chi Minh via Le Duc Tho (letter at Tab A).[4]

In addition, you should inform Sainteny:

—You are determined to:

(1) achieve an honorable settlement;

(2) not be pushed beyond a certain point (just in case Sainteny leaks your conversation to the other side).

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[3] Kissinger reported to the President in a June 24 memorandum that Sainteny was unable to convince Mai Van Bo to allow him to go to Hanoi to deliver a letter from Nixon to Ho Chi Minh. Sainteny described the letter as "of great importance" but did not say it came from Nixon, only that it was not "from the French Government." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 106, Country Files, Far East, Vietnam, "S" Mister, Vol. 1)

[4] Tab A was not attached; for text of Nixon's July 15 letter and Ho Chi Minh's reply of August 25, both released to the public on November 3, see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 910–911.

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98. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, July 18, 1969.

SUBJECT

Operation Against Barracks and Storage Facilities in Dien Bien Phu in North Vietnam

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[1] Source: National Security Council, Nixon Intelligence Files, 303/40 Committee Files, Subject Files, Vietnam, 1965–1969. Secret; Eyes Only. Sent for action.

You will recall that you had previously approved in principle an operation conceived by CIA, which would result in an attack against barracks and storage facilities at Dien Bien Phu in North Vietnam utilizing a rocket attack by CIA-supported guerrilla troops from Laos. Subsequently, after the operation was planned in detail and ready for execution, I suggested that we submit it for the consideration of the 303 Committee in order to preclude subsequent charges of unilateral White House action. On July 8, the 303 Committee met to consider the proposal and despite the fact that CIA had proposed the plan, for unexplainable reasons, General Cushman supported State and Defense in recommending that the operation not be approved.[2] I have summarized below the highlights of the departmental positions as they developed at the meeting.

Alex Johnson expressed the State Department view that the costs and risks involved were not commensurate with anticipated gains. He could foresee no real military or political objectives to be accomplished through the effort even if successful. He conceded, however, that probably nothing would be lost, either.

General Cushman supported Alex Johnson's position. He felt that the necessary operational limitations on the size of the infiltration team precluded getting enough rockets into the target area to have any real impact unless a lucky hit was scored on an ammunition dump. General Cushman pointed out that CIA had been asked to examine the various possibilities within its capabilities for mounting a harassment operation having some psychological impact against North Vietnam and that this proposal was the best CIA could offer. He conceded that CIA's capabilities for mounting harassing operations of any magnitude against North Vietnam are very limited.

Dave Packard was not enthusiastic about the probable results to be achieved from this operation. He felt no real military damage was likely and doubted that the psychological impact would be great.

John Mitchell suggested proceeding with the preliminary operational preparations of rocket testing, targeting, team selection and training and deferring the decision on implementation. Final decision on whether or not to go forward with the operation could then be taken in the light of factors prevailing at that time.

John Mitchell's alternative would entail three to four weeks in time and minimal costs. I support Mr. Mitchell's proposal and recommend that I instruct the CIA to proceed with the operational preparations for this mission subject to final mission approval at a later date.[3]

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[2] The minutes of the July 8 303 Committee are ibid., 303 Committee Minutes. Kissinger's account of the discussion at the meeting closely follows these minutes. On July 3 the CIA prepared a 7-page proposal for the operation for the 303 Committee. (Ibid., Subject Files, Vietnam, 1965–1969)

[3] Nixon initialed the approve option.

99. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to President Nixon[1]

Washington, July 18, 1969.

SUBJECT

The Situation in Laos

In connection with your upcoming trip to the Far East,[2] I want to bring to your attention what I see to be a deteriorating situation in Laos. While in Southeast Asia, you may well want to examine what is occurring there in the context of its effects on American equities in Vietnam.

Since 1962, this Agency has played a major role in support of United States policy in Laos. Specifically, we have developed and maintained a covert irregular force of a total of 39,000 men which has borne a major share of the active fighting, particularly in Northeast Laos. In this latter area, under the leadership of General Vang Pao, guerrilla units formed of Meo tribesmen have been engaged for more than eight years in a seesaw battle with the North Vietnamese Army and Pathet Lao troops.

Up until this year the fighting in North Laos has had a cyclical nature with friendly forces advancing during the rainy season from July until November and enemy forces advancing during the following dry season. This year the pattern has been broken. We are several weeks into the rainy season and the North Vietnamese have continued to attack. They have captured and held, using elements of two North Vietnamese Divisions, including tanks, the former neutralist stronghold of Muong Soui on the edge of the Plaine des Jarres and they are now advancing west along Route 7 toward its junction with Route 13 which links the capital city of Vientiane with the royal capital of Luang Prabang. (See attached map.)[3] There are also indications that enemy units are moving south and west of the plain in a direction which would threaten the major Meo bases of Long Tieng and Sam Thong. The Lao Cabinet, somewhat leaderless with Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma

[1] Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DCI Executive Registry, Job 80–B01284A, Laos, 1 Jan.–31 Dec. 1969. Secret. Copies were sent to Rogers and Laird.

[2] On July 23 Nixon flew to the South Pacific to witness the splashdown of the Apollo XI moon flight. This began a world tour that included stops in Guam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, South Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Romania, and Great Britain.

[3] Attached but not reproduced.

vacationing in France, is in a panic over this situation and has been belaboring the United States Embassy in Vientiane with requests for action, particularly heavier air strikes against the enemy.

The Embassy is working with the 7/13th Air Force to provide a considerable increase in tactical air strikes directed against enemy lines of communication in hopes of inhibiting any major enemy move west of Muong Soui. Although air strikes in the past have exacted a heavy toll, the North Vietnamese forces appear so far in their current campaign willing to pay the price. They may also have chosen to keep moving because tactical air sorties are limited by the extremely bad weather prevailing in the area at this time of year.

On the ground, the neutralist forces which formerly occupied Muong Soui are dispersed and completely ineffective as a fighting force. The Force Armes Royale (FAR) is tied down in defense of other areas and incapable of stopping regular North Vietnamese divisional units. The Meo units under Vang Pao have been forced into a defensive position to protect their key bases. Moreover, these irregular forces are tired from eight years of constant warfare, and Vang Pao is unable to find the manpower resources to do more than keep up with his losses. Already he has been forced to use 13 and 14 year old children to replace his casualties. We think Vang Pao will fight hard to maintain his Headquarters in the Northeast highlands, but as the military pressure on it increases, it will be more and more difficult for him to control his tribal elders, some of whom are already talking about evacuation to safer areas in western Laos.

The Department of State is aware of the problem and is moving diplomatically to urge the Soviets to intercede with the North Vietnamese to slow their advance.[4] Preliminary Soviet reactions are not encouraging.

North Vietnamese intentions are unclear and their current advance may have only limited aims but there are many Lao, including Vang Pao, who believe the North Vietnamese plan to encircle and threaten the royal capital at Luang Prabang and move down Route 13 to Vang Vieng and the edge of the Vientiane plain. Should they do this, they would be able to negotiate from a position of strength. In these circumstances the Lao Government might not be able to hold together and Souvanna could be forced to make some accommodation with the Communists. The North Vietnamese goals may be (1) either a partition of Laos giving them full authority over the areas they control at the

[4] As outlined in telegram 118077 to Vientiane, July 16. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1969–73, POL 27 LAOS)

point of a future cease fire or (2) the reconstitution of the Tripartite Government but consisting this time of a coalition they control: Souvanna Phouma on the right, Communist controlled neutralists in the middle, and the Neo Lao Hak Sat front group on the left.

The North Vietnamese now have the option, if they choose to exercise it, of provoking a most serious political crisis in Laos. In this situation the limits have largely been reached on what this Agency can do in a paramilitary sense to stop the North Vietnamese advance in Laos which is now threatening.

Richard Helms[5]

[5] Printed from a copy that indicates Helms signed the original.

100. Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Wheeler) to Secretary of Defense Laird[1]

CM–4441–69 Washington, July 21, 1969.

SUBJECT

Report of Trip to South Vietnam

[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, DOD/ISA Subject Files: FRC 330 72 A 6308, Box 8, Vietnam #2, 1969, 000.1. Top Secret; Sensitive. Kissinger sent a copy of this memorandum to Nixon under cover of a July 22 memorandum in anticipation of a meeting the President was to have at 6:30 p.m., July 22, with Laird and Wheeler. Kissinger wrote: "Although there is much substantive discussion which could be held as a result of Gen. Wheeler's report, this meeting should be primarily cosmetic, with the view to setting the stage for more detailed subsequent discussion. General Wheeler's trip report is optimistic in terms of progress being made in all areas of Vietnamization, and especially in terms of the military situation in Vietnam which he assesses is the best he has ever found it." Also attached to Kissinger's covering memorandum was a draft of a mission change statement that was undergoing coordination with the JCS. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1320, Unfiled Material, 1969)

REFERENCES

a. Memorandum of Secretary of Defense to ASD (ISA), dated 14 July 1969, subject: Guidance for Southeast Asia Visit[2]
b. Memorandum of Conversation with President Thieu[3]

1. In accordance with our conversation of 14 July 1969,[4] I visited the Republic of Vietnam during the period 16–20 July. The purpose of my trip was, as you announced in Washington, to

—Make a thorough assessment of the current military situation.

—Study all aspects of the continuing Vietnamization Program, including US troop deployments.

—Consult with other military leaders on US military strategy.

2. During my stay, I consulted with Admiral McCain, General Abrams and his deputy, General Rosson, and their component commanders; and with principal US field commanders in Vietnam. Also, I met with civilian officials of the Government of Vietnam and the principal military leaders of the Vietnamese Armed Forces.

The Current Military Situation

3. My impression is that the military situation in Vietnam is better than I have observed on any of my earlier visits there. The military situation appears well in hand. I consider that we are well prepared for any initiatives the enemy may attempt.

—The enemy has severe food shortages in I CTZ. The combined efforts of our interdiction program, the improvements of pacification which increasingly deny him local support, and the pressures exerted by friendly operations appear to have limited his ability to undertake major sustained operations with forces now in Northern South Vietnam.

—ARVN battalions are spending almost 20% more of their time in combat operations than a year ago. The growing effectiveness of the RF/PF has permitted a further ARVN concentration against enemy main forces.

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[2] Attached but not printed.

[3] Wheeler met Thieu at the Independence Palace in Saigon on July 19 from noon to 1:20 p.m. Also at the meeting were McCain, Abrams, and Berger. The participants discussed the current lull in the fighting, modernization of South Vietnam's armed forces, the U.S. withdrawal schedule, and understandings and decisions growing out of the Midway meeting between Thieu and Nixon. The tone of the conversation was optimistic. (Memorandum of conversation, July 19; National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

[4] No record of this conversation has been found.

—The declining enemy activity has enabled an increase of US and ARVN effort in direct support of pacification, further to compound the enemy's support problem and to strengthen the security of the population and friendly forces as well.

—The Regional Forces continue to produce about the same number of casualties and maintain a constant kill ratio of more than 4:1 in spite of a general decline in enemy activity. Their ratio of weapons captured to weapons lost is more than three times the ratio of 18 months ago.

—The Popular Forces improvement in performance is reflected in a gradually increasing kill ratio and a growing weapon exchange ratio, both now more than 3:1.

—There is an increase of almost 50% in the major roads open to traffic in South Vietnam; now two-thirds of the waterways (more than a four-fold increase in 15 months) are open to traffic. In January 1967 only ⅓ of the railroad mileage was open; that figure is now ½. This year the mileage has increased from 44% to 49%.

—The trend in pacification continues slowly upward.

4. Although the situation is generally improved and unspectacular progress continues, a number of countervailing factors persist:

—The enemy retains a capability in the vicinity of the DMZ to mount a multi-battalion attack, with ample logistic back-up, if he so chooses.

—The enemy continues to expand and improve his network of LOCs in Laos, to include a POL pipeline from Vinh through Mugia Pass. His offensive toward Muong Soui and Luang Prabang in Laos is considered by General Vang Pao and some senior US military people to be aimed at forcing the Royal Laotian Government to require suspension of US bombing of the NVN LOCs in the Laos Panhandle.

—The enemy retains the capability to sortie from his Cambodian sanctuaries against friendly forces in II and III CTZ and, in the latter, to mount multi-battalion attacks against Tay Ninh and some lesser effort against Saigon. There continues to be four VC/NVA divisions within and contiguous to III CTZ.

—Although in the Delta no multi-battalion attacks have taken place since last year, enemy main force units as well as NVA units have been introduced in recent months for the first time.

—The net rate of ARVN desertions, although declining, continues as a cause of concern.

—The RVNAF leadership, although improving, still appears as a limiting factor on the improvement of the RVN forces.

—Despite the improvement in overall security of the population, terrorism continues to rise. Some small comfort may be derived from the fact that the enemy's fewer successes in larger scale hostilities encourages diversion of his effort to terrorist activity.

—The large number of refugees continues as a serious problem, having the potential also to threaten the progress of pacification and political stability.

5. On balance, I concur in the judgment of Admiral McCain, General Abrams, General Rosson and other senior commanders that there is continuing improvement in the military situation in Vietnam. Conversations with Vietnamese military leaders and with President Thieu support this judgment.

Vietnamization, Including US Troop Deployments

6. Progress in the RVNAF Improvement and Modernization program is heartening. The turnover of equipment to RVNAF forces is on overall schedule and, in many cases, ahead of schedule. Because of good RF/PF performance, acceleration in the ARVN equipping program has been possible in a number of cases due to completion of training programs earlier than planned.

7. The Vietnamese Navy has received a large part of the vessels scheduled for turn-over and, after a considerable period of "over the shoulder" training, has assumed responsibility for operations in the Delta area. Our naval commanders report that their staff work is good, their morale high and their operations show professional results. They have accepted their responsibilities with spirit and determination.

8. The Vietnamese Air Force has shown marked improvement in recent months. As you know, both the ARVN and US Army forces have long respected the professionalism of the VNAF close-air support operations. It is now interesting to note their performance across the spectrum:

—With fixed wing tactical fighter aircraft, the VNAF, possessing 21% of the inventory of VNAF plus USAF tac fighters, in May 1969 supplied 26% of the strike sorties flown by these forces.

—The VNAF airlift squadrons are lifting over 25% of current RVNAF tactical airlift requirements.

—The more than 65 VNAF UH–1 helicopters are maintaining an in-commission rate equal to US forces overall and higher than some US elements.

—The infusion of the 0–1 observation aircraft with VNAF has expanded their reconnaissance and forward air controller activities as a part of the VNAF–ARVN air-ground team we are seeking to build.

—Most important, the VNAF confidence and diligence have markedly risen in the past few months and the VNAF appears to be reaching out to attain self-sufficiency. This is attributed by General Brown's people to these factors:

—The infusion of new equipment which, due to its long lead time, has only lately begun to arrive.

—A higher priority in RVNAF for personnel, achieved by the establishment with the Joint General Staff of a formal manning structure and justified requirements for the right type of personnel.

—The momentum and confidence derived from increasingly successful operations.

—The realization that US forces are going to be withdrawn and the VNAF must stand on its own feet.

9. There are a number of problems in VNAF remaining, particularly a weak command and control system and a lack of coordinated staff work. Too, some difficulties in management are ascribed to Vice President Ky, whose continued influence within the VNAF inhibits changes which would be desirable.

10. Our people consider that there is much intelligence and ability in the RVNAF to get things done. However, there are difficulties in fitting together the styles of doing things between Americans and Orientals. It appears, however, that the realization that significant US force re-deployments are in prospect is having a beneficial effect on RVNAF diligence and initiative. General Abrams and his people are continuing to emphasize with all levels of the RVNAF the importance of improving RVNAF leadership and reducing the impact of the desertion problem.

11. The performance of ARVN units continues to show improvement. Should the present low level of activity continue, and barring a concerted enemy effort to overwhelm a major ARVN unit, the ARVN divisions can give a good account of themselves and can hold their own against the enemy after the first increment of US troops are re-deployed. However, as you are aware, there has not yet been adequate time for the enemy to react to the US troop re-deployments; hence no assessment of enemy reaction to the deployments can so far be made. However, it is the estimate of General Abrams that a second 25,000 increment can be withdrawn without unwarranted risks to RVNAF success and confidence unless significant changes in enemy dispositions and patterns of activity should take place. I join Admiral McCain, General Abrams and General Rosson in their judgment that assessment of enemy reactions should precede each decision to withdraw further US forces. In other words, I advocate a cut-and-try approach.

12. Meanwhile, the program to accelerate ARVN effectiveness is being pursued by General Abrams with vigor and imagination. Joint ARVN-US operations continue to be carried out with a view to enhancing ARVN confidence and tactics. These have included two operations in which the VNAF has provided helicopter lift for ARVN. The resulting growth in material confidence among the Vietnamese military services is encouraging.

US Military Strategy

13. My first undertaking upon arriving in Saigon was to discuss with Admiral McCain, General Abrams, and General Rosson the military strategy and tactics governing our operations. The results of our discussions were conveyed to you and to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I understand that the JCS have forwarded to you a formal expression of our coordinated views.[5] However, there are two additional aspects of this matter which are pertinent and timely:

a. The operations of friendly forces in South Vietnam have undergone, in fact, a change in pattern as a result of a modification in the enemy pattern of activity. In essence, the enemy has been holding the bulk of his larger formations in remote sanctuaries in-country or in Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam. Guerrilla units operating in smaller elements—squad and platoon—have directed their major activities toward attacks by fire on friendly installations and population centers, acts of terrorism against the population, varied by occasional ambushes along roads and small ground attacks against isolated units. In response to this pattern of activity, General Abrams and his associates have sought to maintain contact with and pre-empt the movements of the larger enemy formations against population centers and have encouraged subordinate commands, using smaller friendly units, to seek out and destroy the small enemy units operating within country. The Regional Forces and Popular Forces have been particularly active in this latter role.

b. An increasing number of combined operations is being undertaken. I found in I and III Corps Tactical Zones that the so-called "Buddy System" is being extensively employed. By means of having a US battalion operating on a continuing basis with a designated ARVN battalion, the ARVN is being encouraged to be more active in the field. Collateral beneficial effects have been to inculcate higher professional standards and a growing confidence in the ARVN that they can operate effectively on their own.

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[5] On July 26, after consultation with McCain and Abrams, the JCS informed Laird that the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese fundamental objective had not changed from bringing all Vietnam under Communist control. To achieve this objective the enemy had to defeat U.S. forces or cause them to withdraw. While the enemy had reduced his level of activity, he had not changed his strategy. Therefore there was no need to change U.S. strategy and mission. (Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs to Laird, JCSM–459–69, July 26; JCS Files, JMF 907/520 (2 July 1969), as cited in Historical Division, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Vietnam War, 1969–1970,* p. 96) At a meeting on July 28 Laird informed the Joint Chiefs that to conform with Presidential statement and COMUSMACV current tactics, the mission of defeating Communist aggression was to be replaced by one of assisting South Vietnam in preserving the opportunity to decide its own political fate free of outside interference. (Ibid., pp. 96–97)

c. In view of these changing patterns of operations, the semantic difficulties that have arisen over the use of the term "maximum pressure on the enemy," and the wide-spread misconception that mobile offensive operations are more costly in casualties than static defensive operations, I suggested to General Abrams that the terms "search and destroy" and "reconnaissance in force" be stricken from the lexicon of military terminology employed in South Vietnam. He readily agreed to my proposal; I expect that he and his subordinates will hereafter employ a phrase such as "pre-emptive operations" or words to that effect.

14. In connection with the foregoing paragraph, I wish to iterate my professional judgment that the concept of operations being followed by General Abrams in the conduct of ground operations is militarily sound in that it has consistently frustrated achievement by the enemy of his objectives and has incurred the lowest level of casualties consistent with achieving our minimum stated objectives in Southeast Asia. He has consistently used mobility and massive firepower to reduce the exposure of his forces to the enemy. He and I concur in the judgment that the adoption of tactics which would permit the enemy to move men and supplies at will would result inevitably in an increase of casualties among all friendly forces and would permit the enemy, once again, to launch attacks against South Vietnamese population centers.

Selective Items of Guidance for Southeast Asia Visit (References a and b, above)

15. As to size and timing of withdrawal of US forces: General Abrams will be prepared to forward his recommendations regarding the second CY 1969 increment for US redeployments in the last week of July 1969. In this connection, the following items are pertinent:

a. As noted in the Memorandum of Conversation with President Thieu, he will confer with Minister of Defense Vy and appropriate members of the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff on Wednesday, 23 July, as to the size and composition of the increment and the takeover of vacated areas and installations by elements of the RVNAF. He does not believe that, at this late date, an additional increment above 25,000 would be feasible. He cites as factors persuading him to this view the fact that both the civilian and military officials of South Vietnam are conditioned to an increment of this size, and they have made plans to assume the responsibility from withdrawn US forces. To increase the number to be withdrawn at this late date will throw a real burden upon the Vietnamese military in the planning for and redeployment of their own forces, and will introduce an unfavorable psychological factor because of the discussions and planning done to date. On the US side, General Abrams pointed out to me the very intricate staff work that

will have to be accomplished in order to insure that we maintain the proper balance in composition of forces, their geographical location, and the level of support which could be rendered to the command.

b. As to the withdrawal of 100,000 in CY 1969: It was very apparent to me during my conversation with President Thieu that he is highly apprehensive that our CY 1969 withdrawal program will go beyond the level discussed with him by General Abrams and by President Nixon at Midway. As is set forth in the Memorandum for Conversation, he expects further withdrawals in CY 1970, and he suggested that General Abrams and his staff confer with the Vietnamese Joint General Staff to the end of determining the magnitude and timing of further withdrawals subsequent to 1 January 1970. Moreover, in view of his reference to and discussion of President Nixon's three criteria, it is my belief that he anticipates further exchanges between President Nixon and himself concerning CY 1970 withdrawals. In view of these factors, I am of the opinion that a withdrawal of more than 50,000 in CY 69 and/or failure to consult with President Thieu regarding CY 1970 would impose severe psychological and political handicaps upon the Government of Vietnam. Additionally, I believe that the effect upon the RVNAF could be deleterious in the extreme.

c. Vietnamization and the NSSM 36 exercise: As I understand it, inputs from the field regarding the NSSM 36 exercise will be received in accordance with the established time table. I wish to stress, however, that, in my judgment we can not complete the whole program by 31 December 1970 or by 30 June 1971. If all goes according to plan, we can complete the ground forces component of the program within those dates and most of the Navy programs; however, the Air Force program can not be completed before 1972. An additional point which must be borne in mind is that the resulting structure is not designed to provide the South Vietnamese Armed Forces the capability to deal with both the full enemy guerrilla force in country and cope with the North Vietnamese armed forces. This fact highlights two points; namely, the imperative requirement to obtain the withdrawal of North Vietnamese formations and individuals from South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to North Vietnam; and the strong probability that we will have to maintain a residual support force in South Vietnam for some years to come unless and until the withdrawal of the North Vietnamese is achieved.

d. As to RVNAF composition: I queried General Abrams as to the desirability of creating a constabulary force. He responded that he could see no value militarily to such an organization; on the contrary, he believes that the creation of another paramilitary force in South Vietnam would further deplete the manpower pool, impose additional disruptive demands on our and GVN resources and will offer little or nothing beyond what the ARVN, RF, PF and National Police now con-

tribute to population security. As to the associated question regarding the adequacy of quantitative levels to handle the existing threat, I revert to my earlier comments regarding the necessity for removing, by one means or another, the NVA from the threat equation. So long as North Vietnamese divisions and regiments are poised on the periphery of South Vietnam, it is my view that the RVNAF alone cannot in the near future maintain the integrity of South Vietnam.

e. As to RVNAF achievements: As pointed out earlier in this report, although the performance of all elements of the RVNAF is not of uniform quality across the board, there is definite indication of progress in all areas. The slow but steady progress in pacification is evidence of the validity of this statement. On the other hand, I am not satisfied that the achievements of the RVNAF are properly publicized or understood, either in South Vietnam or in the United States. I asked for a separate report on this subject and I have directed the Joint Staff to work with OASD (PA) to ascertain what and how improvements can be made.

Summary

16. I recognize that this report does not provide answers satisfactory to us in all areas; nevertheless, I believe that, within the limits of time available to me, it sets forth a realistic assessment of the situation and the direction and degree in which we can move without endangering the progress we have made in the past year and a half.

17. I am convinced that we are on the right track. I was impressed by the determination and the quiet confidence expressed by American and Vietnamese military leaders that they can cope with the situation which will be created by the withdrawal of US forces. I was also impressed by the expansion of the pacification program which, I think, is hurting the enemy badly. On a less optimistic note, I can only conclude that the situation remains fragile, and we must proceed with deliberation if we are to avoid making an irretrievable wrong step.

Earle G. Wheeler

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101. Editorial Note

On July 25, 1969, during his world tour, President Nixon made informal remarks to newsmen for attribution but not direct quotation and on background. Nixon was in Guam after witnessing the splashdown of Apollo 11 astronauts on their return from the first landing on the moon. Beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Top O' the Mar Officer Club,

Nixon expounded on what was first called the Guam Doctrine and then came to be known as the Nixon Doctrine. After reaffirming the United States treaty commitments with Asian allies, Nixon stated, "that as far as problems of internal security are concerned, as far as the problem of military defense, except for the threat of a major power involving nuclear weapons, that the United States is going to encourage and has a right to expect that this problem will be increasingly handled by, and the responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves." The full extent of the remarks in Guam are printed in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pages 544–556.

The statement caused great interest among the press and public in both the United States and Asia. It was refined and restated in later, more formal, Nixon speeches. See Nixon's address on Vietnam, November 3, ibid., pages 901–909. As to the origins of the doctrine, Kissinger recalls that it had been a theme of preparations for Nixon's trip and the original intention had been to develop a major Presidential speech along similar lines for later in the summary. Kissinger recalled that Nixon himself was surprised by the reaction to the statement. Kissinger also suggests that there was "less to the Nixon Doctrine than met the eye." See Kissinger, *White House Years,* pages 222–225. Nixon's own recollections of the event are in *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon,* pages 394–395. Additional documentation on the Nixon Doctrine is in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy.

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102. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Bangkok, July 29, 1969, 4 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

The President
Ellsworth Bunker, Ambassador to South Vietnam
Robert S. Lindquist, Chargé in Malaysia
William H. Bruns, Chargé in Singapore
G. McMurtrie Godley, Ambassador to Laos
Arthur W. Hummel, Ambassador to Burma
Carol Laise, Ambassador to Nepal
Andrew V. Corry, Ambassador to Ceylon

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1023, President's Asian and European Trip, July–August 1969. No classification marking. No drafter indicated. The meeting was held at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok.

Leonard Unger, Ambassador to Thailand
Norman Hannah, DCM in Thailand[2]
Robert G. Neumann, Ambassador to Afghanistan
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President
Ronald Ziegler, Assistant to the President
Harold H. Saunders, NSC Staff

President: Thanks for coming. Time precludes visiting some countries. On the other hand, being in area provides opportunity hear your countries' reactions to our policies generally—everything from foreign assistance over. What I have tried to get across on trip so far:

I have general belief that Asia is where the action is and ought to be—in spite of Vietnam. Other areas naturally important too. US/Soviet relations will be taken care of at highest level. Latin America will not change much. Africa will not govern itself for 200 years. But in terms of conflict involving us, likeliest place is Asia. Mid-East possibly, but there less likely because that would be between US and USSR. But in Asia, countries on edge of China ripe for export of revolution.

As I see it, the way we end Vietnam war will determine whether we can have viable policy in Asia—a settlement that will not be seen as US defeat and will not lead to Communist takeover in a few years. Don't have to put this in domino terms.

One could conclude that getting out of Vietnam any way would be best thing we could do. But—though everyone wants peace—the most detrimental effect of a Vietnam settlement would be a settlement that produced Communist victory in a few years. US people would throw up hands on further active Asian involvement. We are going through critical phase for US world leadership—American people never wanted to be world leaders in first place and maybe that's why we have never had a world policy.

Let's start with Laos.

Godley: King has volunteered his confidence in President and US. King asked Godley say Lao military concerned US might pull out, but they aren't worth much. King and Souvanna main elements of stability. People of Laos have not really grasped problem but they are basically

[2] In Norman Hannah's book, *The Key to Failure: Laos & the Vietnam War* (pp. 269–274), he recalls that at a state dinner with the Thai Prime Minister on July 30, President Nixon told Hannah that he was aware of his strong ideas on Laos and he wanted to hear them. Hannah was loath to give his judgment to the President since it was not shared by Ambassador Unger. Unger and Kissinger subsequently worked out an arrangement resulting in a long telegram, 606 from Bangkok from Unger to Kissinger, August 3, which presented both Unger's more gradualist approach to combating the North Vietnamese in Laos and Hannah's bold advice to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail in the Laos panhandle by using U.S. air and ground forces. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 545, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. II, 1 August 1969–10 October 1969)

for us. Meo are one good fighting element—our most dedicated friends. Internal situation serious. By and large good friends.

President: What about military situation?

Godley: Very serious—7 North Vietnamese battalions—4–6,000 men, now tanks used for first time. Troops using heavier weapons. Enemy has given logistical support never before seen in rainy season. 50–50 chance, next 3–4 weeks enemy would have reacquired most of his plus neutralist 1962 position. Has several options for handling Lao political situation—could now liquidate neutralists as a political force and go into bilateral conflict with non-Communists. Faced with enemy step-up in North, we have increased rate of air sorties in support (from 50 to 200) without altering rules of engagement.

Where from here? We have been trying to press Soviets and British co-chairmen. Embassy Vientiane proposed contacting Soviets to point out enemy buildup, express concern. Thinks Soviets would like to stabilize Laos—aware of Chicom road. Tell Soviets we would reduce sortie rate to 50 a day for 2–3 days and expect enemy assume defensive positions in areas they now control. Would be interesting to see Soviet reaction. Might be able to stabilize situation. Do not recommend total US standdown—Lao would lie down and roll over.

Hummel: Burma neutralist with left-wing government that is politically and economically unsuccessful. Most Burmese blame US and North Vietnam equally. However NeWin wants to see some US counterweight after Vietnam, though not applied in Burma. Have Chicom-sponsored insurgents; are planning renounce friendship treaty with China. But Burma thoroughly neutralist and do not want to lean on us. Do not want to lean on big powers for economic aid.

Lindquist: Malaysians want us in Vietnam and want kind of settlement President described. They believe we will try for right kind of settlement but have nagging doubt this will be possible. This comes at time of other disappointments—breakdown of British security system in Far East. Reappraising own security arrangements—will look more to Australia, Indonesia, Thailand. Slowly readjusting relations with Communist camp (Soviet Embassy there). Interested in Brezhnev proposal. Work closely with us, though no bilateral aid program. US posture correct, letting Commonwealth take lead, but we should go on putting money through regional organizations.

Bruns: Lee Kuan Yew—Post-Vietnam's influence will depend on when post-Vietnam occurs. If 1970–71, he believes that will be too soon because won't be going government in Saigon.

Neumann: Vietnam is not problem in Afghanistan—Indo-Pak and Mid-East problems far closer. There is, however, a good tacit understanding with USSR. We in 1953 did not get into military aid. Russians have pressed Afghans to phase out Chicom programs. Democratic ex-

periment. Economic progress hampered by illiterate parliament trying to deal with complex development problems. Relations with Iran good, and Iran's influence becoming greater. Pakistan: Pushtunistan very much down; transit difficulty up. Countries from Turkey down interested in transit agreement. Have suggested President say word to Yahya about transit; Pakistan could ease transit problem. "A manageable corner to unmanageable problem—Indo-Pak relations."

Corry: Senanayake government replaced radical government in 1965—takes moderate stand. Presses agricultural development and trying reduce communal tensions. Believes peace in Vietnam can come only from withdrawal of all foreign troops. Hopes US will continue show lively interest in Asia. Immediately problems have to do with reelection of this government. We helping grow-more-food campaign.

Laise: Nepalese government takes direct interest in Vietnam. Does not want peace that is US retreat. Nepal wants US presence and aid—constitutes important balance. Chinese and Indian activity have stepped up. Nepal has reacted against India but now back on tracks. India is fumbling for a policy—imagine that US had USSR or China on other side of Canada. India holds string on our presence because our aid financed from rupees. Our interests in Nepal not vital so will depend on US India policy.

Bunker: Aside from military situation—which not bad—Thieu has "used up all his credit but hasn't overdrawn his account." Now broadening base of his government—new cabinet (efficiency, acceptable to assembly, popular base). Fashioning a parliamentary bloc. Forming consultative group outside cabinet, necessary because of disarray his statement created. He will need broader backing for later flexibility in negotiating. May have cabinet formed in another couple of weeks.

President: Can they survive troop withdrawals?

Bunker: Depends on speed and adequate psychological preparation. But if impression we on a rigid timetable could have disastrous effects. Can have good effects if done well—Vietnamese moving ahead rather well.

President: Let me sum up.

On Mid-East, no progress of significance. I anticipate none. May only come at a very high level only when Soviets realize they may be drawn in. Arabs they support in shaky positions. Very pessimistic situation at this time.

On Vietnam, no significant progress in Paris on public talks—don't talk about private contacts. Soviets have played minimal role; expect none unless they can get something because they can't get caught at it. Escalation that would involve US and USSR remote. Ties us down. One factor in other direction is that they have their troubles. As long as Vietnam going on, difficult to make progress in other fields with us.

If USSR needs or wants better relations with US, moving on Vietnam would open door. If I were where they sit, I would keep "giving it to the US" in Vietnam.

Chinese-Soviet and US attitude. I don't think we should rush quickly into embrace with USSR to contain China. Best US stance is to play each—not publicly. US–USSR–Europe lined up against rest of Asia not a pretty prospect. US–USSR security pact would invite Soviet adventurism in area; can let people talk about it but not do anything about.

What really rides on Vietnam, is whether US people are going to play big role in world or not. That question is very serious doubt. Mass of people usually think right but intellectuals oppose all but passive US role. How can we conduct policies in Asia so that we can play role we should:

1. Viable Vietnamese government for at least five years.
2. Where problem is internal subversion, countries must deal with problem themselves. We will help—but not American ground forces. Even when there is foreign exported revolution. Not talking about invasion by conventional troops.
3. I feel that with all criticism of US, Asia leaders realize worst thing for them would be for US to bug out of Vietnam because that would leave vacuum. Collective security is a good theme—but not real for five years (even Japan).
4. We have to conduct policy so we can sell it in US.

103. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Saigon, July 30, 1969.

PARTICIPANTS

President Richard Nixon
President Nguyen Van Thieu
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker
Mr. Nguyen Phu Duc

After President Thieu's welcoming remarks, the President responded that this was his eighth visit to Viet-Nam and that he felt it important at this time to come to the country's capital. It would demonstrate to Hanoi that we stand together as well as the fact that Saigon is a safe place. It was fortuitous that the moon landing provided an opportunity for his Asian trip and for another discussion with President Thieu.

The President complimented President Thieu on his July 11 statement, saying that he thought that it had been both courageous and forthcoming. It had had a good reception in the United States and in world opinion; a number of Senators who have been critical of our policy in Viet-Nam were now saying that the next move was up to Hanoi. The President went on to say he believed that we have gone now as far as we should and that the next move was up to the other side. "We can't have you nibbled away. That is something that we are not willing to permit."

President Thieu responded by explaining the situation he had had to confront here in view of some of the doubts his statement had created. It had been necessary to spend some time in explaining to members of the Assembly, to the Province and District Chiefs, the military, and civil servants, the GVN's "good will for peace." This he had done

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1023, Presidential/HAK Memcons, President Nixon and Thieu, 7/30/69. Top Secret; Nodis; MoonGlow. The meeting was held at Independence Palace. Kissinger sent copies of this memorandum to Rogers and Richardson on August 13. Bunker sent the original to Kissinger under cover of a memorandum of August 19 in which he wrote: "I think it [the meeting] went exceedingly well. From the preliminary soundings we have taken, this seems to be an almost unanimous opinion here. In reading the transcript of yesterday's [July 31] plenary session in Paris, it appears that Hanoi got the message." (Ibid., Box 138, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. IX, 8/1/69–8/31/69) According to the President's Daily Diary, Nixon and Thieu met at the Palace from noon to 5:35 p.m. This time apparently includes the discussion with the advisers; see footnote 3 below. (Ibid., White House Central Files)

through means of press conferences and meetings. He felt that the impression now was that he has been forthcoming and has made a generous offer for serious negotiations and a move toward peace, but that this should be the last offer until there is some response from the other side.

President Thieu went on to say that he felt we must keep the door open in Paris; that we have won support of the free world because of the forthcoming proposals we have both made and that we must, therefore, not withdraw from the talks. As long as the other side continues to nourish the hope of winning by whatever method, military or political, we must stand firm. But, he added, we stand ready to discuss anything and in any way, publicly or privately. The problem is whether the other side is really ready to negotiate. Until now they have been reluctant and we have not seen evidence of a real intention to move ahead.

The President asked President Thieu how his moves toward political organization were progressing.

President Thieu replied by saying that as the situation now stands, we have offered to enter into reasonable and serious talks with the communists. The question is whether they are willing to talk reasonably or will choose to continue the war. If they choose the latter, the war may take on a different character. The enemy may choose to carry on at a slower tempo, eventually even to fade away; thus it might go on this way for four or five years. We have to be prepared for the fact that it might take this course. We, therefore, have to move ahead on various fronts: a) to strengthen our military forces; b) to expand pacification, to extend security through land reform and other measures to bring the people along with us; c) to consolidate the people with the government; d) to secure the collaboration of political parties in support of the government; e) to work toward collaboration of the Assembly and the Executive and f) to fashion a broader based Cabinet.

South Viet-Nam must become stronger politically, militarily, and economically.

President Thieu added that the GVN might have suggestions about our AID program, especially about procedures, in order to help the economy grow more rapidly. He felt this was important to the overall effort. The President replied that we intended to continue to provide economic aid and would be interested in their suggestions.

President Thieu went on to say that the feeling here is that President Nixon's trip should be seen in the context of a diplomatic move to stimulate progress toward a solution in Paris. He wondered what the relative influence of Russia and China on the talks is. In any case, President Thieu felt that it was important to make preparations for what he called a "long haul, low cost" policy while South Viet-Nam

was in the process of growing stronger and stronger. "You help us so we can take over more and more." The process of growing stronger could have the effect of weakening the other side; and if they do not accept a political solution, it is clear that we ourselves will have to do more.

President Thieu said there seemed to him to be two alternatives, either for the U.S. to speed up the war or to help the GVN to take over more of the war burden. He felt that the statements which the President had made during his trip indicated the latter course, i.e., that Asians should take over more responsibility for their own security. President Thieu felt that this was a constructive policy and that if the U.S. wishes to disengage, the best course is to help South Viet-Nam grow strong. He added that if you help us to resist and "chase away the aggressor," we can handle the rest of the problem.

The President repeated that we intend to continue our aid which we believe is important in developing the Vietnamese economy and in the effort to Vietnamize the war, both for the effect that this has in Viet-Nam and in the United States. The President added that he felt American opinion would be favorably influenced by President Thieu's efforts to broaden the base of his government.

President Thieu said he proposed to go ahead with his plans and remarked that one of the problems he had had during the last two weeks was how to hold back the super-hawks and to keep the super-doves from going too far.

President Thieu said that there are risks in the "long haul, low cost" solution because the people do not yet have confidence in our ability to oppose the communists politically. Therefore, we have to have time to convince the people that we have the means to win politically. We must also convince the communists of the need to negotiate.

President Nixon asked President Thieu's judgment as to how to go about this. Should we make it clear to the other side we are not going to quit? Thieu replied in the affirmative.

The President asked President Thieu his view of why the enemy did not attempt another high point militarily in July.

President Thieu replied that the enemy is preparing for another try, they had not been able to get ready for an effort in July, but that they would try again. Thieu remarked that the enemy problem is to maintain the war at a level which will not discourage or prevent further reduction in U.S. forces, but at the same time to try to discredit the ability of the Vietnamese forces.

President Nixon remarked that going to Paris bought the enemy time and this had been expensive for us.

President Thieu asked what we should now do in Paris, and the President replied that he felt that we should sit tight for the next two

or three months. President Thieu agreed and said that the Vietnamese understand too that we must be forthcoming toward the negotiations.

The discussion then turned to the question of troop reduction. The President said he felt that no statement should be made about the next increment now; that this would give the impression that his visit had been used to put pressure on the GVN.

President Thieu responded that it would be helpful to do this in a way which would indicate to the Vietnamese people that the reductions will be gradual. He believed also that we should exploit the fact of withdrawals indicating that while we were making constructive moves, the communists were doing nothing. He felt also that it was important to develop a plan for further U.S. reductions in 1970 in which the U.S. would say we will withdraw X numbers of troops and GVN would say the same thing. It was important that the reductions should not appear to be sudden improvisations responding to some particular influence.

The President replied that he thought it was well to have a plan, but it should never be discussed publicly. We should not disclose to the enemy what we propose to do, but keep them guessing. Another disadvantage in making public disclosures ahead of time is the fact that critics at home will not be satisfied with whatever numbers we come up with. They will continue to snipe at us and say we are not doing enough. Consequently, let us have a plan, but let us keep it secret among ourselves. The President referred to his remarks at his press conference on June 19 about Clark Clifford's formula to the effect that he hoped we might do better.[2] He explained that what he had in mind, though he could not say so publicly, was that Clifford's formula was not optimistic enough if we issue a warning to the enemy and then have to act on it.

The President asked President Thieu about the prospects for his land reform program. Thieu replied that the draft law had been submitted to the Assembly, which was now in recess. The Assembly would, however, meet in mid-August and he hoped that it might enact the law by the end of August.

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[2] On June 19 President Nixon held a news conference at the White House during which he was asked to respond to a suggestion put forth by former Secretary of Defense Clifford that 100,000 American troops ought to be withdrawn by the end of 1969 and that all ground troops ought to be out by the end of 1970. In response, President Nixon said, "I would hope that we could beat Mr. Clifford's timetable, just as I think we have done a little better than he did when he was in charge of our national defense." (*Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 471–472) Kissinger recalls in *White House Years,* "Though strenuous efforts were made to 'interpret' the President's remark, the damage was done; our insistence on mutual withdrawal was by then drained of virtually any plausibility." (pp. 274–275)

The President said that he had recently read a report that the VC were coming more under Chinese influence and asked whether President Thieu felt they had any separate identity from Hanoi.

President Thieu responded that he felt Hanoi had played the game as between Moscow and Peking very cleverly. They had not long ago issued a statement saying they were neither pro-Moscow nor pro-Peking. The fact is that they continue to receive help and need it from both the Soviets and Communist Chinese. There are two factions in Hanoi—pro-war and pro-negotiation. They use both in a skillful way to ingratiate themselves with both the Soviets and the Chinese, the pro-negotiation faction with Moscow and the pro-war faction with Peking.

President Thieu went on to say that after the war North Viet-Nam will attempt to maintain groupings both in Cambodia and Laos. He added that "we never forget the ultimate purpose of the Chinese. North Viet-Nam also nourishes and will continue to nourish the purpose and objective of imposing communism on the South. They will accept a temporary division, as they did in 1954, but they will not relinquish their purpose."

The President asked President Thieu whether, if the North stays out of South Viet-Nam, they can handle the VC. He replied, "Yes, I believe we can. But we cannot imagine a permanent peace if North Viet-Nam remains in Laos and Cambodia. It is not possible to have an international body which can control one-thousand miles of border. Therefore, it is important that in a settlement Laos and Cambodia should be included and that controls should be set up in both these countries as well as South Viet-Nam.

The President said he was concerned about the deteriorating situation in Laos and asked Thieu what he felt we could do to be more effective. Thieu replied that he felt one measure we could take was to increase the bombing.

The President asked for his views of Sihanouk. President Thieu replied that while Sihanouk is bad, we don't want to have something worse. He added that there are only two groups in Cambodia who can overthrow Sihanouk, the military or the communists; the military are weak and ineffectual and it is more likely to be the communists who would succeed. Even if the military moved against Sihanouk, he felt that the communists would eventually take over. What Sihanouk does or can do depends very largely on what happens in Viet-Nam. Cambodia is a weak country and if Sihanouk were overthrown, or if we encouraged his overthrow, it is highly likely the communists will take over.

When the President asked whether President Thieu felt the communists were a great danger to Sihanouk, he said he believed so. He thought that Sihanouk wants Cambodia to play a neutral role, but that

he may not be able to maintain this if the communists gain or even largely increase their control.

At this point the Vice President entered the conversation and Dr. Kissinger and Ambassador Bunker withdrew.[3]

[3] While this group was meeting, a second group of "Advisers"—Berger, Green, Abrams, South Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Khiem and Defense Minister Vy—met and discussed the significance of the lull, Vietnamization, and the American public's attitude towards the war. Nixon, Thieu, Ky, Kissinger, Bunker, and Nguyen Phu Duc joined the meeting after their discussion ended. Nixon briefed the advisers on his discussions with Thieu and Ky and then gave them a "pep talk." (Memorandum from Holdridge to Kissinger, July 31; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1320, Unfiled Material, 8 of 19)

104. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Paris, August 4, 1969.

PARTICIPANTS

Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge
Phillip Habib
Henry A. Kissinger
William A.K. Lake

Mr. Kissinger outlined the President's view that we have made as many unilateral concessions as we are going to.

Mr. Habib agreed that Thieu need make no more moves unless there is "significant movement" by the other side. Habib said he thought that the situation in the negotiations is now like that of last June–August, when the other side was simply marking time before moving in the fall. He said that we have to show them how to be forthcoming.

Mr. Kissinger said that, with regard to withdrawals, we must have a clearcut assurance that once withdrawn, North Vietnamese are not coming back—an unambiguous verification process. A written document per se is not necessary.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 106, Country Files, Far East, Vietnam, "S" Mister, Vol. 1. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

Mr. Kissinger stated that the President had said in response to questions from Ceausescu[2] that we would not accept the formation of a *negotiated* coalition government or a *unilateral* withdrawal of forces. He was flat on this.

Mr. Habib said that they had not yet used their authority to offer to pass messages on a political settlement from the other side to the GVN. They might use it later. Mr. Kissinger did not object, but asked that if done, it be done coldly and precisely.

Mr. Habib said that the North Vietnamese had not yet gotten the message on our position, but he thinks they are getting it. Mr. Kissinger said that if they make it "Nixon's War," he may try to win it. He does not want to see Communist troops in Saigon.

In response to Mr. Habib's question, Mr. Kissinger said we should not yet indicate we have nothing more to say. But we should shut off their endless speeches about our sincerity and avoid being placed on the defensive. The key is to convince them that the framework is not to be changed.

Ambassador Lodge said that they will never agree to really free elections, and we shall therefore never see them. But we may get a mixed commission of some sort. Mr. Kissinger said he did not expect to see elections either. There will be no winner-take-all solution.

Mr. Habib agreed that we must convince them that the President can't hold still after November 1.

Mr. Kaplan and General Weyand[3] joined the conversation at this point. Mr. Kissinger said that Kaplan should hit hard the theme of "no more unilateral concessions" in his dealings with the press.

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[2] Reference is to questions asked by President Nicolae Ceausescu of Nixon during a discussion on Vietnam at a meeting in Bucharest, Romania, August 3. A memorandum of discussion of that meeting is printed in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, Vol. XLI.

[3] Lieutenant General Frederick C. Weyand, Military Adviser to the U.S. Paris Peace Delegation, and Harold Kaplan, the delegation's press spokesman.

105. Notes of a Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, August 5, 1969, 6:50 p.m.

[Omitted here is brief discussion unrelated to the Kissinger–Xuan Thuy conversation.]

K said he wanted to give P brief rundown on his talk—spent 3 and a half hours with their Chief negotiator.[2] K said it was at Sainteny's home and there four of them present—including interpreter and note taker. K said he made presentation along line he had shown to P on plane and similar to what P said to Ceausescu.[3] K said he laid down deadline on them very hard. K said they asked 8 clarifying questions and then launched into usual line. K said he told them if they had nothing new to say, they were speaking in wrong forum and he would leave. K said in every case when he got tough, he moved back. He indicated he was extremely eager to talk again but had no authority yet and wanted to go back to Hanoi. K said he is writing long report now. K said one of his assistants who was present feels this was most conciliatory they have ever been. K said while none of this proves anything before he would have said the chances were one in ten and now he thinks they are one in four or three that this thing will work. P asked what will happen. K said one interesting thing was they said when they want to get in touch again they would prefer to get in touch thru Walters rather than Sainteny. K said they had number of modifications in their negotiating position, but it is not enough for us yet. P said this movement has not been made to Lodge and K said right. He saw Habib right after meeting and K is sure of that. P said not to tell them a thing about it. K said he just went over positions and in abstract way said let me understand position exactly. K said they tried to draw him into discussion about ten points and K told them these are ten points and not ten commandments and we will not talk about them as only basis for solution. K said he told them it is their turn to make proposal now, etc. K said he told them toward end of this year will face another test of strength. K said every time he did that, other side pulled back. P said it looks to him as though they will try to diddle us along, but this also proves that Lodge has not been tough enough. K said he told them Pres will not withdraw troops unilaterally and will not replace Thieu—

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 360, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File, Aug. 1969. No classification marking.

[2] With Xuan Thuy; see Document 106 for the formal report to the President.

[3] See footnote 2, Document 104.

this will not happen and they have to face as fact of life. K said they will get Romanian report shortly.[4] K said if we do not hear within four weeks or there is no movement at Paris. Pres interrupted to ask K what his guess is—will they want to talk to K again. K said he suggested that they do normal negotiation in Paris and if they reach point where they want to tell us something quite new, they get in touch with K. K said he told them he did not want to come over there to hear the same old thing. P said he agreed completely with this. K said if they get in touch and ask to see him it would be the first time in 18 months that they have asked to see us—the other meetings have been at our request. P said he wants Lodge instructed to that effect and to stop begging. K said he told Lodge of change P had made in Saigon statement[5]—also that P has said he has gone as far as he can go.

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to the Kissinger–Xuan Thuy conversation. Kissinger briefed the President on his talks with Pompidou who agreed that there would be no further concessions on Vietnam and offered to arrange for contacts with the North Vietnamese, if required. The President and Kissinger agreed that if the story about the Kissinger–Xuan Thuy meeting broke, they would say that Kissinger had dinner with Sainteny, the North Vietnamese were present, and they had a "social chat." Both Kissinger and Nixon also agreed not to tell Laird about the meeting in Paris.]

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[4] Apparently a Romanian report of the Kissinger–Xuan Thuy conversation, not further identified.

[5] Apparent reference to a change in Nixon's statement on arrival at Saigon on July 30. The text of the statement is in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 584–585.

106. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, August 6, 1969.

SUBJECT

Meeting in Paris with North Vietnamese[2]

Attached is the full account of my conversation at Paris with Xuan Thuy and Mai Van Bo.

The following points seem to me to be of particular significance:

—Xuan Thuy did not hit back hard at my statements about the necessity for us to take actions of gravest consequence if there is not major progress by November 1. He did say that if we do not agree to a solution on the basis of the NLF ten points, they will have no choice but to continue to fight. But he did not press this point strongly.

—Although he "explained" the ten points to me, he did not do so very aggressively. He stated that he did not regard them as the "ten commandments" after I said that we did not so regard them.

—Xuan Thuy indicated a desire to see me again, "if we can make progress."

—The meeting was business-like and serious, but conducted in a fairly easy atmosphere.

—Xuan Thuy emphasized the question of troop withdrawals and political settlement, calling for unconditional U.S. withdrawal and on the removal of Thieu, Ky and Huong. He also expressed particular interest in our views on neutralization. He said that they wanted the North to be socialist, among other things, and the South to be democratic. This distinction may not mean anything but is nonetheless noteworthy.

—Xuan Thuy for the first time hinted at some linkage between the withdrawal of our forces and theirs (points two and three of their ten points). While he was vague on specifics, the message was clear and significant.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 863, For the President's File, Vietnam Negotiations, Camp David Memcons, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. The memorandum is not initialed by Kissinger.

[2] The decision for Kissinger to meet with Xuan Thuy in Paris was part of the initiative with Sainteny; see Document 97. Initially Nixon and Kissinger wanted Sainteny to travel to Hanoi on their behalf to deliver Nixon's letter (see footnote 4, Document 97), but the North Vietnamese would not give Sainteny a visa and the letter was delivered to Mai Van Bo in Paris instead. Nixon and Kissinger then asked Sainteny to arrange a meeting between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. Kissinger met Xuan Thuy instead since Le Duc Tho left Paris for Hanoi. (Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 277–278)

—He emphasized their desire for good relations—including technical, economic and cultural relations—between us once peace is achieved and reconstruction began.

—He preferred General Walters over Sainteny as a contact point.

Attachment

Memorandum of Conversation

Paris, August 4, 1969.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Major General Vernon Walters
Mr. William A.K. Lake

Xuan Thuy
Mai Van Bo
Vietnamese Notetaker
Vietnamese Interpreter

Dr. Kissinger opened the conversation by saying that he appreciated the opportunity of seeing Mr. Xuan Thuy and to be able to have direct discussions. He had known Mai Van Bo since 1967. He had always found him to show great diplomatic skill and subtlety. Dr. Kissinger said he would like to say a personal word before getting into the matter which had brought him there. He had been concerned with peace in Vietnam since 1965. Anyone who has followed Vietnamese history, particularly the events of the last five years, must be aware of the courage and dignity of the Vietnamese people. He was fully aware that after all that had happened, there was a great amount of distrust between our two peoples. But any discussions will be conducted on our side with respect for the courage and dignity of the Vietnamese people. He wondered whether there had been any answer to the letter from our President which had been delivered in Paris two weeks before. Xuan Thuy said that President Nixon's letter had been forwarded to Hanoi. It was not dated. Dr. Kissinger said the letter had actually been written three days before it had been delivered. Perhaps he should say a few things which President Nixon had asked him personally to convey.

Dr. Kissinger said that Washington had read with great care the statements that had been made at the plenary sessions and in the private meetings. Hanoi had often questioned our good will and our sincerity. It was hard for us to judge whether they did this for psychological effect or to what degree they really believed this. Dr. Kissinger said that he was there to tell them that we sincerely wanted peace and were approaching it with an attitude of good will, but he was also there to tell them how the situation appeared to us.

On November 1, 1969, the negotiations which led to the end of the bombing would be one year old. During this period, the U.S. had made what we consider to be significant moves. We had ended reinforcements, we had a partial bombing halt, then a total bombing halt, and the withdrawal of 25,000 combat forces. We had offered to accept the result of free elections. To us it looks as if there had been no significant response. It is in the long term intolerable for us to be treated at every discussion like school boys who are taking an examination in the ten points of the NLF. We were willing to discuss their ten points but we also wanted a discussion of the proposals our side had made. Therefore, he was here to suggest to them from the highest possible level and in all sincerity that we attempt to make another effort to settle this conflict by the time the bombing halt is one year old—that is to say, by the 1st of November. As part of this effort, we would like to answer some of the questions which had been put to us by their side on various occasions. (Dr. Kissinger commented here that he was reading from notes which had been approved personally by the President):

—The United States is willing to withdraw all of its forces without exception from Vietnam as part of a program for the removal of all outside forces from Vietnam.

—The United States is prepared to accept any outcome of a free political process. In defining the political process, he would like to set forth a few propositions:

a. We realize that neither side can be expected to give up at the conference table what had not been conceded on the battlefield.

b. We believe that a fair political process must register the existing relationship of political forces.

c. We realize that we will differ with them on how to achieve this but neither side should be asked to accept the proposition that it can be defeated without noticing it. We are not asking them to disband the organized Communist forces and they should not ask us to disband the organized non-Communist forces.

—We remain prepared, as we had said, to discuss the ten points together with our own points. In order to show our good will in the period between now and November 1, we will withdraw somewhat larger forces than we have already withdrawn and reduce our B–52 and tactical air operations by 10%.

In order to expedite negotiations, the President is ready to open another channel of contact with them. He is prepared to appoint a high-level emissary who would be authorized to negotiate a conclusion. This special contact makes sense only if negotiations are serious. If this contact takes place, the President is prepared to adjust military operations in order to facilitate the negotiations. If the objective was sufficiently serious and the conclusion sufficiently imminent, the President is prepared to ask Dr. Kissinger to conduct the discussions.

At the same time, Dr. Kissinger had been asked to tell them in all solemnity that if by November 1, no major progress has been made toward a solution, we will be compelled—with great reluctance—to take measures of the greatest consequences.

We had noticed that in their propaganda and in the Paris discussions, they were attempting to make this "Mr. Nixon's War." We did not believe that this was in their interest. If it is Mr. Nixon's War, he cannot afford not to win it. Dr. Kissinger then said, "you are a courageous, indeed a heroic people," and no one knows what the final result would be of such a sequence of events. We believe that such a tragic conflict to test each other can be avoided.

He wished to conclude with the same statement with which he began. If there are serious discussions we will make every effort to treat Hanoi with the respect and courtesy to which their sacrifices entitle them. In fairness and respect he must tell them that we cannot continue to accept the procedures that have characterized our contacts in the last 15 months after November 1. He also hoped that when we looked back on this conversation, we would consider it a turning point toward peace and reconciliation between our two peoples.

Xuan Thuy then asked whether Dr. Kissinger had finished, as he would like to ask a few questions for clarification. Dr. Kissinger said, "Please do," and noted that he had read Xuan Thuy's questions at the negotiations and they were always acute.

Xuan Thuy then said, "you say that between now and November 1, all problems will be settled, but at the same time, you say that from now to November 1, U.S. will withdraw troops in greater numbers than the 25,000 already withdrawn. What is the meaning of these two propositions?"

Dr. Kissinger replied that this was a sign of our good will and sincerity. But we would make no further concessions. Xuan Thuy said that he did not clearly understand. Dr. Kissinger then said that he had not said that all troops must be out by November 1 but that there must be an understanding by which it is clear *when* all troops will be out.

Xuan Thuy then asked whether he understood rightly that between now and November 1 the U.S. would withdraw more troops in a greater number than the 25,000. That is one question. Another is whether from now on there are meetings and discussions for settling these matters.

Dr. Kissinger said that we proposed between now and November 1 that we agree to make a serious major effort to agree on all essential matters. (We then propose that on issues of great consequence or issues of principle he would be prepared to come to Paris or any other place on weekends to discuss outstanding problems. This would not happen unless the issues were serious. (As Xuan Thuy did not appear

to have clearly understood, Dr. Kissinger repeated the statement.)) He then continued that we were proposing this so that before history and our conscience we could say that we had done everything possible to avoid what we must otherwise do. (Xuan Thuy smiled without mirth, and consulted Mai Van Bo.)

Xuan Thuy then asked if he might ask another question. "Do you mean that the Four Party Conference should go on as now and that besides this there be other discussions between the DRV and the US only?"

Dr. Kissinger replied that we now have the plenary discussions on Ave. Kleber in which the speeches made are not distinguished by their novelty. (Xuan Thuy smiled.) We have private discussions on the Ambassadorial level and we have started technical discussions between Habib and Ha Van Lau. If any one of these prove useful, they should be continued. If they believed that the existing forums lend themselves to a solution, we have no interest in complicating the situation. If it should prove possible to avoid repetition of some of the speeches released by both sides, we would be prepared to open another forum provided this promised to achieve a rapid solution on issues of great importance. As for his own participation, his other duties did not permit him to spend considerable time on negotiations in which issues were not clearly defined. The technical execution could be carried out in existing forums. His participation would have to remain secret and on some occasions, because of his other responsibilities, he would be replaced by someone who would have the full confidence of the President himself.

Xuan Thuy said that Dr. Kissinger had referred to the neutralization of Vietnam and he would like to understand further what was meant.

Dr. Kissinger said that Xuan Thuy had raised this question with Sainteny when they had met previously. He simply wanted to say that we agreed with it in principle, and were prepared to discuss it. But we did not think that this was the occasion for negotiations on it. In any event, he could tell them that we do not intend to maintain bases in Vietnam.

Xuan Thuy said that Dr. Kissinger had referred to negotiations "at the highest level". Dr. Kissinger reiterated that he was speaking *on behalf* of the highest U.S. level. He could also say that we would be prepared to send an emissary to meet for example with their Foreign Minister, or Prime Minister, provided that there was some assurance that this would lead to a rapid conclusion. At this point it would probably be best to narrow the issues of disagreement on major issues by existing procedures he had outlined.

Xuan Thuy then asked whether he might express his views. He said that he had up to now listened very attentively to Dr. Kissinger.

He would like to have an exchange of views in a very straightforward and realistic way so that they could better understand each other's views, so as to contribute to a correct and rapid settlement of the Vietnamese problem. Vietnam is far from the U.S., more than 10,000 miles away. Vietnam had done no harm to the U.S. The U.S. Government in the past had intervened in the Vietnamese problem and had set up the administration of Ngo Dinh Diem and successive administrations in South Vietnam. Then the U.S. had brought in its advisers, military personnel and war-making units of U.S. combat troops. There was a half million U.S. troops in South Vietnam. In the meantime, the U.S. had launched a war of destruction against the DRV with its air and naval forces, thus creating a great deal of suffering for people in both South and North Vietnam. The Vietnamese people had been forced to fight against this intervention and aggression to defend their existence and the sacred rights of their fatherland. Dr. Kissinger had studied the history of their people and knew that the Vietnamese people had an age old history and that their history was characterized by struggles against foreign aggression. The Vietnamese people in this fight for the defense of their independence, freedom and peace had been united in rising against foreign aggression. They had never been subdued by any power or deception. Over the past 25 years the people had been continuously fighting for their just cause. What did they want? Nothing but their independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. These were recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements. Now in view of the special circumstances in Vietnam, they wanted the North to be independent, to live in peace and to be socialist. For South Vietnam, they wanted an independent, democratic, neutral, peaceful life. They understood a neutral South Vietnam to be a SVN without foreign troops, without military bases, without being involved in any way in any military alliance, without being under the protection of any military bloc. The reunification of Vietnam would be carried out step by step, by peaceful means and by mutual agreement between the two zones.

With regard to Laos, Xuan Thuy said they recognize the peaceful, independent sovereignty of Laos and the Geneva Agreements of 1962 on Laos. On Cambodia they recognize the peaceful sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cambodia in its present boundaries. They want to live in friendship and peace with all nations over the whole world. They wanted broad relations—economic, cultural, technical—with all nations. In a word, they want peace, not war. They had been actually compelled to fight by the American authorities and they want peace—but not peace at any price, peace with independence and freedom. He had several times told Ambassador Cabot Lodge that the NLF had presented its 10 points and that they approved them for an overall solution as they were logical and reasonable. If the 10 points were now taken as a basis, the war could come to a prompt and rapid solution.

If the war goes on, or is expanded, they would be forced to continue fighting in order to reach their objectives. They had sufficient determination to do so but they were also rich in goodwill.

Now, asked Xuan Thuy, how can the Vietnam problem be settled? There are two basic questions. The first question is the total withdrawal of all US forces and of the forces of their camp from South Vietnam. They agreed to the proposals set down—the 10 points—that is, all US troops must withdraw from South Vietnam without conditions.

Dr. Kissinger asked if he might interrupt on this point. He would comment on Xuan Thuy's exposé after he finished. If he might make a specific point and he would like Walters to repeat it in French, it was this: we were willing to discuss the 10 points, but we do not regard the 10 points as the Ten Commandments. On the matter of unconditional withdrawal he must tell them that he would not quarrel about the word unconditional. But they knew and we knew that there must be a quid pro quo for American withdrawal, a unilateral pull-out was out of the question. He was not there to argue phrases, but since we are speaking here in private, there must be a clear relationship between our withdrawals and theirs. They must understand this and not have any illusions.

Xuan Thuy replied that each side understands this matter in its own way. He did not understand that the 10 points were the Ten Commandments or the Bible but that the 10 points in view of the situation in Vietnam were logical and realistic. Therefore, he felt it necessary to explain that in the 10 points there were points 2 and 3. This Dr. Kissinger knew. (Dr. Kissinger said that he knew the 10 points but not as well as Xuan Thuy, who smiled.) Point 2 dealt with the armed forces of the US and other foreign countries in South Vietnam. These are the only foreign forces in South Vietnam. As for Point 3, it deals with Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam. This question will be settled by the Vietnamese parties among themselves. Points 2 and 3 belonged together. In the eight points of President Nixon, in the points dealing with the withdrawal of U.S. and allied troops, it is pointed out that some troops withdraw in twelve months; on the remaining troops, one doesn't know when. If the U.S. sets a time limit of twelve months for some and the remainder without time limit, then it looks as if the U.S. doesn't want to withdraw its troops completely.

Xuan Thuy referred to Dr. Kissinger's statement that the U.S. is prepared to withdraw all troops in South Vietnam and intends to maintain no bases. He took notes of this statement. But now he must ask about President Nixon's speech—why could the U.S. bring its troops in so quickly, but need so long to withdraw them. Why not do so in say five or six months?

Dr. Kissinger asked if he could interrupt. Xuan Thuy said he preferred to finish.

Now, Xuan Thuy continued, Mr. Advisor Kissinger says the U.S. has withdrawn 25,000 troops. Thuy had repeatedly commented that this 25,000 number is insignificant in comparison with the 540,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam. Even if another 25,000 or more were now withdrawn, it would still be insignificant. Therefore, Xuan Thuy had often said that the U.S. wants to carry out troop withdrawal in driblets, and wants to prolong its military occupation of South Vietnam. It has created doubt in their minds about the intentions of the U.S.

The second fundamental problem, Xuan Thuy continued, is the political regime in South Vietnam, the elections in South Vietnam. In the eight points of President Nixon this question is dealt with only superficially; they just say it will be settled by the Vietnamese themselves. They also say the U.S. is prepared to accept any result of elections. But the important question is: who will organize the elections? President Nixon said that the present Saigon administration is legal and constitutional, and that the present administration therefore has the right to organize elections. That is why President Nixon has agreed to the propositions of Nguyen van Thieu. Xuan Thuy said he thought that if they were really having a straightforward, real, frank discussion, one should not express himself in such a way. How can one say that the Saigon administration is legal and constitutional? It is well known to all the peoples of the world that the present Thieu–Ky–Huong administration, he said, is a warlike, dictatorial administration which oppressed anyone who speaks of coalition, neutrality or democratic liberties. If the Thieu–Ky–Huong administration remains as now, it would be difficult to settle the Vietnam problem.

Xuan Thuy added that he thought that Thieu–Ky–Huong must be changed (i.e. removed—trans.); they would consider the *remaining* administration as a reality, but this administration should change its policy and stand for peace, independence and neutrality. In their view—as mentioned in the 10 points—it is logical and reasonable to form a provisional government to hold elections. This is because the realities show on the one hand the PRG, on the other hand the Saigon administration. In addition there are other political forces. If the Saigon administration organizes the elections, then the PRG will not agree. If the PRG organizes the elections, then the Saigon administration does not agree. Therefore a provisional coalition government, composed of the PRG and the remainder of the Saigon government which is for peace, independence and neutrality, should organize the elections—then this is reasonable.

Xuan Thuy believed that if now these two key questions are settled, then peace will be rapidly restored. After the restoration of peace, Vietnam—both South and North—will begin the rebuilding of a new life. Xuan Thuy was sure that in this reconstruction they would establish relations—technical, commercial, economic, cultural—with all

countries, and that they would establish good relations and friendship with the US.

Xuan Thuy then said he was prepared to exchange views with Dr. Kissinger.

Dr. Kissinger replied that he appreciated what Xuan Thuy had said. He would like first to ask two clarifying questions.

Was Xuan Thuy saying that Thieu, Ky and Huong must be replaced before *any* new political construction, i.e. new political solution?

Xuan Thuy responded that the U.S. now says the PRG should hold talks with the Saigon administration. But the PRG says that the Thieu–Ky–Huong administration is warlike. They oppress anyone who speaks of coalition; therefore, if they were to talk to the Saigon administration, no settlement could be achieved. President Nixon had recently visited Saigon, he continued, to quiet this administration because it is torn by internal strife. This proves it has no popular support. This will create more problems for the U.S., including problems in Paris. That, he said, is why the PRG demands that Thieu–Ky–Huong be removed and the remaining administration change its policies to peace, independence and neutrality. The remaining administration could talk to the PRG.

Dr. Kissinger asked if he could put a second question to Xuan Thuy, one which was not perhaps polite but was asked in the spirit of frankness of this talk.

Xuan Thuy, he said, who had spent a long time in these negotiations, knew all the nuances. He did not. He therefore wondered whether in this meeting Xuan Thuy had said anything which was not already said at Avenue Kleber or in the private talks? If so, what was it?

Xuan Thuy said that the difference was that he had expanded for Dr. Kissinger's better comprehension on *how* U.S. troops must be withdrawn and how a provision coalition government should be organized. It is not the PRG which must organize it. This is the proposition of the PRG—and this proposition is logical and reasonable.

Dr. Kissinger asked if he were to understand that in this provisional coalition government, the PRG is to be represented together with what is left of the Saigon government.

Xuan Thuy said he would clarify: on the one hand, it is the PRG; on the other, the remainder of the Saigon administration which would have changed its policies and would stand for peace, neutrality and independence. These two would form the provisional coalition government.

Dr. Kissinger said he understood. He thought he should sum up a few things.

First, with respect to troop withdrawals—We have stated that we will withdraw our troops after a settlement. It is useless to discuss

whether we are serious. If they wish to know this, they should discuss it seriously. They could regulate our withdrawals by the speed of their own. If they did not wish to have U.S. and DRV troops treated as comparable, we could negotiate some correspondence. But there would be no withdrawal of U.S. forces without the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces. We do not insist on keeping U.S. forces in Vietnam after others are withdrawn. He could say on the highest authority that we seek no U.S. bases in Vietnam.

Secondly, Dr. Kissinger said he must tell Xuan Thuy, so he would not be misled or confused by people who visited him, that we will *not* replace Thieu, Ky or Huong any more than we ask them to replace any individuals in the PRG.

At the same time, he wanted to repeat what he had said earlier: any settlement must reflect the existing balance of political forces. We have no intention of humiliating anyone.

As he had understood Xuan Thuy's exposition, and as he had expounded also, there are two problems. One has to do with the withdrawal of forces, the other with a political solution. Xuan Thuy believes we have not been sufficiently precise on the issue of withdrawal. We believe they have been too precise on the question of a political solution. (Xuan Thuy laughed.) If we are to complete the major part of our work by November 1, we should stop talking about points and start talking about the problems. He believed they understood what we have in mind with respect to the withdrawal of forces. It remains therefore a question of finding some formula for establishing a relation between their forces and our forces.

The problem is of course much more complicated, Dr. Kissinger added, and this meeting is not the occasion to solve it. It must be done on the basis of recognition of the realities in South Vietnam—of the government in Saigon and of other political forces. With this accepted, we will work to find a solution reflecting the true wishes of the people of South Vietnam. We have too much respect for Xuan Thuy to believe that we could trick him into a solution which does not respect their dignity. But they cannot impose a dishonorable solution on us.

Dr. Kissinger suggested that they think over this conversation in this spirit. There are many ways of approaching a solution. They can speed up the work that goes on in existing forums, and they can be assured that it will be noticed in Washington. The President and he—Kissinger—read very carefully all that is said in Paris. If a very important issue is reached or there is something they wished to convey to the President but don't wish to say in a forum where too many people would know, he could arrange to be informed through Mr. Sainteny or General Walters, who remains in Paris. But it must be an important matter capable of being brought to a conclusion.

Xuan Thuy asked whether General Walters was present at the meeting. Dr. Kissinger said that he is our Defense Attaché at Paris. He was General Eisenhower's interpreter and is an acquaintance of President Nixon. He cannot discuss, but can take information, Dr. Kissinger said.

Xuan Thuy asked for his address. Dr. Kissinger promised it to him later. (At the end of the meeting, General Walters gave Mai Van Bo his telephone numbers at home and at the office.)

Dr. Kissinger wished to say one other thing. When he was a professor, he had started out with problems of philosophy and art. He recognized that the most difficult problems are not where good people meet evil people, but are where two strong people with strong convictions confront each other. (Xuan Thuy smiled.) We would prefer to have the Vietnamese as friends rather than as enemies, Dr. Kissinger continued. He was talking to Xuan Thuy so that at the end of the year—that is, after November 1—our two peoples who have no fundamental disagreement with each other, should not once again need to test each other's resolution. He believed that we must make an effort to find a solution between now and November 1.

Dr. Kissinger then said he had one practical problem to raise. Did they prefer Sainteny or General Walters as a means to communicate with him (Kissinger)? Or maybe not at all? Xuan Thuy said if he had anything to convey, he would say it to General Walters. Dr. Kissinger reiterated that General Walters cannot discuss; he can only take messages for Dr. Kissinger.

Xuan Thuy asked if Dr. Kissinger were finished. When told yes, Xuan Thuy said Dr. Kissinger had stated that the U.S. had just partially, then totally stopped the bombing, and had then withdrawn 25,000 troops. Dr. Kissinger had said this showed goodwill. But he had added that he had found no goodwill by the DRV. This was not true. The DRV rather had responded with great goodwill. Originally they demanded that the bombing be totally stopped before talks. But the U.S. only partially stopped it, and they had talked. Then, when the U.S. had stopped the bombing, we had said we would talk on November 6. But we didn't, and the conference only started two months later.

At the conference, Xuan Thuy continued, they have put forward their four points, the NLF five points, and now there are the overall ten points. The U.S. has its eight points and Saigon has proposed a number of things. But one must say that our plans of settlement—the eight points and Saigon's proposals—are not comprehensive at all.

The reason why the DRV agrees to the ten points of the NLF is that this overall solution is logical, reasonable and fair. It points out how military, political and other problems can be settled.

Dr. Kissinger noted that it has only one defect—we don't agree with it. Xuan Thuy smiled.

Xuan Thuy said there is a contradiction in our ideas. On the one hand, there is the rapid withdrawal of US and other countries' troops from Vietnam and an end to the war. (Dr. Kissinger interjected "and DRV" after "troops" in the preceding sentence.) On the other hand, Xuan Thuy said, we wish to consolidate the puppet government. How?

Dr. Kissinger said that this is our problem. We are not saying that we insist on any particular government being maintained after a settlement. But we will not—because it is beyond our power and for other reasons—replace Thieu and Ky and Huong. We want the people of South Vietnam to choose their own government after a settlement.

Xuan Thuy said that this is what Ambassador Lodge had told him many times. And he had told Lodge many times what he had said.

Dr. Kissinger said yes, that if this were to be the discussion, there would not be a solution by November 1.

Xuan Thuy said he would like to state that last June he had gone to Hanoi to meet with his government. His government was aware of all the details of the Paris conference and was fully in agreement with the views he had expressed in this meeting. His government had reaffirmed that all the negotiations in Paris on the Vietnam problem are entrusted to him and Le Duc Tho as the men responsible. Therefore he had today listened to Dr. Kissinger's views. He will, he said, report Dr. Kissinger's remarks to his government in Hanoi. He said he was prepared to study Dr. Kissinger's views and at the same time wanted Dr. Kissinger to study his. What he had been saying at the meeting, he felt he had said straightforwardly and frankly.

Xuan Thuy suggested that they thank Mr. Sainteny, their host, who had provided an opportunity for the meeting.

He said that he did wish to meet with Dr. Kissinger again if we can make progress.

Dr. Kissinger then asked Xuan Thuy to keep this discussion in absolute confidence and not to refer to it in other discussions which were taking place or to speak of it to anyone else.

Xuan Thuy agreed and added that when the private discussions became known it was not through them and if there were a leak it was in Washington. Dr. Kissinger said that they were right and this was the first agreement they had reached (humorously). He could assure him that this discussion would not leak from Washington.

Dr. Kissinger said that now that they had finished the formal discussion he would like to say something as a former professor who had studied diplomatic history. He could appreciate a good negotiator. If he understood what Xuan Thuy had said it was to ask for the impossible

and finally to agree to the barely conceivable as a major concession. Xuan Thuy smiled briefly.

Xuan Thuy said that he wanted to explain this to Dr. Kissinger so that he could have a better understanding of the 10 points of the NLF, of which they approved. As he had told Dr. Kissinger at the beginning there were two possibilities. It would be good if both sides could reach agreement on the basis of the 10 points, then a real agreement could be rapidly reached. If this were not possible, then the war could go on but they want the first possibility as peace is much better. If they could discuss and agree on military and political problems a settlement would be prompt. He had once told Ambassador Cabot Lodge that for questions regarding South Vietnam the U.S. should enter talks with the Provisional Revolutionary Government but they had accepted talks between the DRVN and the U.S. because the U.S. wanted them.

Dr. Kissinger said that we appreciated the meeting and he thought that they understood one another. He saw no further progress possible at this meeting. He understood that this was a serious problem for which their people had fought with great courage and on our side, too, we had suffered a great deal. He believed that the essential positions are clear and we would have to see in the next three months whether they were reconcilable. We have indicated a possible way by which this could happen. He wanted to tell Xuan Thuy of the President's sincerity but equally of his determination. He would also like to tell him personally of his respect for him and his people. This will continue whether they found a way to be friends or whether fate forces us into an expanded confrontation.

Xuan Thuy said that their aspirations were for independence and peace, and Dr. Kissinger had said that neither side should humiliate the other side. Ambassador Cabot Lodge had once said to him that they were trying to force the U.S. to surrender. He had told him that he had no such idea. On the contrary, they were continuing to create favorable conditions for the U.S. to withdraw its troops. They had experienced 25 years of war, and therefore their aspirations for peace are real.

Dr. Kissinger then said that he suggested that they think about their discussion and we would watch what goes on at the meetings with great care. If Xuan Thuy thought another such discussion would be helpful he could call General Walters and we would arrange a visit and a meeting place, either there or at some other place. This discussion should be on matters beyond what is being discussed in the normal meetings. If they made a step significantly different from the usual steps they would find that we would meet them with a spirit of good will.

Xuan Thuy said that the same was true for them. But on our side we had only talked about methods for taking a step forward but had not offered any concrete step.

Dr. Kissinger said that President Nixon had made a proposal; we had said that we would recognize a free political process. We had stated propositions. He could not accept that we had made no propositions. We must now see where we must go. He did not want to get into detailed negotiations at this meeting. Dr. Kissinger repeated that if they showed willingness to achieve a reasonable compromise, we would not try to take advantage of them or to humiliate them.

After parting amenities the Vietnamese expressed the desire to leave first without taking leave of Mr. Sainteny as they would thank him when they saw him again.

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107. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, August 7, 1969.

SUBJECT

General Wheeler's Assessment of the Soviet Role in The Paris Negotiations

Attached is General Wheeler's assessment of the Soviet role in the Paris negotiations[2] which was sent to me by Mel Laird during your trip.

General Wheeler makes the following points:

—The premise for total cessation of hostile acts against North Vietnam has been violated.

—The Soviet Union has relaxed pressure on North Vietnam.

—Without support given by the Soviet Union, the North Vietnamese military effort would collapse within a few months.

—Immediate diplomatic action should be directed at the Soviet Union to press the North Vietnamese to pursue meaningful negotiations.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 138, Vietnam Country Files, Vol. IX, 8/1/69–8/31/69. Secret; Sensitive. The following handwritten note appears on the memorandum: "ret 8/20 Pres has not seen." On August 12 Kissinger sent Laird a short memorandum that read: "I have shown both your memorandum and the attachment to the President, who agrees with your assessment that General Wheeler has written an illuminating and important report." (Ibid.)

[2] Attached but not printed was CM–4433–69, a July 14 memorandum from Wheeler to Laird.

Mr. Kissinger stated that the President had said in response to questions from Ceausescu[2] that we would not accept the formation of a *negotiated* coalition government or a *unilateral* withdrawal of forces. He was flat on this.

Mr. Habib said that they had not yet used their authority to offer to pass messages on a political settlement from the other side to the GVN. They might use it later. Mr. Kissinger did not object, but asked that if done, it be done coldly and precisely.

Mr. Habib said that the North Vietnamese had not yet gotten the message on our position, but he thinks they are getting it. Mr. Kissinger said that if they make it "Nixon's War," he may try to win it. He does not want to see Communist troops in Saigon.

In response to Mr. Habib's question, Mr. Kissinger said we should not yet indicate we have nothing more to say. But we should shut off their endless speeches about our sincerity and avoid being placed on the defensive. The key is to convince them that the framework is not to be changed.

Ambassador Lodge said that they will never agree to really free elections, and we shall therefore never see them. But we may get a mixed commission of some sort. Mr. Kissinger said he did not expect to see elections either. There will be no winner-take-all solution.

Mr. Habib agreed that we must convince them that the President can't hold still after November 1.

Mr. Kaplan and General Weyand[3] joined the conversation at this point. Mr. Kissinger said that Kaplan should hit hard the theme of "no more unilateral concessions" in his dealings with the press.

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[2] Reference is to questions asked by President Nicolae Ceausescu of Nixon during a discussion on Vietnam at a meeting in Bucharest, Romania, August 3. A memorandum of discussion of that meeting is printed in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, Vol. XLI.

[3] Lieutenant General Frederick C. Weyand, Military Adviser to the U.S. Paris Peace Delegation, and Harold Kaplan, the delegation's press spokesman.

105. Notes of a Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, August 5, 1969, 6:50 p.m.

[Omitted here is brief discussion unrelated to the Kissinger–Xuan Thuy conversation.]

K said he wanted to give P brief rundown on his talk—spent 3 and a half hours with their Chief negotiator.[2] K said it was at Sainteny's home and there four of them present—including interpreter and note taker. K said he made presentation along line he had shown to P on plane and similar to what P said to Ceausescu.[3] K said he laid down deadline on them very hard. K said they asked 8 clarifying questions and then launched into usual line. K said he told them if they had nothing new to say, they were speaking in wrong forum and he would leave. K said in every case when he got tough, he moved back. He indicated he was extremely eager to talk again but had no authority yet and wanted to go back to Hanoi. K said he is writing long report now. K said one of his assistants who was present feels this was most conciliatory they have ever been. K said while none of this proves anything before he would have said the chances were one in ten and now he thinks they are one in four or three that this thing will work. P asked what will happen. K said one interesting thing was they said when they want to get in touch again they would prefer to get in touch thru Walters rather than Sainteny. K said they had number of modifications in their negotiating position, but it is not enough for us yet. P said this movement has not been made to Lodge and K said right. He saw Habib right after meeting and K is sure of that. P said not to tell them a thing about it. K said he just went over positions and in abstract way said let me understand position exactly. K said they tried to draw him into discussion about ten points and K told them these are ten points and not ten commandments and we will not talk about them as only basis for solution. K said he told them it is their turn to make proposal now, etc. K said he told them toward end of this year will face another test of strength. K said every time he did that, other side pulled back. P said it looks to him as though they will try to diddle us along, but this also proves that Lodge has not been tough enough. K said he told them Pres will not withdraw troops unilaterally and will not replace Thieu—

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 360, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File, Aug. 1969. No classification marking.

[2] With Xuan Thuy; see Document 106 for the formal report to the President.

[3] See footnote 2, Document 104.

this will not happen and they have to face as fact of life. K said they will get Romanian report shortly.[4] K said if we do not hear within four weeks or there is no movement at Paris. Pres interrupted to ask K what his guess is—will they want to talk to K again. K said he suggested that they do normal negotiation in Paris and if they reach point where they want to tell us something quite new, they get in touch with K. K said he told them he did not want to come over there to hear the same old thing. P said he agreed completely with this. K said if they get in touch and ask to see him it would be the first time in 18 months that they have asked to see us—the other meetings have been at our request. P said he wants Lodge instructed to that effect and to stop begging. K said he told Lodge of change P had made in Saigon statement[5]—also that P has said he has gone as far as he can go.

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to the Kissinger–Xuan Thuy conversation. Kissinger briefed the President on his talks with Pompidou who agreed that there would be no further concessions on Vietnam and offered to arrange for contacts with the North Vietnamese, if required. The President and Kissinger agreed that if the story about the Kissinger–Xuan Thuy meeting broke, they would say that Kissinger had dinner with Sainteny, the North Vietnamese were present, and they had a "social chat." Both Kissinger and Nixon also agreed not to tell Laird about the meeting in Paris.]

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[4] Apparently a Romanian report of the Kissinger–Xuan Thuy conversation, not further identified.

[5] Apparent reference to a change in Nixon's statement on arrival at Saigon on July 30. The text of the statement is in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 584–585.

106. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, August 6, 1969.

SUBJECT

Meeting in Paris with North Vietnamese[2]

Attached is the full account of my conversation at Paris with Xuan Thuy and Mai Van Bo.

The following points seem to me to be of particular significance:

—Xuan Thuy did not hit back hard at my statements about the necessity for us to take actions of gravest consequence if there is not major progress by November 1. He did say that if we do not agree to a solution on the basis of the NLF ten points, they will have no choice but to continue to fight. But he did not press this point strongly.

—Although he "explained" the ten points to me, he did not do so very aggressively. He stated that he did not regard them as the "ten commandments" after I said that we did not so regard them.

—Xuan Thuy indicated a desire to see me again, "if we can make progress."

—The meeting was business-like and serious, but conducted in a fairly easy atmosphere.

—Xuan Thuy emphasized the question of troop withdrawals and political settlement, calling for unconditional U.S. withdrawal and on the removal of Thieu, Ky and Huong. He also expressed particular interest in our views on neutralization. He said that they wanted the North to be socialist, among other things, and the South to be democratic. This distinction may not mean anything but is nonetheless noteworthy.

—Xuan Thuy for the first time hinted at some linkage between the withdrawal of our forces and theirs (points two and three of their ten points). While he was vague on specifics, the message was clear and significant.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 863, For the President's File, Vietnam Negotiations, Camp David Memcons, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. The memorandum is not initialed by Kissinger.

[2] The decision for Kissinger to meet with Xuan Thuy in Paris was part of the initiative with Sainteny; see Document 97. Initially Nixon and Kissinger wanted Sainteny to travel to Hanoi on their behalf to deliver Nixon's letter (see footnote 4, Document 97), but the North Vietnamese would not give Sainteny a visa and the letter was delivered to Mai Van Bo in Paris instead. Nixon and Kissinger then asked Sainteny to arrange a meeting between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. Kissinger met Xuan Thuy instead since Le Duc Tho left Paris for Hanoi. (Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 277–278)

—He emphasized their desire for good relations—including technical, economic and cultural relations—between us once peace is achieved and reconstruction began.

—He preferred General Walters over Sainteny as a contact point.

Attachment

Memorandum of Conversation

Paris, August 4, 1969.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Major General Vernon Walters
Mr. William A.K. Lake

Xuan Thuy
Mai Van Bo
Vietnamese Notetaker
Vietnamese Interpreter

Dr. Kissinger opened the conversation by saying that he appreciated the opportunity of seeing Mr. Xuan Thuy and to be able to have direct discussions. He had known Mai Van Bo since 1967. He had always found him to show great diplomatic skill and subtlety. Dr. Kissinger said he would like to say a personal word before getting into the matter which had brought him there. He had been concerned with peace in Vietnam since 1965. Anyone who has followed Vietnamese history, particularly the events of the last five years, must be aware of the courage and dignity of the Vietnamese people. He was fully aware that after all that had happened, there was a great amount of distrust between our two peoples. But any discussions will be conducted on our side with respect for the courage and dignity of the Vietnamese people. He wondered whether there had been any answer to the letter from our President which had been delivered in Paris two weeks before. Xuan Thuy said that President Nixon's letter had been forwarded to Hanoi. It was not dated. Dr. Kissinger said the letter had actually been written three days before it had been delivered. Perhaps he should say a few things which President Nixon had asked him personally to convey.

Dr. Kissinger said that Washington had read with great care the statements that had been made at the plenary sessions and in the private meetings. Hanoi had often questioned our good will and our sincerity. It was hard for us to judge whether they did this for psychological effect or to what degree they really believed this. Dr. Kissinger said that he was there to tell them that we sincerely wanted peace and were approaching it with an attitude of good will, but he was also there to tell them how the situation appeared to us.

On November 1, 1969, the negotiations which led to the end of the bombing would be one year old. During this period, the U.S. had made what we consider to be significant moves. We had ended reinforcements, we had a partial bombing halt, then a total bombing halt, and the withdrawal of 25,000 combat forces. We had offered to accept the result of free elections. To us it looks as if there had been no significant response. It is in the long term intolerable for us to be treated at every discussion like school boys who are taking an examination in the ten points of the NLF. We were willing to discuss their ten points but we also wanted a discussion of the proposals our side had made. Therefore, he was here to suggest to them from the highest possible level and in all sincerity that we attempt to make another effort to settle this conflict by the time the bombing halt is one year old—that is to say, by the 1st of November. As part of this effort, we would like to answer some of the questions which had been put to us by their side on various occasions. (Dr. Kissinger commented here that he was reading from notes which had been approved personally by the President):

—The United States is willing to withdraw all of its forces without exception from Vietnam as part of a program for the removal of all outside forces from Vietnam.

—The United States is prepared to accept any outcome of a free political process. In defining the political process, he would like to set forth a few propositions:

a. We realize that neither side can be expected to give up at the conference table what had not been conceded on the battlefield.

b. We believe that a fair political process must register the existing relationship of political forces.

c. We realize that we will differ with them on how to achieve this but neither side should be asked to accept the proposition that it can be defeated without noticing it. We are not asking them to disband the organized Communist forces and they should not ask us to disband the organized non-Communist forces.

—We remain prepared, as we had said, to discuss the ten points together with our own points. In order to show our good will in the period between now and November 1, we will withdraw somewhat larger forces than we have already withdrawn and reduce our B–52 and tactical air operations by 10%.

In order to expedite negotiations, the President is ready to open another channel of contact with them. He is prepared to appoint a high-level emissary who would be authorized to negotiate a conclusion. This special contact makes sense only if negotiations are serious. If this contact takes place, the President is prepared to adjust military operations in order to facilitate the negotiations. If the objective was sufficiently serious and the conclusion sufficiently imminent, the President is prepared to ask Dr. Kissinger to conduct the discussions.

At the same time, Dr. Kissinger had been asked to tell them in all solemnity that if by November 1, no major progress has been made toward a solution, we will be compelled—with great reluctance—to take measures of the greatest consequences.

We had noticed that in their propaganda and in the Paris discussions, they were attempting to make this "Mr. Nixon's War." We did not believe that this was in their interest. If it is Mr. Nixon's War, he cannot afford not to win it. Dr. Kissinger then said, "you are a courageous, indeed a heroic people," and no one knows what the final result would be of such a sequence of events. We believe that such a tragic conflict to test each other can be avoided.

He wished to conclude with the same statement with which he began. If there are serious discussions we will make every effort to treat Hanoi with the respect and courtesy to which their sacrifices entitle them. In fairness and respect he must tell them that we cannot continue to accept the procedures that have characterized our contacts in the last 15 months after November 1. He also hoped that when we looked back on this conversation, we would consider it a turning point toward peace and reconciliation between our two peoples.

Xuan Thuy then asked whether Dr. Kissinger had finished, as he would like to ask a few questions for clarification. Dr. Kissinger said, "Please do," and noted that he had read Xuan Thuy's questions at the negotiations and they were always acute.

Xuan Thuy then said, "you say that between now and November 1, all problems will be settled, but at the same time, you say that from now to November 1, U.S. will withdraw troops in greater numbers than the 25,000 already withdrawn. What is the meaning of these two propositions?"

Dr. Kissinger replied that this was a sign of our good will and sincerity. But we would make no further concessions. Xuan Thuy said that he did not clearly understand. Dr. Kissinger then said that he had not said that all troops must be out by November 1 but that there must be an understanding by which it is clear *when* all troops will be out.

Xuan Thuy then asked whether he understood rightly that between now and November 1 the U.S. would withdraw more troops in a greater number than the 25,000. That is one question. Another is whether from now on there are meetings and discussions for settling these matters.

Dr. Kissinger said that we proposed between now and November 1 that we agree to make a serious major effort to agree on all essential matters. (We then propose that on issues of great consequence or issues of principle he would be prepared to come to Paris or any other place on weekends to discuss outstanding problems. This would not happen unless the issues were serious. (As Xuan Thuy did not appear

to have clearly understood, Dr. Kissinger repeated the statement.)) He then continued that we were proposing this so that before history and our conscience we could say that we had done everything possible to avoid what we must otherwise do. (Xuan Thuy smiled without mirth, and consulted Mai Van Bo.)

Xuan Thuy then asked if he might ask another question. "Do you mean that the Four Party Conference should go on as now and that besides this there be other discussions between the DRV and the US only?"

Dr. Kissinger replied that we now have the plenary discussions on Ave. Kleber in which the speeches made are not distinguished by their novelty. (Xuan Thuy smiled.) We have private discussions on the Ambassadorial level and we have started technical discussions between Habib and Ha Van Lau. If any one of these prove useful, they should be continued. If they believed that the existing forums lend themselves to a solution, we have no interest in complicating the situation. If it should prove possible to avoid repetition of some of the speeches released by both sides, we would be prepared to open another forum provided this promised to achieve a rapid solution on issues of great importance. As for his own participation, his other duties did not permit him to spend considerable time on negotiations in which issues were not clearly defined. The technical execution could be carried out in existing forums. His participation would have to remain secret and on some occasions, because of his other responsibilities, he would be replaced by someone who would have the full confidence of the President himself.

Xuan Thuy said that Dr. Kissinger had referred to the neutralization of Vietnam and he would like to understand further what was meant.

Dr. Kissinger said that Xuan Thuy had raised this question with Sainteny when they had met previously. He simply wanted to say that we agreed with it in principle, and were prepared to discuss it. But we did not think that this was the occasion for negotiations on it. In any event, he could tell them that we do not intend to maintain bases in Vietnam.

Xuan Thuy said that Dr. Kissinger had referred to negotiations "at the highest level". Dr. Kissinger reiterated that he was speaking *on behalf* of the highest U.S. level. He could also say that we would be prepared to send an emissary to meet for example with their Foreign Minister, or Prime Minister, provided that there was some assurance that this would lead to a rapid conclusion. At this point it would probably be best to narrow the issues of disagreement on major issues by existing procedures he had outlined.

Xuan Thuy then asked whether he might express his views. He said that he had up to now listened very attentively to Dr. Kissinger.

He would like to have an exchange of views in a very straightforward and realistic way so that they could better understand each other's views, so as to contribute to a correct and rapid settlement of the Vietnamese problem. Vietnam is far from the U.S., more than 10,000 miles away. Vietnam had done no harm to the U.S. The U.S. Government in the past had intervened in the Vietnamese problem and had set up the administration of Ngo Dinh Diem and successive administrations in South Vietnam. Then the U.S. had brought in its advisers, military personnel and war-making units of U.S. combat troops. There was a half million U.S. troops in South Vietnam. In the meantime, the U.S. had launched a war of destruction against the DRV with its air and naval forces, thus creating a great deal of suffering for people in both South and North Vietnam. The Vietnamese people had been forced to fight against this intervention and aggression to defend their existence and the sacred rights of their fatherland. Dr. Kissinger had studied the history of their people and knew that the Vietnamese people had an age old history and that their history was characterized by struggles against foreign aggression. The Vietnamese people in this fight for the defense of their independence, freedom and peace had been united in rising against foreign aggression. They had never been subdued by any power or deception. Over the past 25 years the people had been continuously fighting for their just cause. What did they want? Nothing but their independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. These were recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements. Now in view of the special circumstances in Vietnam, they wanted the North to be independent, to live in peace and to be socialist. For South Vietnam, they wanted an independent, democratic, neutral, peaceful life. They understood a neutral South Vietnam to be a SVN without foreign troops, without military bases, without being involved in any way in any military alliance, without being under the protection of any military bloc. The reunification of Vietnam would be carried out step by step, by peaceful means and by mutual agreement between the two zones.

With regard to Laos, Xuan Thuy said they recognize the peaceful, independent sovereignty of Laos and the Geneva Agreements of 1962 on Laos. On Cambodia they recognize the peaceful sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cambodia in its present boundaries. They want to live in friendship and peace with all nations over the whole world. They wanted broad relations—economic, cultural, technical—with all nations. In a word, they want peace, not war. They had been actually compelled to fight by the American authorities and they want peace—but not peace at any price, peace with independence and freedom. He had several times told Ambassador Cabot Lodge that the NLF had presented its 10 points and that they approved them for an overall solution as they were logical and reasonable. If the 10 points were now taken as a basis, the war could come to a prompt and rapid solution.

If the war goes on, or is expanded, they would be forced to continue fighting in order to reach their objectives. They had sufficient determination to do so but they were also rich in goodwill.

Now, asked Xuan Thuy, how can the Vietnam problem be settled? There are two basic questions. The first question is the total withdrawal of all US forces and of the forces of their camp from South Vietnam. They agreed to the proposals set down—the 10 points—that is, all US troops must withdraw from South Vietnam without conditions.

Dr. Kissinger asked if he might interrupt on this point. He would comment on Xuan Thuy's exposé after he finished. If he might make a specific point and he would like Walters to repeat it in French, it was this: we were willing to discuss the 10 points, but we do not regard the 10 points as the Ten Commandments. On the matter of unconditional withdrawal he must tell them that he would not quarrel about the word unconditional. But they knew and we knew that there must be a quid pro quo for American withdrawal, a unilateral pull-out was out of the question. He was not there to argue phrases, but since we are speaking here in private, there must be a clear relationship between our withdrawals and theirs. They must understand this and not have any illusions.

Xuan Thuy replied that each side understands this matter in its own way. He did not understand that the 10 points were the Ten Commandments or the Bible but that the 10 points in view of the situation in Vietnam were logical and realistic. Therefore, he felt it necessary to explain that in the 10 points there were points 2 and 3. This Dr. Kissinger knew. (Dr. Kissinger said that he knew the 10 points but not as well as Xuan Thuy, who smiled.) Point 2 dealt with the armed forces of the US and other foreign countries in South Vietnam. These are the only foreign forces in South Vietnam. As for Point 3, it deals with Vietnamese armed forces in South Vietnam. This question will be settled by the Vietnamese parties among themselves. Points 2 and 3 belonged together. In the eight points of President Nixon, in the points dealing with the withdrawal of U.S. and allied troops, it is pointed out that some troops withdraw in twelve months; on the remaining troops, one doesn't know when. If the U.S. sets a time limit of twelve months for some and the remainder without time limit, then it looks as if the U.S. doesn't want to withdraw its troops completely.

Xuan Thuy referred to Dr. Kissinger's statement that the U.S. is prepared to withdraw all troops in South Vietnam and intends to maintain no bases. He took notes of this statement. But now he must ask about President Nixon's speech—why could the U.S. bring its troops in so quickly, but need so long to withdraw them. Why not do so in say five or six months?

Dr. Kissinger asked if he could interrupt. Xuan Thuy said he preferred to finish.

Now, Xuan Thuy continued, Mr. Advisor Kissinger says the U.S. has withdrawn 25,000 troops. Thuy had repeatedly commented that this 25,000 number is insignificant in comparison with the 540,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam. Even if another 25,000 or more were now withdrawn, it would still be insignificant. Therefore, Xuan Thuy had often said that the U.S. wants to carry out troop withdrawal in driblets, and wants to prolong its military occupation of South Vietnam. It has created doubt in their minds about the intentions of the U.S.

The second fundamental problem, Xuan Thuy continued, is the political regime in South Vietnam, the elections in South Vietnam. In the eight points of President Nixon this question is dealt with only superficially; they just say it will be settled by the Vietnamese themselves. They also say the U.S. is prepared to accept any result of elections. But the important question is: who will organize the elections? President Nixon said that the present Saigon administration is legal and constitutional, and that the present administration therefore has the right to organize elections. That is why President Nixon has agreed to the propositions of Nguyen van Thieu. Xuan Thuy said he thought that if they were really having a straightforward, real, frank discussion, one should not express himself in such a way. How can one say that the Saigon administration is legal and constitutional? It is well known to all the peoples of the world that the present Thieu–Ky–Huong administration, he said, is a warlike, dictatorial administration which oppressed anyone who speaks of coalition, neutrality or democratic liberties. If the Thieu–Ky–Huong administration remains as now, it would be difficult to settle the Vietnam problem.

Xuan Thuy added that he thought that Thieu–Ky–Huong must be changed (i.e. removed—trans.); they would consider the *remaining* administration as a reality, but this administration should change its policy and stand for peace, independence and neutrality. In their view—as mentioned in the 10 points—it is logical and reasonable to form a provisional government to hold elections. This is because the realities show on the one hand the PRG, on the other hand the Saigon administration. In addition there are other political forces. If the Saigon administration organizes the elections, then the PRG will not agree. If the PRG organizes the elections, then the Saigon administration does not agree. Therefore a provisional coalition government, composed of the PRG and the remainder of the Saigon government which is for peace, independence and neutrality, should organize the elections—then this is reasonable.

Xuan Thuy believed that if now these two key questions are settled, then peace will be rapidly restored. After the restoration of peace, Vietnam—both South and North—will begin the rebuilding of a new life. Xuan Thuy was sure that in this reconstruction they would establish relations—technical, commercial, economic, cultural—with all

countries, and that they would establish good relations and friendship with the US.

Xuan Thuy then said he was prepared to exchange views with Dr. Kissinger.

Dr. Kissinger replied that he appreciated what Xuan Thuy had said. He would like first to ask two clarifying questions.

Was Xuan Thuy saying that Thieu, Ky and Huong must be replaced before *any* new political construction, i.e. new political solution?

Xuan Thuy responded that the U.S. now says the PRG should hold talks with the Saigon administration. But the PRG says that the Thieu–Ky–Huong administration is warlike. They oppress anyone who speaks of coalition; therefore, if they were to talk to the Saigon administration, no settlement could be achieved. President Nixon had recently visited Saigon, he continued, to quiet this administration because it is torn by internal strife. This proves it has no popular support. This will create more problems for the U.S., including problems in Paris. That, he said, is why the PRG demands that Thieu–Ky–Huong be removed and the remaining administration change its policies to peace, independence and neutrality. The remaining administration could talk to the PRG.

Dr. Kissinger asked if he could put a second question to Xuan Thuy, one which was not perhaps polite but was asked in the spirit of frankness of this talk.

Xuan Thuy, he said, who had spent a long time in these negotiations, knew all the nuances. He did not. He therefore wondered whether in this meeting Xuan Thuy had said anything which was not already said at Avenue Kleber or in the private talks? If so, what was it?

Xuan Thuy said that the difference was that he had expanded for Dr. Kissinger's better comprehension on *how* U.S. troops must be withdrawn and how a provision coalition government should be organized. It is not the PRG which must organize it. This is the proposition of the PRG—and this proposition is logical and reasonable.

Dr. Kissinger asked if he were to understand that in this provisional coalition government, the PRG is to be represented together with what is left of the Saigon government.

Xuan Thuy said he would clarify: on the one hand, it is the PRG; on the other, the remainder of the Saigon administration which would have changed its policies and would stand for peace, neutrality and independence. These two would form the provisional coalition government.

Dr. Kissinger said he understood. He thought he should sum up a few things.

First, with respect to troop withdrawals—We have stated that we will withdraw our troops after a settlement. It is useless to discuss

whether we are serious. If they wish to know this, they should discuss it seriously. They could regulate our withdrawals by the speed of their own. If they did not wish to have U.S. and DRV troops treated as comparable, we could negotiate some correspondence. But there would be no withdrawal of U.S. forces without the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces. We do not insist on keeping U.S. forces in Vietnam after others are withdrawn. He could say on the highest authority that we seek no U.S. bases in Vietnam.

Secondly, Dr. Kissinger said he must tell Xuan Thuy, so he would not be misled or confused by people who visited him, that we will *not* replace Thieu, Ky or Huong any more than we ask them to replace any individuals in the PRG.

At the same time, he wanted to repeat what he had said earlier: any settlement must reflect the existing balance of political forces. We have no intention of humiliating anyone.

As he had understood Xuan Thuy's exposition, and as he had expounded also, there are two problems. One has to do with the withdrawal of forces, the other with a political solution. Xuan Thuy believes we have not been sufficiently precise on the issue of withdrawal. We believe they have been too precise on the question of a political solution. (Xuan Thuy laughed.) If we are to complete the major part of our work by November 1, we should stop talking about points and start talking about the problems. He believed they understood what we have in mind with respect to the withdrawal of forces. It remains therefore a question of finding some formula for establishing a relation between their forces and our forces.

The problem is of course much more complicated, Dr. Kissinger added, and this meeting is not the occasion to solve it. It must be done on the basis of recognition of the realities in South Vietnam—of the government in Saigon and of other political forces. With this accepted, we will work to find a solution reflecting the true wishes of the people of South Vietnam. We have too much respect for Xuan Thuy to believe that we could trick him into a solution which does not respect their dignity. But they cannot impose a dishonorable solution on us.

Dr. Kissinger suggested that they think over this conversation in this spirit. There are many ways of approaching a solution. They can speed up the work that goes on in existing forums, and they can be assured that it will be noticed in Washington. The President and he—Kissinger—read very carefully all that is said in Paris. If a very important issue is reached or there is something they wished to convey to the President but don't wish to say in a forum where too many people would know, he could arrange to be informed through Mr. Sainteny or General Walters, who remains in Paris. But it must be an important matter capable of being brought to a conclusion.

Xuan Thuy asked whether General Walters was present at the meeting. Dr. Kissinger said that he is our Defense Attaché at Paris. He was General Eisenhower's interpreter and is an acquaintance of President Nixon. He cannot discuss, but can take information, Dr. Kissinger said.

Xuan Thuy asked for his address. Dr. Kissinger promised it to him later. (At the end of the meeting, General Walters gave Mai Van Bo his telephone numbers at home and at the office.)

Dr. Kissinger wished to say one other thing. When he was a professor, he had started out with problems of philosophy and art. He recognized that the most difficult problems are not where good people meet evil people, but are where two strong people with strong convictions confront each other. (Xuan Thuy smiled.) We would prefer to have the Vietnamese as friends rather than as enemies, Dr. Kissinger continued. He was talking to Xuan Thuy so that at the end of the year—that is, after November 1—our two peoples who have no fundamental disagreement with each other, should not once again need to test each other's resolution. He believed that we must make an effort to find a solution between now and November 1.

Dr. Kissinger then said he had one practical problem to raise. Did they prefer Sainteny or General Walters as a means to communicate with him (Kissinger)? Or maybe not at all? Xuan Thuy said if he had anything to convey, he would say it to General Walters. Dr. Kissinger reiterated that General Walters cannot discuss; he can only take messages for Dr. Kissinger.

Xuan Thuy asked if Dr. Kissinger were finished. When told yes, Xuan Thuy said Dr. Kissinger had stated that the U.S. had just partially, then totally stopped the bombing, and had then withdrawn 25,000 troops. Dr. Kissinger had said this showed goodwill. But he had added that he had found no goodwill by the DRV. This was not true. The DRV rather had responded with great goodwill. Originally they demanded that the bombing be totally stopped before talks. But the U.S. only partially stopped it, and they had talked. Then, when the U.S. had stopped the bombing, we had said we would talk on November 6. But we didn't, and the conference only started two months later.

At the conference, Xuan Thuy continued, they have put forward their four points, the NLF five points, and now there are the overall ten points. The U.S. has its eight points and Saigon has proposed a number of things. But one must say that our plans of settlement—the eight points and Saigon's proposals—are not comprehensive at all.

The reason why the DRV agrees to the ten points of the NLF is that this overall solution is logical, reasonable and fair. It points out how military, political and other problems can be settled.

Dr. Kissinger noted that it has only one defect—we don't agree with it. Xuan Thuy smiled.

Xuan Thuy said there is a contradiction in our ideas. On the one hand, there is the rapid withdrawal of US and other countries' troops from Vietnam and an end to the war. (Dr. Kissinger interjected "and DRV" after "troops" in the preceding sentence.) On the other hand, Xuan Thuy said, we wish to consolidate the puppet government. How?

Dr. Kissinger said that this is our problem. We are not saying that we insist on any particular government being maintained after a settlement. But we will not—because it is beyond our power and for other reasons—replace Thieu and Ky and Huong. We want the people of South Vietnam to choose their own government after a settlement.

Xuan Thuy said that this is what Ambassador Lodge had told him many times. And he had told Lodge many times what he had said.

Dr. Kissinger said yes, that if this were to be the discussion, there would not be a solution by November 1.

Xuan Thuy said he would like to state that last June he had gone to Hanoi to meet with his government. His government was aware of all the details of the Paris conference and was fully in agreement with the views he had expressed in this meeting. His government had reaffirmed that all the negotiations in Paris on the Vietnam problem are entrusted to him and Le Duc Tho as the men responsible. Therefore he had today listened to Dr. Kissinger's views. He will, he said, report Dr. Kissinger's remarks to his government in Hanoi. He said he was prepared to study Dr. Kissinger's views and at the same time wanted Dr. Kissinger to study his. What he had been saying at the meeting, he felt he had said straightforwardly and frankly.

Xuan Thuy suggested that they thank Mr. Sainteny, their host, who had provided an opportunity for the meeting.

He said that he did wish to meet with Dr. Kissinger again if we can make progress.

Dr. Kissinger then asked Xuan Thuy to keep this discussion in absolute confidence and not to refer to it in other discussions which were taking place or to speak of it to anyone else.

Xuan Thuy agreed and added that when the private discussions became known it was not through them and if there were a leak it was in Washington. Dr. Kissinger said that they were right and this was the first agreement they had reached (humorously). He could assure him that this discussion would not leak from Washington.

Dr. Kissinger said that now that they had finished the formal discussion he would like to say something as a former professor who had studied diplomatic history. He could appreciate a good negotiator. If he understood what Xuan Thuy had said it was to ask for the impossible

and finally to agree to the barely conceivable as a major concession. Xuan Thuy smiled briefly.

Xuan Thuy said that he wanted to explain this to Dr. Kissinger so that he could have a better understanding of the 10 points of the NLF, of which they approved. As he had told Dr. Kissinger at the beginning there were two possibilities. It would be good if both sides could reach agreement on the basis of the 10 points, then a real agreement could be rapidly reached. If this were not possible, then the war could go on but they want the first possibility as peace is much better. If they could discuss and agree on military and political problems a settlement would be prompt. He had once told Ambassador Cabot Lodge that for questions regarding South Vietnam the U.S. should enter talks with the Provisional Revolutionary Government but they had accepted talks between the DRVN and the U.S. because the U.S. wanted them.

Dr. Kissinger said that we appreciated the meeting and he thought that they understood one another. He saw no further progress possible at this meeting. He understood that this was a serious problem for which their people had fought with great courage and on our side, too, we had suffered a great deal. He believed that the essential positions are clear and we would have to see in the next three months whether they were reconcilable. We have indicated a possible way by which this could happen. He wanted to tell Xuan Thuy of the President's sincerity but equally of his determination. He would also like to tell him personally of his respect for him and his people. This will continue whether they found a way to be friends or whether fate forces us into an expanded confrontation.

Xuan Thuy said that their aspirations were for independence and peace, and Dr. Kissinger had said that neither side should humiliate the other side. Ambassador Cabot Lodge had once said to him that they were trying to force the U.S. to surrender. He had told him that he had no such idea. On the contrary, they were continuing to create favorable conditions for the U.S. to withdraw its troops. They had experienced 25 years of war, and therefore their aspirations for peace are real.

Dr. Kissinger then said that he suggested that they think about their discussion and we would watch what goes on at the meetings with great care. If Xuan Thuy thought another such discussion would be helpful he could call General Walters and we would arrange a visit and a meeting place, either there or at some other place. This discussion should be on matters beyond what is being discussed in the normal meetings. If they made a step significantly different from the usual steps they would find that we would meet them with a spirit of good will.

Xuan Thuy said that the same was true for them. But on our side we had only talked about methods for taking a step forward but had not offered any concrete step.

Dr. Kissinger said that President Nixon had made a proposal; we had said that we would recognize a free political process. We had stated propositions. He could not accept that we had made no propositions. We must now see where we must go. He did not want to get into detailed negotiations at this meeting. Dr. Kissinger repeated that if they showed willingness to achieve a reasonable compromise, we would not try to take advantage of them or to humiliate them.

After parting amenities the Vietnamese expressed the desire to leave first without taking leave of Mr. Sainteny as they would thank him when they saw him again.

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107. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, August 7, 1969.

SUBJECT

General Wheeler's Assessment of the Soviet Role in The Paris Negotiations

Attached is General Wheeler's assessment of the Soviet role in the Paris negotiations[2] which was sent to me by Mel Laird during your trip.

General Wheeler makes the following points:

—The premise for total cessation of hostile acts against North Vietnam has been violated.

—The Soviet Union has relaxed pressure on North Vietnam.

—Without support given by the Soviet Union, the North Vietnamese military effort would collapse within a few months.

—Immediate diplomatic action should be directed at the Soviet Union to press the North Vietnamese to pursue meaningful negotiations.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 138, Vietnam Country Files, Vol. IX, 8/1/69–8/31/69. Secret; Sensitive. The following handwritten note appears on the memorandum: "ret 8/20 Pres has not seen." On August 12 Kissinger sent Laird a short memorandum that read: "I have shown both your memorandum and the attachment to the President, who agrees with your assessment that General Wheeler has written an illuminating and important report." (Ibid.)

[2] Attached but not printed was CM–4433–69, a July 14 memorandum from Wheeler to Laird.

108. Letter From the Head of the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam (Lodge) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Paris, August 9, 1969.

Dear Henry:

Herewith our analysis of your discussion with Xuan Thuy:

Thuy gave every sign of being intensely interested in all that you said. He surely did not miss the basic thrust of your message—including the reference to "Mr. Nixon's war" and to the deadline, although he obviously cannot know just what these statements mean.

He will report your statements to Hanoi. Nothing will happen until Hanoi completes its study of the President's letter, your message, and the other signals which it has been given—notably the President's statements in Saigon and the actions which we have been taking on the ground.

The North Vietnamese will surely not ignore the threats in your statement, even though Thuy did not respond directly to your words and did not discuss what should happen after November 1. To the extent that he did mention the date it was only to ask about what would be done before November 1.

But in two places he replied, although making sure each time to express good will and a preference for peace. Once he said, "If the war goes on, or is expanded, they would be forced to continue fighting in order to reach their objectives. They had sufficient determination to do so but they were also rich in good will." (page 5 of your notes) And again, after speaking of agreement on the basis of the 10 points, he said "If this were not possible, then the war would go on but they want the first possibility, as peace is much better." (page 12)

In this way Thuy is saying, and Hanoi will probably do the same, that they are prepared to negotiate (on terms which I will discuss below) but that they are also prepared to go on fighting.

Thus, while they will recognize the threat, they probably will not react by making a major step toward meeting our position on the issues. They are more likely to make tactical moves in order to hold off

[1] Source: Massachusetts Historical Society, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Reel 9. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. On August 7 Kissinger wrote Lodge a letter enclosing the memorandum of conversation of his August 4 meeting with Xuan Thuy (see attachment to Document 106). In his letter Kissinger requested Lodge and Habib's "assessment of the discussions as soon as practical." This letter was Lodge's response.

the "consequences" of which you spoke to Thuy. They might for example, begin to negotiate more actively (even with a special emissary) but not give away any substance. They may even calculate that we are bluffing. They could hold to their positions right up to the deadline and see how we act, knowing that a change on their part at the last minute might get us to hold off. Alternatively, they could refuse to make a major change and in effect dare us to act, believing that we could not sustain an escalation of the war, but being themselves ready to pay a short-term price, however high.

As regards negotiating, he did not give much. He recognized that you were not negotiating the issues with him at that moment, but he did wish to make some things clear.

One was their willingness to talk with us about everything. This suits them: they do not wish to talk with the present GVN about anything.

He also was quite interested in making sure that he understood the offer that emissaries should meet at a higher level. But he later emphasized the responsibility given to him and Le Duc Tho. This may be his way of knocking down the idea without, however, formally rejecting it. He would not have the authority to do this last out of hand.

He was probably not clear as to what the future at the Paris Meetings would be. Your explanation that we could narrow the issues of disagreement would not mean much to him. The issues of disagreement are already narrowed—what he is looking for is a further move on our part in their direction.

Thuy made a great point of singling out the two key issues. This is not new. But he explained what he meant in a way he has not done explicitly before and thus underlined the nature of their position and its significance.

Thus, on withdrawal he used some new words when he related points 2 and 3 of the ten points. This has always been implicit in their formulation of the ten points, and we have read it so, but he carried the argument a step further with you. In doing so, however, he was careful not to indicate in any way that they were prepared to engage in a step by step tacit withdrawal process. He left their withdrawal open, but gave no sign that it would be phased and geared to our withdrawal.

As regards a political settlement he went further than previously in explaining how a provisional "coalition government" could be formed. He did not wipe out the entire GVN—just decapitated it, while making clear that all the remaining administration would have to do would be to negotiate a provisional "coalition government" with the PRG. Note that the task for Saigon is to "talk" with the PRG. When he says the Saigon administration (renovated and decapitated) and the

PRG would "form" the provisional coalition government, he means they will decide on who shall be in it.[2]

It is not clear whether the PRG and the renovated Saigon administration would share in governing or just share in picking the provisional "coalition". On page 7 he says the "coalition" will be "composed of the PRG and the remainder of the Saigon government" but elsewhere (page 8) he says "the remaining administration could talk to the PRG." Further, he did not answer your question on the bottom of page 8 with a clear affirmative. Instead, he said the two "would form the provisional government."

I stress this because in the past the DRV and PRG have said that the PRG need not be represented in the provisional coalition government. Although Thuy usually chooses his words carefully, it is not certain what he means in this instance. He may be leaving the choice open (for what it may be worth) between a coalition of the PRG and of the remaining Saigon government, or the formation of a "coalition government" by means of the two sides choosing individuals for a temporary and limited purpose.

That is a detail, but one which I thought worth noting because of the trouble we have always encountered when we try to figure out exactly what they mean when they are being a bit ambiguous.

In any event, his attitude toward the present GVN is clear. However he dresses it up, he is calling for the removal of Thieu–Ky–Huong (by us) and the formation of the "peace cabinet" of which they have spoken before. And he adds the proviso that this "remaining administration should change its policy and stand for peace, independence and neutrality." In other words, not only must the present leadership go, but the "remaining administration" would have to be composed of people acceptable to the other side.

The emphasis on "provisional coalition government" is also nothing new. It is also the keystone of Hanoi's policy. Thuy's words make it even more evident that a political settlement goes before all. Withdrawal—even mutual withdrawal dressed up and camouflaged—is ne-

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[2] On August 12 Lodge sent Kissinger "a sequel to my letter of August 9," in which he noted that Xuan Thuy went "into greater detail regarding a political settlement than ever before, particularly as to the provisional so-called 'coalition government.'" Lodge suggested a "counter idea" which matched Xuan Thuy's details—a series of specific issues to be discussed with the GVN in an attempt to answer certain questions: Who would organize elections and under whose laws? How would the electoral commissions be chosen and what authority would they have? What kinds of elections—presidential or national assembly? What would the armed forces (including police) on both sides be doing? Lodge suggested clarifying these details with Thieu and then deciding with him what to tell Hanoi. (Massachusetts Historical Society, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Reel 9)

gotiable. But the hardness of the position on a political settlement emerges nonetheless.

Thuy also was careful to say (twice) why it would be "difficult" to settle the Viet-Nam problem with Thieu–Ky–Huong. It is because they are warlike; because they claim to be legal and have the right to organize elections; it is because they are against coalition, neutrality and democratic liberties. The stress is on "coalition" and who organizes election. Could it be that Thuy is saying that if Thieu would change his policy and accept a "provisional coalition government", then it would be possible to settle the problem with the present government? This is a question which has always been lurking in the background. I see no way of getting an answer now without playing into Hanoi's hands—even if we were to be willing to consider such a proposition.

It is clear that they are firm on a "provisional coalition" now. They leave a few cracks, but their objective is obvious. They heard you out on our unwillingness to replace the GVN leadership. Phil thinks that they do not yet believe us on this point. But they will think about it and they will also think about your statement (repeated) that "any settlement must reflect the existing balance of political forces." That will puzzle them—and they will try to parse it out and then relate it to their ideas.

Finally, they will think it all over carefully. We will get some answers—maybe here—but they will dribble out their response always trying to get us to be more "concrete". They are always seeking details and new formulations. That is as close as they seem ever to come to negotiation.

They will have well noted all that you said, particularly the points listed on page 2 of your notes and for which you cited specific Presidential approval. Some of this is new to them, for example, the statement on withdrawal of all forces "without exception", on registering the existing relationship of political forces, and not asking them to disband organized Communist forces.[3] They will think about these things, about "Mr. Nixon's war" about the November 1 deadline, and then they may make a small move. We will need to be alert to all shadings, but I do not anticipate any major breakthrough.

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[3] On August 11 Kissinger sent Lodge a letter thanking him for "his excellent analysis." Kissinger stated: "I am concerned, however, that there is one misunderstanding which probably resulted from imprecision in the transcript. When I spoke of 'organized forces', I was referring to organized *political* forces—the NLF. The point I was attempting to make was that since we have not insisted on dismemberment of the political forces of the other side, it is totally unacceptable that they, in turn, should insist on dismemberment of the current regime in South Vietnam. In this context I do not believe I have made any concessions beyond which have already been approved." (Ibid.)

My broad assessment as a result of the above analysis, therefore, is that no essential change of the DRV position emerges from what Xuan Thuy said to you—simply a few hints and shadings. What you said to him, of course, goes much farther than we have ever gone and is very new and important.

If this analysis and assessment of the meeting are correct, the question arises: what next?

One possibility is that the DRV will take the initiative to answer the President and you by a letter or by a request for a meeting.

If, on the other hand, Hanoi does not reply, we should consider whether I should ask for a private meeting with Xuan Thuy after I return here in late August. I would tell Thuy at such a meeting that we are interested in learning his government's reaction to the President's letter and to your presentation.

The DRV may reply by calling for a renewal of the Habib/Lau meetings on which they are now holding back. If they do, we should go ahead with our presentations and rebuttals as already approved. Habib might question Lau on Thuy's formulations with respect to a new so-called "coalition government". This should, of course, be cleared in advance with Thieu.

Another new element would be our confirmation, if asked by Lau, of the two new points you made to Thuy (without referring to your conversation): 1) that the US is prepared to withdraw *all* its forces if the DRV does so; and 2) that the US does not require that all Communist forces in the South be disbanded.

I believe that these actions would be our best sequel to the initiatives which the President and you have taken.

With warm regards,

As ever yours,

Henry Cabot Lodge[4]

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature. The signed copy is in the National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 861, For the President's File, Vietnam Negotiations, Camp David Memos, 1969–1970.

109. Backchannel Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Head of the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam (Lodge)[1]

Washington, August 14, 1969, 2335Z.

The President has asked that I forward to you the following message:

"I am in full agreement with Ambassador Bunker's views on the private talks as outlined in Saigon 16292[2] and have noted that instructions from State on this subject are generally consistent with Bunker's views. Nevertheless, I am reinforcing these views through a separate back channel message to you. I believe that the U.S. has been as forthcoming as can be reasonably expected in the talks thus far and direct that in subsequent meetings, Habib confine himself to confronting the other side with a number of direct questions designed to elicit their views. Lacking responsiveness on the part of the other side, Habib should avoid any reiteration of our position, avoid protestations of our good will, and avoid the hint of any new concessions on our part lacking reciprocity.["][3]

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 64, Memoranda to the President, 1969 August. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. In an attached August 15 covering memorandum to the President, Kissinger informed Nixon that "pursuant to our discussion, I sent messages to both Lodge and Bunker via back channels, informing them of your views on the conduct of the next secret meetings in Paris."

[2] In telegram 16292 from Saigon, August 13, Bunker agreed with Lodge's analysis that in Paris the DRV was interested in learning as much as possible about the U.S. position on a settlement, but he also "believed there was a tactical limit as to how far and how fast we go in opening our hand without any sign of reciprocal movement from the other side." Although he endorsed the idea of confronting the other side with a number of direct questions designed to elicit their views, he would not recommend going "on endlessly elaborating our views without receiving something in return." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 180, Paris Talks/Meetings, Private Paris Meetings, July–August 1969)

[3] Kissinger sent a similar backchannel message to Bunker on August 14. (Ibid.) In backchannel message Saigon 087, August 15, Bunker acknowledged receipt of Kissinger's message and commented: "I feel that the posture [the President] has defined of position to be taken in Paris is one most likely to elicit views of the other side and hence produce progress." In backchannel message 509 from Paris, August 15, Lodge acknowledged Nixon's instructions and noted he assumed it did not mean that Habib would not be precluded from brief restatements of U.S. positions, if the discussion called for it. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 64, Memoranda to the President, 1969 August)

110. Editorial Note

In late August 1969 Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield traveled to Cambodia. During his visit Mansfield spoke with Sihanouk for 2 hours, with the Prince dominating the conversation. According to the telegraphic report of their meeting, Sihanouk told Mansfield that the "main threat to Cambodia is presently Vietnamese communism" and he admitted "that North Vietnamese were violating Cambodia's frontiers, although he did not at first believe U.S. and other reports regarding use of his territory as a sanctuary." Sihanouk stated it was important to be able to talk to those with whom one disagrees. He had learned this from the break with the United States—Sihanouk interjected that he would never again break relations with the United States—and he explained Cambodia's official relations with the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. Sihanouk denied that arms transited through Sihanoukville to the Viet Cong, but he did admit there was arms trafficking within Cambodia in new Chinese weapons captured by Cambodian troops. Sihanouk then raised the issue of U.S. bombing of Cambodia. The relevant extract telegram reads as follows:

"Sihanouk pointed out to Senator Mansfield that there were not Cambodian protests of bombings in his country when these hit only VC's and not Cambodian villages or populations. He declared that much of his information regarding U.S. bombings in uninhabited regions of Cambodia came from U.S. press and magazines. He strongly requested the avoidance of incident involving Cambodian lives." (Telegram 26 from Phnom Penh, August 26; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 12, Geopolitical File, Cambodia, Bombing, 1969–1970)

Kissinger also reproduces this extract in *White House Years* (page 251) as part of his evidence that Sihanouk gave tacit approval to secret U.S. bombing of Cambodia.

111. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, August 30, 1969.

SUBJECT

Response from Ho Chi Minh

Attached is a translation of the response from Ho Chi Minh, received in Paris on August 30, 1969.

It is a very tough, almost insolent, message. It states only what the U.S. must do. It makes demands but no concessions. Although addressed to the President of the United States, it refers to "American governing circles." If one wished to look for silver linings, one could find some hope in the fact that this is the first communication we have received that has not linked the word "unconditional" with the call for our withdrawal from Vietnam. The last paragraph is rather conciliatory, although probably for the sake of symmetry.

The letter is disappointing in content, but does have the virtue that it can help demonstrate the necessity of whatever actions are taken in November.

Attachment

Letter From North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh to President Nixon

Hanoi, August 25, 1969.

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter.[2]

The war of aggression of the United States against our people, violating our fundamental national rights, still continues in South Vietnam. The United States continues to intensify military operations, the B–52 bombings[3] and the use of toxic chemical products multiply

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 106, Country Files, Vietnam, "S" Mister, Vol. I. Top Secret; Eyes Only; Nodis. A handwritten note on the memorandum reads: "President has seen."

[2] See footnote 4, Document 97.

[3] Nixon underlined the phrases "intensify military operations" and "the B–52 bombings."

the crimes against the Vietnamese people. The longer the war goes on, the more it accumulates the mourning and burdens of the American people. I am extremely indignant at the losses and destructions caused by the American troops to our people and our country. I am also deeply touched at the rising toll of death of young Americans who have fallen in Vietnam by reason of the policy of American governing circles.

Our Vietnamese people are deeply devoted to peace, a real peace with independence and real freedom. They are determined to fight to the end, without fearing the sacrifices and difficulties in order to defend their country and their sacred national rights.[4] The overall solution in ten points of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam is a logical and reasonable basis for the settlement of the Vietnamese problem. It has earned the sympathy and support of the peoples of the world.

In your letter you have expressed the desire to act for a just peace. For this the United States must cease the war of aggression and withdraw their troops from South Vietnam, respect the right of the population of the South and of the Vietnamese nation to decide for themselves, without foreign influence.[5] This is the correct manner of solving the Vietnamese problem in conformity with the national rights of the Vietnamese people, the interests of the United States and the hopes for peace of the peoples of the world. This is the path that will allow the United States to get out of the war with honor.

With good will on both sides we might arrive at common efforts in view of finding a correct solution of the Vietnam problem.

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[4] Nixon underlined the words "They are determined to fight to the end" and "fearing the sacri-, to defend, country, rights" in this sentence.

[5] Nixon underlined this sentence with the exception of "For this".

112. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, September 2, 1969.

SUBJECT

Military Options in Laos

Attached is a coordinated State/Defense/CIA analysis of military actions which might be undertaken in support of the Royal Laotian Government.[2]

I find this a surprisingly negative and unhelpful paper. A number of possible actions are listed: initiation of B–52 reconnaissance and strike operations, improvement of Aerial Reconnaissance Direction Finding (ARDF) capability, deployment of two Thai infantry battalions [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], provision of additional Thai air support of Laos, provision of Thai artillery support, provision of additional equipment to Laotian forces, and increasing Lao salaries and good allowances. However, all of the major moves are in effect ruled out, since the "cons" are listed in such a way as to outweigh the "pros," as follows:

—B–52 operations might result in further NVA escalation, and diplomatic complexities. In addition, there is a lack of suitable targets, and an excessive risk factor.

—Introduction of two Thai infantry battalions would provide a pretext for North Vietnamese escalation which Thai resources would be inadequate to meet. US air and logistical support would also be required.

—Additional Thai air support might tip the Thai hand if F–5's or F–86's were used, and the Thai allegedly would be unwilling to turn over their T–28's to the Lao unless higher-performance aircraft were provided them in return. The addition of these T–28's would not increase the total air effort in Laos.

—Provision of Thai artillery support in battery strength would not tactically be feasible and would invite NVA counteraction; anything less would be militarily unsound and would be opposed by the Thai.

What is left is provision of additional equipment to the Laotian forces, and increasing Lao salaries and food allowances. Even these

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1319, Unfiled Material, 1969, 3 of 19. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusive; Eyes Only. Sent for action.

[2] Dated August 19 and sent under Laird's signature; attached but not printed.

measures are said to cause problems due to the need to cut into US programs elsewhere and the additional budgetary and foreign exchange expenditures which would be entailed.

The analysis ends with these words:

"However, we would recommend that serious consideration be given to the feasibility of introducing additional modern equipment, increasing the Royal Lao tactical air capability, raising salaries and food allowances, and providing greater ARDF support in Northern Laos."

Cutting away the bureaucratese, this recommendation would provide for a limited military response to the critical situation in Laos. Psychologically, though, it hardly seems sufficiently tangible or responsive to the situation to please either the Thai or the Lao. It is even somewhat contradictory—in knocking down the possibility of turning over Thai T–28's to the Lao, it was alleged that total Laotian air effort would not be increased, and in fact might be decreased, through use of lesser skilled Laotian crews; and yet a stepped-up Lao tactical air capability is called for. I suspect that what is really at work here is a DOD reluctance to disrupt programs which are under way in Vietnam and other parts of the world.

Recommendations:

A. Immediate Action

—Provide M–16s. Souvanna has again requested them and has underlined the favorable impact on morale which this step would have at this time.

—Provide T–28s for the Lao by shifting them from the Thai and then replacing the Thai losses. [*2 lines of source text not declassified*] Check the number of qualified Lao pilots and see whether immediate input of more trainees is necessary. If so, initiate an expanded training program in Thailand or elsewhere.

—Ascertain whether more C–47 and C–130 gunships could usefully be deployed. They have shown themselves a great morale factor for the Lao, and should be immediately introduced if they would bring good results. Provide more fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.

—See whether logistic and ammunition support to Lao army is adequate and effect improvements if not. If more pay and allowances would make the Lao fight better, this, too, should be provided.

—Increase artillery support for key points in Laos. Reintroduce a Thai battery or single pieces where they would be able to provide training and also have military value, or institute immediate training for the Lao and prepare to turn over 105's—whichever is better tactically, or even a mix of all. Some artillery support is obviously better than no artillery support, as is now the case.

—Implement better reconnaissance capability and ARDF support on lines of communication into Northern Laos, if lack of information is a limiting factor in our ability to cope. (This may not be so important, with Meo spotters in much of the area.)

—Direct the Department of Defense to undertake immediately a program to accomplish the above.[3]

B. Contingency Planning

The next crisis may come during the next dry season starting about November, or perhaps even earlier. If the Communists push hard to bring pressure on Souvanna Phouma, they may endanger the political balance in Vientiane.[4] Or they may force Souvanna into a compromise which leaves our interests out (even recognizing our leverage over Souvanna). In order to avoid a recurrence of slow bureaucratic response to a need for action in Laos, we should:

—Prepare a plan of retaliation for immediate execution if the Communists attack another Lao keypoint, e.g. B–52 anti-personnel raids on the Plaine de Jarres.

—Orchestrate now a publicity campaign concerning Communist pressures in Laos. This would:

a. raise Communist nerves as to what we have in mind;
b. prepare public opinion in the US if we have to do something else in Laos (e.g. B–52's) and provide some protection against the charge of escalation.

—Do a contingency paper as to what our behavior will be if the Communists upset the present fragile stability in Laos.

a. At what point do we decide that we no longer have any interest in preservation of the 1962 agreement?
b. How can we keep from reaching that point? i.e. are there means within our current level of military involvement to persuade the Communists that it is too dangerous to upset the balance? Can we forewarn

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[3] Nixon initialed the approve option.

[4] In a September 2 briefing memorandum to Nixon, Kissinger described the prospects for a North Vietnamese offensive in Laos: "The Communists appear to have contained the Royal Lao Government offensive in the Plaine des Jarres area, but have not counterattacked in significant force. Meanwhile, Ambassador Godley in conversations with Souvanna raised the problem of containing the anticipated Communist counter offensive. He started with the assumption that the Communists can take the offensive if Hanoi chooses to devote sufficient resources to the job. He recommended that Souvanna should talk with Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese representatives, to reassure them that he does not seek a military solution and that he does not intend to deny the Pathet Lao a role in Laos." Nixon wrote the following marginal comments: "(My God!)" and "K—we must force them to divert resources to Laos." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 10, President's Daily Briefs)

the Communists—possibly through the co-Chairmen and the ICC—that further aggression of the Muong Soui type will require us to take another look at the Geneva Accords and the question whether the Communists have not vitiated them?

c. What do we do if the point is reached? Do we move into the Panhandle and deprive the Communists of the benefit which they principally sought? Do we encourage the Thai to move into areas of critical importance to them [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] if the Souvanna Government falls? Do we encourage them to do so directly, or to use the enclave for a Lao Government-in-half-exile? How much backing do we provide?

Or do we simply extract what propaganda advantage we can, via the UN and elsewhere?[5]

[5] Nixon initialed the approve option.

113. Memorandum From the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Packard) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, September 4, 1969.

SUBJECT

The My Lai atrocity

In March 1968 a task force of the Americal Division conducted a combat operation against My Lai, a Viet Cong controlled village in Quang Ngai Province. The mission was to seize the village and destroy it, after evacuating noncombatants, in order to eliminate a Viet Cong sanctuary. During the operation a small group of American soldiers reportedly shot many (possibly 100) unarmed, unresisting Vietnamese civilians. Those who had knowledge of the incident did not report it. Subsequent assertions of the Viet Cong that the Americans were killing hundreds of innocent civilians were investigated by the Commander of the 11th Infantry Brigade and Vietnamese Provincial Authorities, with inconclusive results. Headquarters, Department of the Army was

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 118, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam—Lt. Calley Case (The Mai Lai Atrocity). Confidential. The memorandum was retyped on White House stationery.

first apprised of this apparent war crime in March 1969 and started an investigation which is still in progress.

On the basis of evidence thus far developed, court martial charges will be preferred on September 4 or 5, 1969 against an Army Lieutenant allegedly implicated in the atrocity. Further delay might risk a loss of court martial jurisdiction, for the officer is scheduled to be discharged on September 6th. The known facts leave no doubt about the necessity of prosecution. If sufficient additional evidence is developed, charges will be brought against others. Details are contained in the attached "Statement of Facts and Circumstances."[2]

The next stage of the case will be a formal investigation of the charges under procedures which afford accused persons a hearing. Following this, the court martial convening authority will determine whether the charges will be referred for trial.

Publicity attendant upon such a trial could prove acutely embarrassing to the United States. It might well affect the Paris peace talks, and those nations opposed to our involvement in Vietnam will certainly capitalize upon the situation. Domestically, it will provide grist for the mills of antiwar activists.

Apart from publicity attendant upon any court martial proceedings, the incident will almost surely find its way into the public press by other means. A combat photographer who was working with the task force is reported to have given color-slide lectures about the incident to fraternal groups in the Cleveland area. Several Congressmen have learned of it through letters from a former serviceman.

We plan to furnish substantially the same information to the Chairmen of selected Congressional committees on 5 September 1969.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) will be in touch with his counterpart on your staff to work out an appropriate press plan.

David Packard[3]

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[2] Attached but not printed.

[3] The retyped copy indicates Packard signed the original.

114. Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon[1]

Washington, September 4, 1969.

SUBJECT

Vietnamizing the War (NSSM 36)

In response to National Security Study Memorandum 36 (NSSM 36),[2] the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) have prepared a plan (Enclosure 1) to Vietnamize the war.[3] In addition to the Joint Staff, Pacific Command, and MACV inputs, the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency contributed to portions of the study.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have developed four alternative timetables for withdrawing about half of the American forces in Vietnam over 18, 24, 30, and 42 months. The JCS recommends that until the enemy threat declines, at least 267,500 U.S. troops should remain in South Vietnam. That residual force would:

Include a ground combat force of 2⅔ divisions (out of a 10⅔ division pre-Vietnamization force). These 57,000 men would provide for emergency reinforcement of the RVNAF and safeguard U.S. base areas.

Provide artillery, tactical air, airlift, logistic, and advisory support to the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). This complement would total about 210,500 men.

The JCS recommend, and I concur, that planning for Vietnamization should remain flexible and subject to periodic reassessments. The size, composition, and specific timing of each redeployment increment should be based on a careful evaluation of the existing situation and the reactions to previous redeployments. The JCS, in their report, contend the 42 month schedule for reducing U.S. troop presence to the 267,500 level is preferable from a military standpoint. They also believe the 30 month schedule can be accomplished with acceptable risks. Subsequent to submitting the report, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, told me he believed the 24 month schedule would be acceptable, in his judgment, for planning purposes.

I, too, believe the 24 month schedule has merit. I recommend such a schedule for planning purposes. It would allow us to maintain a steady momentum towards Vietnamization, with the apparent politi-

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 91, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnamization, Vol. 1A. Top Secret; Sensitive.

[2] Document 58.

[3] The JCS plan is in an appendix to Enclosure 1, a memorandum from Wheeler to Laird, JCSM–522–1–69, August 29; attached but not printed.

cal and economic dividends to the United States, while allaying to some extent the risks that a mood of despair and defeat might be engendered among the South Vietnamese people. The 24 month schedule would also provide time for a more orderly redeployment process for United States forces. If the 18 month schedule were followed, for example, nearly 200,000 U.S. troops would have to be redeployed in CY 1970. While I believe such a substantial redeployment could be accomplished in one year, the extra 6 months would provide the time required for more systematic and efficient planning and movement.

The Secretary of State agrees (Enclosure 2)[4] with my emphasis on flexibility and periodic reassessment, but believes on balance, the 18 month timetable should be our target. He, of course, agrees the nature and timing of Vietnamization should be subject to change if events so indicate.

In essence, then, I am recommending the adoption of the 24 month Vietnamization schedule for planning purposes. The follow-on planning can, and I believe should, stay flexible and be couched in terms of goals. While avoiding the impression of being married to a rigid timetable, we should avoid, on the other hand, any impression we are drifting. There are many uncertainties with which we must deal in considering (1) the impact of Vietnamization, (2) U.S. redeployment schedules, (3) U.S. residual force levels, (4) redeployment of air and naval forces, (5) budget implications, and (6) continuing Vietnamization planning. I should like to treat briefly each of these topics, in turn, and attempt to lay out the key factors involved, the uncertainties, and the options available to us.

Impact of Vietnamization

The impact of the Vietnamization program to date is uncertain. It will take many months for changes in the attitudes and activities of the Vietnamese Government and military forces to be evident. Likewise the impact of the Vietnamization program on pacification and ground combat is not yet discernible.

Some preliminary observations, however, can be made:

• The impact in South Vietnam appears on balance to be positive. There has been little or no panic, and some efforts by the government to increase its effectiveness are discernible. Nonetheless, the Vietnamization process has caused, in CIA's judgment, considerable uneasiness among the South Vietnamese. There is little doubt that Saigon's primary interest is with holding back the process as long as possible.

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[4] Enclosure 2 is a September 3 memorandum from Rogers to Nixon; attached but not printed.

• *Hanoi's reaction* is still clouded. We frankly do not know what it is. Most of the evidence now available suggests the Communists have chosen to fight the war in other ways than in the recent past and are making efforts to be in a position to capitalize on whatever opportunities Vietnamization may offer in the future.

• *Elsewhere in Asia,* it has become clear the troop-contributing countries want to participate more actively in troop-redeployment planning. I see no reason why satisfactory arrangements cannot be made for such planning. I believe we should not exclude, in that process, the possibility of trying to exact more support of various kinds for South Vietnam from other Asian nations rather than considering only the phase-down of troop-contributing country efforts.

• *Within the United States,* vocal opposition to the war has appeared to diminish; but I believe this may be an illusory phenomenon. The actual and potential antipathy for the war is, in my judgment, significant and increasing. We need demonstrable progress, and the prospect for continued progress, in Vietnamization to elicit continuing domestic support across a broad front. We need a positive and understandable program, even if its dimensions are not fully defined and are subject to change, which will appeal to the U.S. people.

In addition to looking at the impact of Vietnamization on the nations directly involved, it is also instructive to review the impact from a functional standpoint. Specifically, I would like to review briefly (a) the military effects and (b) the effect on the pacification program:

• *We expect continued improvements in the combat capability of the RVNAF.* There are a number of unknowns, however, affecting the rate and absolute level of this improvement. In my initial report of 2 June 1969 on Vietnamizing the War, I noted that, "These unknowns include, inter alia, the quality of leadership, the motivation of the armed forces, the psychological reaction of the South Vietnamese to U.S. redeployments, and the ability of the South Vietnamese to find a stronger organizational structure. These unknowns, collectively, can be at least as important to the overall situation in South Vietnam as the more tangible and measurable elements. With such unknowns, we must recognize the possibility that even with additional training, improved equipment, and increased combat support, the RVNAF will not be able soon to stand alone against the current North Vietnamese and Viet Cong force levels." Despite continuing RVNAF improvement, I believe this assessment remains valid.

The RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Program was originally intended to prepare the RVNAF to meet the residual VC insurgency threat after the North Vietnamese troops had been withdrawn. That residual VC threat, however, has been declining. This diminishing VC threat, coupled with RVNAF improvement, must lead us to reorient

our thinking on the Vietnamization goals. We are now considering the feasibility of expanding the program to prepare the RVNAF to meet a combined VC/NVA threat. I now have under review actions to:

—Improve RVNAF leadership and esprit.
—Reduce desertion rates.
—Increase combined operations and planning.
—Improve RVNAF logistics and intelligence capabilities.
—Determine optimum RVNAF force structure.
—Develop strategy and tactics best suited to RVNAF capabilities.

We must bear in mind, however, that RVNAF progress will be particularly sensitive to the size and timing of U.S. redeployments. Despite the decline in overall allied military strength as U.S. troops withdraw, four important factors will govern the total combat capability of the allied forces remaining in Vietnam:

—*The numerical size of the RVNAF is increasing significantly.* The regular, popular and regional forces grew by 250,000 during the past 18 months to a total of about 896,000, and further expansion is planned.

—*Modern arms and equipment* of about $1.2 billion in value are being turned over to the Vietnamese.

—*U.S. artillery, tactical aircraft, and logistical personnel remaining in the Residual Support Force* will provide the RVNAF with greatly improved firepower and mobility.

—*Virtually all of the programs aimed at quantitative improvement and expansion of the South Vietnamese ground forces will be completed by December 1970.* The Navy and Air Force programs extend to June 1972 but are small. Provided qualitative improvement in RVNAF keeps pace, allied forces should be able to prevent serious military setbacks and enable the GVN to continue its pacification and nation-building programs.

The effect of Vietnamization on the pacification program is uncertain. Local security is closely related to the size and effectiveness of the paramilitary forces, such as the Regional Forces (RF), Popular Forces (PF), and Revolutionary Development (RD) cadre. However, security scores in the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) undoubtedly reflect the large-scale presence of U.S. troops. A VC/NVA offensive against areas recently vacated by U.S. troops could cause serious erosion of pacification gains. These gains have been substantial during the past year, at least statistically. The latest assessment indicates that approximately 87% of the population is rated relatively secure. However, gains made under the accelerated pacification program are fragile. The areas remaining to be pacified may present more difficult problems than did earlier ones. Future progress is likely to be slow and sporadic, particularly if the enemy decides to contest the pacification effort directly.

In summary, I feel Vietnamization has been successful so far. There are uncertainties and risks, mainly incident to the timing, in proceeding with Vietnamization. There are graver risks involved, in my judgment, in not proceeding. There is ample reason to believe the

Vietnamization program can be continued, even at an accelerated pace.

United States Redeployment Schedules

The JCS plan provides four alternative timetables to withdraw U.S. forces from Vietnam. The timetables for reducing our force levels to 267,500 men include 18 month, 24 month, 30 month, and 42 month programs. Using July 1, 1969 as a starting point, these programs would terminate, respectively, on December 31, 1970; June 30, 1971; December 31, 1971; and December 31, 1972.

These schedules provide examples of possible alternatives and I believe we should consider these four plans as examples rather than as rigid alternatives. As the JCS recommend, we need to periodically reassess the impact and the enemy reaction as we reduce our forces.

The advantages of the slower 30 and 42 month Vietnamization program involve mainly the added military assurances that U.S. presence gives. It is clear the South Vietnamese leadership, for the most part, would view the slower programs as a stabilizing influence for them. The main disadvantages of the slower programs would be the impact on the United States people. It could be reasonably expected that such drawn-out programs would not be accepted by substantial segments of the United States public as enough positive momentum in attaining our objectives in Southeast Asia.

The advantages of the faster 18 and 24 month Vietnamization programs hinge mainly on the public support such positive movement should elicit. The disadvantages, of course, are the added military risks involved and the prospect, especially, with the 18 month program of a destabilizing effect on the South Vietnamese society and a less-efficient redeployment process on our part.

I know of no effective way to measure precisely these various elements. I do believe, however, the necessity for support by the U.S. people is the overriding factor involved. I believe it would also be desirable to keep our military leadership in tune with the Vietnamization program, not only as an assignment but also as a matter of conviction. General Wheeler's personal agreement that the 24 month schedule would be agreeable for planning purposes is therefore a significant step. In my judgment, the 24 month schedule, which terminates June 30, 1971 (the end of FY 1971), represents the most attractive basis for continued planning.

United States Residual Force Levels

The size of the U.S. residual force is one of the main issues discussed in the JCS final report. I am convinced that we must tailor the force to the overall situation as it develops in South Vietnam. I firmly believe that decisions on the size of the residual force and on the re-

deployment rate used in getting down to the residual force should be developed within the framework of your three criteria now so well publicized at home and abroad. To illustrate:

• If, as summed for NSSM 36, current VC/NVA force levels remain constant, the JCS-recommended U.S. residual force package would range from 267,500 to 285,000 men. This force would be designed to support the RVNAF, protect American units, and provide an emergency reinforcement capability.

• It may be possible to reduce the size of the JCS residual force while maintaining essentially the same capability. A review by my staff indicated that approximately 42,000 people (from 267,500 to 225,000) could be eliminated without significantly degrading support to the RVNAF and allied forces remaining in Vietnam and without assuming a decline in the enemy threat. The JCS addressed this point and disagreed the 225,000 man force could be achieved without degrading combat capability. We shall continue to address the issue, however.

• If the enemy threat declines from current levels, we could accept a reduced combat capability and withdraw additional forces. We will periodically reassess the need for a force of this size as Vietnamization moves ahead. I see no need to make any firm decision on the size of the residual force at this time. It is advisable, however, to delineate some tentative goals for planning purposes. We are ahead of schedule in redeploying the initial increments from South Vietnam. I believe we can continue to seek acceleration in redeployments, whatever our program for planning may be.

As an added point, I believe we should consider reducing the magnitude of the U.S. combat support to RVNAF. With few exceptions, RVNAF units today receive only a small fraction of the support provided to comparable American units. Under the JCS plans to Vietnamize the war, RVNAF forces will receive as much artillery, tactical air, airlift, and logistic support as U.S. combat units. This many-fold increase in support may not be needed. While we should provide the Vietnamese with the assistance they need, we should not necessarily endeavor to create an RVNAF as a mirror image of U.S. forces in organization, tactics and operations. I will continue to evaluate this problem.

Redeployment of Air and Naval Forces

A key point at issue in Vietnamization is whether reductions in U.S. out-of-country/offshore forces are feasible. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that such forces should not be within the terms of reference for Vietnamizing the war. I consider that additional reductions in out-of-country/offshore forces should be feasible in the coming months.

More specifically at issue is the question of redeploying tactical aircraft. The JCS believe that tactical aircraft withdrawals beyond those they propose (17% of the present force) would pose serious risks to our forces in Southeast Asia. I appreciate their concern, but believe that we can gradually reduce the magnitude of our tactical air operations in South Vietnam without appreciably affecting the course of the war.

I also believe that we should begin reducing the numbers of our tactical air units and their supporting forces based in Thailand. After the bombing halt in North Vietnam, the effort of these tactical air elements was shifted to Laos. Part of this effort has gone to support the Royal Lao Government and interdict routes into northern Laos. I would recommend against any reduction in the level of that support at this time. The remainder of this effort, however, has been concentrated largely on infiltration routes through the Panhandle. The cost of this effort is high and its net value, at least at current operating levels, uncertain.

The JCS plan indicates that the interdiction campaign in the Lao Panhandle has effectively reduced the level of enemy activity in South Vietnam. While this bombing has undoubtedly inflicted damage to the enemy's logistic system network and created significant resupply problems, the Central Intelligence Agency indicates that throughout the dry season the enemy was able to supply his forces in South Vietnam at a rate sufficient to sustain operations and replenish stockpiles. Supply shortages did occur in South Vietnam during the past year, but they were localized and temporary. The CIA has no information which would suggest that the enemy was forced to alter any major military operation for want of logistical support at any time during the period of intensive U.S. bombing of enemy supply lines. Consequently, we may be able to maintain an acceptable level of results using fewer resources. We shall continue to study this problem.

Budgetary Impact

The overall budgetary impact of the proposed force reductions is less than you may have hoped for. Using the JCS redeployment schedules, the total savings, after the withdrawals are completed, amount to approximately $5 billion annually. This compares to a total current incremental cost of the war to the U.S. of about $17 billion annually. Of the remaining cost, $10 billion is required to maintain the sizable residual forces (including $3 billion to operate the extensive tactical air support forces) and about $2 billion represents our costs to supply and maintain the expanded RVNAF operations. This conflict will continue to require sizable resources as long as we provide air, artillery and other support on about the same scale as our forces now receive.

There are other factors involved in the cost picture. For example:

—The 350,000 military personnel assumed to leave the force structure represent 44 percent of the force increase of 800,000 which has occurred since 1965 to support our efforts in Southeast Asia. The remaining 450,000 military personnel include some specific units programmed for Southeast Asia and the CONUS training and support base required to sustain U.S. forces remaining there. The actual manpower reduction which might occur is also dependent upon factors such as rotation policies, retention rates, and reserve considerations. We shall want to continue an intensive study of our manpower policies to see that savings may realistically be made.

On the other side of the ledger, there may be some calls for added U.S. budgetary support of the South Vietnamese economy. There are significant inflationary pressures in that economy and the provision of U.S. resources may be one alternative to consider in alleviating such pressures. This is an area, too, that will require more study; but the trend will surely be to call on more U.S. resources, not less, in tackling South Vietnamese economic problems.

Continued Vietnamization Planning

The four alternative timetables for withdrawing U.S. forces from Vietnam should be considered as examples rather than as rigid schedules. Choosing among the timetables is, at best, an imprecise business. There are dangers in moving too fast. On the other hand, moving too slowly may give incorrect signals to friend and foe alike. Consistent with an emphasis on flexibility, I believe we should not tie ourselves inextricably to any of the four timetables.

However, I strongly support the JCS position that future troop-deployment planning must be coordinated in advance with the GVN. Experience now substantiates the need for combined consideration of such practical matters as transfer of areas of responsibility, bases, facilities, and the disposition of equipment. Furthermore, to the extent practicable, the governments of the troop-contributing countries should be consulted in order to elicit their cooperation. To accomplish this coordination, we must resort to some timetable as a rough planning guide.

Without question, some elements of the Government of Vietnam, and of other troop-contributing countries, would consider the 18 month and perhaps even the 24 month timetable as too fast. They undoubtedly would prefer one of the longer timetables as a planning guide. On the other hand, if appropriate stress is placed on the strength and purpose of the residual force, and on a clear acceptance of, say, the 24 month timetable as only a tentative target subject to change as required, then agreement should be possible. The 24 month timetable would require the redeployment of about 200,000 U.S. troops by the end of FY

1971. This would place heavy pressure on the GVN and RVNAF, but should cause them to extend themselves in a manner which could have salutary effects. We should remain alert, however, for signs that the pressure is too heavy. Explicit joint US/GVN formulation of an RVNAF replacement plan, coupled with a U.S. residual force plan, should make the pressure bearable.

Confident acceptance by the GVN and other troop-contributing countries of the 18 month timetable with a strong U.S. residual force could also have a salutary effect on Hanoi. If they come to believe that the U.S. expects to maintain a substantial combat support and logistical capability for an indefinite period, they could develop serious doubts about their chances of success in the foreseeable future. If they were thus persuaded to pull back, or even to refrain from expanding infiltration, we could then consider reductions in the residual forces as outlined above.

Just as important as the schedules and timing involved from a military standpoint is the concept of Vietnamization in the broader context. For us to achieve our objectives in South Vietnam, it will be necessary for the South Vietnamese to show more stature and stability in the political, economic, social, and technological areas. As we continue to study the Vietnamization process, as I believe we must, we should expand the scope of the effort to include the broader context of Vietnamization.

I believe, too, that we must try to get a firmer grip on the many areas of uncertainty, and, at a minimum, outline for you in a more definitive way the options available in the areas incident to Vietnamization, the benefits to be expected in pursuing the options, and the costs and risks involved.

Recommendations

1. We should continue to give the highest priority to Vietnamizing the war, exerting maximum effort to expand, equip, train, and modernize the RVNAF and do whatever else may be required to transfer progressively to the Republic of Vietnam greatly increased responsibility for all aspects of the war.

2. We should proceed, for planning purposes, on the 24 month redeployment schedule outlined by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This schedule appears to offer the best balance among the advantages and disadvantages incident to Vietnamization.

3. Future troop redeployment planning should be coordinated with the Government of Vietnam and with the other troop-contributing countries.

4. Planning should stay as flexible as possible. Recognizing we are now ahead of the redeployment schedule proposed for the 24 month

timetable, we should continue to look for ways to accelerate the Vietnamization program.

5. We should keep the Vietnamization study effort actively in process. Not only should the concept of Vietnamization be broadened to include non-military areas, but the options in the military field on force levels, force composition, and potential budgetary savings incident to all our operations in Southeast Asia should also be vigorously examined.

Mel Laird

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115. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, September 5, 1969.

SUBJECT

Analysis for Vietnam

Over the past months, I have become convinced of the need for systematic analysis of U.S. policies and programs in Vietnam.

Looking back on our experience over the last few years, it is remarkable how frequently officials have let their preconceptions about Vietnam lead them astray even though a careful and objective analysis of readily available facts would have told them differently. The examples are legion:

—the shortcomings of the Strategic Hamlet Program were obvious to any discerning observer of the rural political and economic situation in Vietnam;

—U.S. force deployments in 1965 were based on intelligence estimates of enemy strength that underestimated it by half;

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 139, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. X, September 1969. Secret; Nodis. Sent for action. Attached but not printed is an August 30 memorandum from Laurence Lynn, Jr., to Kissinger, in which Lynn informed Kissinger that he had revised this memorandum for the President as Kissinger requested. A notation on Lynn's memorandum indicates it was "Hand carried to Pres. 9/4."

—our expectations for the bombing campaign against North Vietnam were overly optimistic;

—our mistaken optimism in 1966 that the North Vietnamese could no longer sustain heavy casualties in the South was completely contradicted by the facts of North Vietnamese demography;

—our excessively optimistic expectations for the various "revolutionary-development" type cadre programs;

—the shock of the Tet offensive was in part attributable to our failure to analyze available intelligence accurately.

I cite these examples because of my concern at the current paucity of analysis on Vietnam at a time when major changes are taking place in our policy.

For example, I believe we should give careful consideration to whether we have marshalled and analyzed all the available evidence on:

—the progress of Vietnamese force modernization and the current performance capability of Vietnamese forces;

—the effect on Viet Cong political activities and the rebuilding potential for Viet Cong local force and guerilla units pursuant to U.S. troop withdrawals from the Delta;

—the real progress, if any, of the GVN toward the implementation of the recently proposed land reform program;

—the extent to which some of our more successful economic assistance programs might allow us to quicken what has been the quite remarkable eroding effect that our economic assistance has had on Viet Cong political fortunes in the countryside;

—the nature of the recently registered gains in pacification efforts and their vulnerability to a decline in GVN–US military capability;

—internal developments following any major U.S. program changes in Vietnam.

We need a special group with semi-permanent status to give continuous direction to the analyses and serve as a touchstone for those in Washington and elsewhere who can make analytical contributions.

One way to accomplish this task is to establish a Vietnam Special Studies Group under my chairmanship on the model which has worked so well with the Verification Committee and the Intelligence Estimates. The group would include representatives from OSD, JCS, CIA and State with other agencies represented as appropriate. It would sponsor analytical efforts of the type I've mentioned and provide for the circulation and discussion of the results within the government. As appropriate, these studies and the issues they raise would be forwarded to you or to the NSC.

Recommendation:

I recommended that you approve the establishment of a Vietnam Special Studies Group chaired by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and with appropriate representation from the agencies.[2]

[2] Nixon initialed the approve option. This decision was institutionalized in National Security Decision Memorandum 23, September 16, which created the VSSG. (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 363, Subject File, NSDMs) Noting that he met daily with a Vietnamization working group under Nutter and there already was an Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam, Laird asked Kissinger in a letter of September 22, "Is such a group [VSSG] necessary in view of ongoing efforts?" (Ibid.)

116. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, September 5, 1969.

SUBJECT

Preliminary Analysis of the Significance of the Death of Ho Chi Minh

Ho's death will deal a blow to North Vietnamese morale, although it probably will not by itself soon lead to a softening, or significant change, in North Vietnamese policies toward the war in the South.[2]

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 69, Vietnam Subject Files, Death of Ho Chi Minh. Confidential. Sent for information. The memorandum was not initialed by Kissinger; a note on the memorandum reads: "Hand carried to the President, 9–6–69." Kissinger's assessment is in part based on three papers, all undated but probably written on September 3. They are entitled "NSC Staff Analysis," "CIA Analysis," and "State/INR Analysis." (Ibid.) Ho Chi Minh died on September 3.

[2] In a September 9 memorandum to Kissinger, Holdridge wrote that "with little to go on save gall" he and the NSC staff were attempting to estimate the trend in the DRV even before Ho Chi Minh was laid to rest. Holdridge acknowledged that the DRV leadership was collective and "that none of the big four in the politburo: Duan, Chinh, Giap or Dong is strong enough to grab the controls completely at the outset," but he believed that "over the long pull, we are inclined to guess, and it is only a guess, that Le Duan will gradually consolidate his power position." Holdridge agreed with most other observers that "DRV policy after Ho will almost certainly have to gravitate in the direction of moderation," but he was not sure that these shifts would provide grounds for progress from Washington's point of view. (Ibid., Box 139, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. X, September 1969)

Four men appear to be the most likely candidates to succeed Ho as Party leader, although there is very little hard information concerning factions or policy differences within the top leadership. In order of position within the Party, they are:

—Party First Secretary Le Duan, 61: Duan has enjoyed a close personal relationship with Ho, but has almost certainly lost some of his influence in the past year.

—Theoretician and National Assembly Chairman Truong Chinh, 61: He is considered to be the most pro-Chinese of the top leadership, in the sense that he has apparently favored modelling North Vietnamese policies along Chinese Communist lines.

—Premier Pham van Dong, 61: Dong has long been closely associated with Ho. He is reputedly more moderate than the others.

—Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap, 57: Like Ho, Giap has great popular prestige because of his role in the victory over the French.

Of these, Chinh and Le Duan are believed to have the inside track.

Le Duan is known for his policies of sacrificing everything for the struggle in the South. Chinh, Giap and probably Dong advocate a cautious, steady application of the tactics of the "people's war" and simultaneously the preservation of the strength of the regime in the North and building it up along orthodox Marxist lines.

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117. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, September 10, 1969.

SUBJECT

Our Present Course on Vietnam

I have become deeply concerned about our present course on Vietnam. This memorandum is to inform you of the reasons for my concern. It does not discuss alternative courses of action, but is provided for your background consideration. You know my recommendations.

While time acts against both us and our enemy, it runs more quickly against our strategy than against theirs. This pessimistic view

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–024, Special NSC Meeting Folder, 9/12/69, Vietnam. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. This memorandum is printed in full in Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 1480–1482.

is based on my view of Hanoi's strategy and the probable success of the various elements of our own.

I. U.S. Strategy

In effect, we are attempting to solve the problem of Vietnam on three highly interrelated fronts: (1) within the U.S., (2) in Vietnam, and (3) through diplomacy. To achieve our basic goals through diplomacy, we must be reasonably successful on *both* of the other two fronts.

a. U.S.

The pressure of public opinion on you to resolve the war quickly will increase—and I believe increase greatly—during the coming months. While polls may show that large numbers of Americans now are satisfied with the Administration's handling of the war, the elements of an evaporation of this support are clearly present. The plans for student demonstrations in October are well known, and while many Americans will oppose the students' activities, they will also be reminded of their own opposition to the continuation of the war.[2] As mentioned below, I do not believe that "Vietnamization" can significantly reduce the pressures for an end to the war, and may, in fact, increase them after a certain point. Particularly significant is the clear opposition of many "moderate" leaders of opinion, particularly in the press and in the East (e.g., *Life* Magazine). The result of the recrudescence of intense public concern must be to polarize public opinion. You will then be somewhat in the same position as was President Johnson, although the substance of your position will be different. You will be caught between the Hawks and the Doves.

The effect of these public pressures on the U.S. Government will be to accentuate the internal divisiveness that has already become apparent to the public and Hanoi. Statements by government officials which attempt to assuage the Hawks or Doves will serve to confuse Hanoi but also to confirm it in its course of waiting us out.

b. Vietnam

Three elements on the Vietnam front must be considered—(1) our efforts to "win the war" through military operations and pacification, (2) "Vietnamization," and (3) the political position of the GVN.

(1) I do not believe that with our current plans we can win the war within two years, although our success or failure in hurting the enemy remains very important.[3]

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[2] Nixon underlined this sentence.

[3] Nixon underlined this sentence.

(2) "Vietnamization" must be considered both with regard to its prospects for allowing us to turn the war over to the Vietnamese, and with regard to its effect on Hanoi and U.S. public opinion. I am not optimistic about the ability of the South Vietnamese armed forces to assume a larger part of the burden than current MACV plans allow. These plans, however, call for a thirty-month period in which to turn the burden of the war over to the GVN. I do not believe we have this much time.

In addition, "Vietnamization" will run into increasingly serious problems as we proceed down its path.

—Withdrawal of U.S. troops will become like salted peanuts to the American public: The more U.S. troops come home, the more will be demanded. This could eventually result, in effect, in demands for unilateral withdrawal—perhaps within a year.

—The more troops are withdrawn, the more Hanoi will be encouraged—they are the last people we will be able to fool about the ability of the South Vietnamese to take over from us. They have the option of attacking GVN forces to embarrass us throughout the process or of waiting until we have largely withdrawn before doing so (probably after a period of higher infiltration).

—Each U.S. soldier that is withdrawn will be relatively more important to the effort in the south, as he will represent a higher percentage of U.S. forces than did his predecessor. (We need not, of course, continue to withdraw combat troops but can emphasize support troops in the next increments withdrawn. Sooner or later, however, we must be getting at the guts of our operations there.)

—It will become harder and harder to maintain the morale of those who remain, not to speak of their mothers.

—"Vietnamization" may not lead to reduction in U.S. casualties until its final stages, as our casualty rate may be unrelated to the total number of American troops in South Vietnam. To kill about 150 U.S. soldiers a week, the enemy needs to attack only a small portion of our forces.

—"Vietnamization" depends on broadening the GVN, and Thieu's new government is not significantly broader than the old (see below). The best way to broaden the GVN would be to create the impression that the Saigon government is winning or at least permanent. The more uncertainty there is about the outcome of the war, the less the prospect for "Vietnamization."

(3) We face a dilemma with the GVN: The present GVN cannot go much farther towards a political settlement without seriously endangering its own existence; but at the same time, it has not gone far enough to make such a settlement likely.

Thieu's failure to "broaden" his government is disturbing, but not because he failed to include a greater variety of Saigon's Tea House politicians. It is disturbing because these politicians clearly do not believe that Thieu and his government represent much hope for future power, and because the new government does not offer much of a bridge to neutralist figures who could play a role in a future settlement.[4] This is not to mention his general failure to build up political strength in non-Catholic villages. In addition, as U.S. troops are withdrawn, Thieu becomes more dependent on the political support of the South Vietnamese military.

c. Diplomatic Front

There is not therefore enough of a prospect of progress in Vietnam to persuade Hanoi to make real concessions in Paris. Their intransigence is also based on their estimate of growing U.S. domestic opposition to our Vietnam policies. It looks as though they are prepared to try to wait us out.

II. Hanoi's Strategy

There is no doubt that the enemy has been hurt by allied military actions in the South, and is not capable of maintaining the initiative on a sustained basis there. Statistics on enemy-initiated activities, as well as some of Giap's recent statements, indicate a conscious decision by Hanoi to settle down to a strategy of "protracted warfare." This apparently consists of small unit actions with "high point" flurries of activity, and emphasis on inflicting U.S. casualties (particularly through rocket and mortar attacks). This pattern of actions seems clearly[5] to indicate a low-cost strategy aimed at producing a psychological, rather than military, defeat for the U.S.

This view of their strategy is supported by our estimates of enemy infiltration. They *could* infiltrate more men, according to intelligence estimates, despite growing domestic difficulties. The only logical reason for their not having done so is that more men were not needed in the pipeline—at least for a few months—to support a lower-cost strategy of protracted warfare. It seems most unlikely that they are attempting to "signal" to us a desire for a de facto mutual withdrawal, although this cannot be discounted.[6] There is no diplomatic sign of this—except in Xuan Thuy's linkage of points two and three of the PRG program—and I do not believe they trust us enough to "withdraw" a larger percentage of their men than we have of ours, as they would be doing.

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[4] Nixon underlined most of the first three sentences of this paragraph.

[5] Nixon underlined this sentence beginning here to its end.

[6] Nixon underlined this sentence.

Hanoi's adoption of a strategy designed to wait us out fits both with its doctrine of how to fight a revolutionary war and with its expectations about increasingly significant problems for the U.S.[7]

III. Conclusion

In brief, I do not believe we can make enough evident progress in Vietnam to hold the line within the U.S. (and the U.S. Government), and Hanoi has adopted a strategy which it should be able to maintain for some time—barring some break like Sino-Soviet hostilities. Hence my growing concern.

[7] Nixon underlined this sentence.

118. Memorandum From John Holdridge of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, September 10, 1969.

SUBJECT

Positions of Key US Officials on a Ceasefire in Vietnam[2]

Following is a brief summary of the known views of officials who will attend the NSC meeting on September 12.

Secretary of State Rogers: He favors a US initiative for a cease fire in which the main condition would be prior agreement *in principle* on the withdrawal of external forces and on the South Vietnamese working out a political solution themselves. Once this agreement was signed, an international body would be established and a cease fire would take effect. He believes this position might be acceptable to the North Vietnamese. Rogers also thinks that we must begin to work out a detailed position on a cease fire since the issue may soon come very rapidly to the forefront.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), H–024, Special NSC Meeting, 9/12/69, Vietnam. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Sent for information.

[2] On August 28 Kissinger sent the President a 22-page paper on a cease-fire in Vietnam. Although Nixon wrote "excellent analysis" on the covering memorandum, the paper contained none of the President's characteristic underlining or comments.

Secretary of Defense Laird: So far as we can ascertain, Laird has no strong views one way or another on a US cease fire initiative. He recognizes the problem which would be posed by an enemy cease fire initiative, however, and is in favor of immediate planning on a detailed allied cease fire position. He is said to believe that a cease fire is most likely to come about tacitly with the Communist side gradually slowing down its offensive operations in which case he is said to believe we should respond by cutting our own offensive actions.

Ambassador Bunker: He is in favor of consulting soon with the GVN on a cease fire in order to be prepared for any enemy initiative. He does not favor our taking the initiative, but believes that our response to the Communists should be to accept a cease fire in principle pending satisfactory resolution of the "circumstances" which would make a valid cease fire possible. These circumstances basically involve prior agreement on the withdrawal of external forces, and adequate provision for verification of that withdrawal and for the supervision of the terms of the cease fire.

Philip Habib of the Paris Delegation: Habib is said to favor a US initiative for a cease fire, but does not believe it has much chance of acceptance by the enemy. He would condition implementation of the cease fire to prior agreement on the withdrawal of the NVA and adequate arrangements on supervision.

General Abrams: He, of course, is primarily concerned with the adverse military implications of any cease fire which does not provide for adequate disposition and control of the NVA and VC forces. Like Bunker, he strongly favors tieing a US initiative, or our response to an enemy proposal, to prior agreement on NVA withdrawal and to very careful and complete terms on supervision of the cease fire. We have no recent reading on the details of Abrams thinking, but at one point he was in favor of starting with a cease fire in one area (e.g., the DMZ sector) as a test proposition.

CINCPAC, Admiral McCain: We have no reliable reading on McCain's current position, although in the past he has been in step with General Abrams in opposing any cease fire which did not provide adequately for allied security and the disposition of the enemy forces. If anything, he is probably to the right of General Abrams on this aspect.

CIA Director Helms: He is unlikely to take any position on a cease fire, since he believes his role is not that of policy formulation. If pressed for his view, he would probably favor a cease fire conditioned to prior agreement on withdrawal and adequate supervision.

119. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, September 11, 1969.

SUBJECT

Vietnam Options

Attached is a paper analyzing alternative Vietnam policies. It is provided for your background reading for the 9:30 a.m. meeting on Vietnam on Friday, September 12.[2]

Four options are considered:

—Maintain essentially our *current strategy* across the board;
—Accelerate *negotiations* while maintaining essentially our current Vietnamization policy and moderating our military tactics;
—Accelerate *Vietnamization* while maintaining essentially our current negotiating approach and moderating our military tactics;
—*Escalate* militarily while maintaining essentially our current negotiating approach and halting the Vietnamization process.[3]

Attachment

I. Basic Elements in Vietnam Policy

In formulating alternative Vietnam policies there are three basic components which we can vary: our *negotiating strategy*, which includes

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–024, Special NSC Meeting, 9/12/69, Vietnam. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Sent for information. This memorandum was not initialed by Kissinger, but on another copy there is a handwritten indication that Kissinger signed it. (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 91, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnamization, Vol. IX, September 1967–December 1969)

[2] Document 120.

[3] According to a September 24 memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, the President met with Laird and Mitchell on September 24. Kissinger wrote that the meeting was "an intimate discussion on Vietnam. I believe we are still faced with the four basic options [as outlined in this memorandum]. . . . You will want to discuss each of these options, focusing primarily on the pros and cons of proceeding with military escalation on November 1." Kissinger continued that he was "inclined to believe that accelerated Vietnamization would be a road to swift disaster. Thus, we appear to find ourselves at a cross roads which suggests that we must look intensively over the next several weeks at the alternatives of accelerated negotiations or sharp escalation of the type visualized in the Duck Hook Plan." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 45, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Vietnam Contingency Plan, Sept–Oct 1969) Duck Hook was an NSC-generated contingency planning operation ongoing in September. Brief notes of meetings between Kissinger and his staff on Duck Hook on September 10, 12, 20, 24, and 29 are ibid. Nixon met with Laird, Mitchell, and Kissinger from 10:03 a.m. to 12:44 p.m. on September 24. (President's Daily Diary, September 24; Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files) No memorandum of conversation of the meeting has been found.

both the type of political settlement we seek and the way in which we negotiate these questions in Paris; our *Vietnamization policy,* which includes the criteria and timing for our troop withdrawals; and our *military tactics,* which include both how and where we fight and the signals we send.

By varying the emphasis on these components, four basic alternative routes emerge. We can:

1. Maintain essentially our *current strategy* across the board;
2. Accelerate *negotiations* while maintaining essentially our current Vietnamization policy and moderating our military tactics;
3. Accelerate *Vietnamization* while maintaining essentially our current negotiating approach and moderating our military tactics;
4. *Escalate* militarily while maintaining essentially our current negotiating approach and halting the Vietnamization process.

We have to consider these alternatives in light of present realities and the major targets of our strategy.

II. The Current Situation

We are thus heading toward autumn in uncertain fashion. Is there political significance to the lull? If so, how do we take advantage of it without demoralizing our own forces and perhaps risking greater casualties? Can the Thieu regime stand up to more political compromises? more extensive US troop pullouts? If we cannot move further on both these fronts, which fork should we take to maintain American public support without undermining the GVN's position? What is the most critical time-buying factor for the American people—lower casualties, progress in Paris, US disengagement? What is the impact of each of these factors on the other?

All three Vietnam participants are feeling pressures. The enemy has suffered heavy losses. Their leadership is apparently divided over their strategy and whether or not to explore negotiations. The GVN simultaneously tries to placate US opinion with negotiating reasonableness and its own supporters with soothing interpretation of its proposals and reassurances that it will not budge further. We are torn between the impatience of war-weary Americans and a commitment to reach a just settlement.

III. Three Audiences

Our Vietnam strategy is directed at three basic audiences: the enemy, the GVN, and the American people. Our purposes are to:

—convince the *enemy* that they have nothing to gain by waiting;
—reassure the *GVN* that we will negotiate and disengage at a pace that should allow it to compete politically and militarily with the other side;
—maintain the support of the *American people* for an honorable outcome to the war.

The enemy's negotiating attitude, the situation in South Vietnam, and the endurance of American opinion of course interact. The other side's willingness to negotiate seriously will be keyed largely to his perception of American staying power and the political and military evolution in SVN. Competing forces in South Vietnam, and most particularly the uncommitted, all weigh and reflect both the bargaining process and the stamina of the American people. US public opinion will be heavily influenced by progress—or lack of it—in Paris and the ability of the GVN to hold up militarily and politically.

A. The Enemy

It is very difficult to assess the other side's intentions with regard to negotiations. We do not know whether Hanoi and the NLF will be willing to negotiate a settlement that we can accept or whether they intend to await the collapse of the GVN or American stamina.

—Enemy internal propaganda documents point to autumn negotiations.

—The substantially reduced infiltration pipelines might be a signal of a coming willingness to negotiate, including the question of de facto withdrawals.

—There may be significance in the reduced level of hostilities and enemy-initiated actions recently, as well as Hanoi's release of three American prisoners in connection with July 4.

—The PRG might have been established to allow the NLF to negotiate a political settlement as equals.

—There have been second hand private hints in the past that some members of the present GVN government, including Thieu himself, might be acceptable in an eventual sharing of power.

—The enemy might fear that Vietnamization, by gradually reducing US presence and lowering casualties, could maintain American public support while the GVN is successively strengthened.

—The other side may be persuaded that we are prepared to be reasonable in negotiating a political settlement, that Thieu will be obliged to yield and that therefore negotiations might yield a satisfactory solution.

There are other strong arguments suggesting that the enemy is not serious about negotiations:

—They have insistently demanded a coalition government, overthrow of the GVN, and the unconditional withdrawal of US troops.

—To date they have flatly rejected Thieu's election proposals.

—They still refuse to talk to the GVN in private on political matters.

—The creation of the PRG, in this context, might confirm a retrogression from the bombing halt understanding that the other side would talk to the GVN.

—The enemy's reduced military activities, rather than being a negotiating signal, could well be designed only to induce us to speed up our troop withdrawals while they cut down their own casualties.[4] Once our withdrawals have progressed significantly and have picked up strong momentum, the enemy might resume military pressures and continue to stonewall the Paris talks.

—They might well believe that time is on their side—they need only sit tight, make sufficient attacks to keep US casualties up, maintain a negotiating facade, and wait for the American people to force an unconditional US pullout or a face-saving agreement. (The Clifford article might have served to reinforce this view.)[5]

—The enemy basically mistrusts negotiations, given their 1954 and 1962 experiences where they believe they achieved less through the negotiating process than their battlefield position warranted.

There is, in short, enough conflicting evidence to suggest that there are sharp differences within the enemy's leadership over negotiating strategy. *The crucial factor remains whether they can be persuaded that they can better pursue their objectives through negotiations than through waiting.*

B. The GVN

The Thieu regime is squeezed politically between our pressure for negotiating concessions and pressure from conservative supporters to stand fast. It will be squeezed militarily between the Vietnamization process and enemy threats. Furthermore, the Army leaders and other elements whose support Thieu needs to make the RVNAF more self sufficient are precisely the ones who resist political concessions. Thus our continued pressing of Thieu on both negotiating positions and troop replacements could prove contradictory and too much for the GVN to bear.

Clear assessments of the GVN's current military and political position are very difficult.

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[4] Although there is no indication on the memorandum that the President saw it, this sentence was apparently underlined by Nixon.

[5] Clifford's article, published in *Foreign Affairs,* vol. 47, (July 1969), pp. 601–622, was entitled, "A Vietnam Reappraisal: The Personal History of One Man's View and How It Evolved." Clifford called for withdrawing 100,000 U.S. troops by the end of 1969 and all U.S. ground combat troops by the end of 1970. Clifford recalls the article and the reaction to it in *Counsel to the President: A Memoir* (Random House: New York, 1991) pp. 607–609.

The RVNAF has been growing stronger in size if not in quality.

—While we can measure progress in numbers of men and equipment, we have great difficulty assessing motivation, aggressiveness, leadership skills.

—Desertions remain a major problem—very high recent levels can only partly be explained by the expansion of the armed forces.

—There has been sufficient improvement to allow replacements of US forces up to perhaps 100,000 without serious military impact.

—Beyond that range, even with heavy US support, we cannot be sure of RVNAF performance against both the VC and continued North Vietnamese presence.

—We can be sure that the enemy will seek to inflict defeat on both withdrawing US troops and their South Vietnamese replacements in order to sabotage the Vietnamization rationale.

We still do not have any precise understanding of the extent to which the GVN is making progress in increasing its control of the countryside.

—In response to NSSM 19 on Internal Security, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, supported by State and CIA, reported that pacification is not making sufficient progress and would not unless there were radical changes in the program. JCS and MACV dissented, arguing that substantial advances were being made.[6]

—More population has been brought under GVN control, partly because of emigration to the cities, but the stability of recent gains remains in doubt, especially in the contested, category C, hamlets.

The political situation is as uncertain as the related military and pacification aspects.

—The Thieu government has been the most stable since Diem, has been somewhat broadened, erected a constitutional framework and conducted elections. Thieu has launched efforts to coalesce noncommunist groups to compete with the NLF, both under his NSDF banner and in a "loyal opposition."

—In future political competition the tightly organized and disciplined NLF would hold major advantages over the splintered noncommunist forces. Many of the latter remain skeptical about Thieu's intentions and prefer to jockey for future positions of power rather than join together against the communists.

—Thieu's election proposals have stirred a good deal of opposition in South Vietnam, both within the government and the Assembly. Many people believe his proposals have gone too far, that the other side is sitting still while the GVN does all the moving under American

[6] For a summary of the response to NSSM 19 see Document 94.

pressure. Perhaps ominously, Vice President Ky recently met with various leaders outside the government like "Big Minh" and Senator Don. Thieu and Foreign Minister Thanh have backed and filled on the election proposals in statements designed to calm such reactions.

We, of course, have means to reassure Thieu and strengthen his position, but they risk our objectives with our other audiences, the enemy and the American people.

—We can relax our pressures on Thieu to make *political compromises,* thus solidifying his political support among many elements in Vietnam, especially those needed to carry off the Vietnamization process. However, this course risks stalemate in Paris and protest from Americans seeking a negotiated settlement.

—We can drag out the *troop replacement* program, thus bolstering the GVN's military position. *However,* this would postpone the withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces from the country and feed dissent in the United States.

—We could *escalate* militarily against the enemy, lifting the morale of the RVNAF and many of the GVN's supporters. *However,* this policy could stiffen the enemy's morale as well as hurt it, and it would inflame American public opinion.

C. The American People

We are well aware of the popular pressures for a prompt settlement of the war and the consequent time limitations placed upon the Administration in carrying out its strategy. There are several ways in which to buy time with the American public:

—Pursue a manifestly reasonable negotiating track in Paris;

—Phase out American presence in South Vietnam;

—Attempt to lower our casualties further by modifying our military tactics;

—Convince the American people that the Allied position in South Vietnam has improved, the enemy's position has deteriorated, and that therefore time is actually on *our* side if only we have the patience.

Sooner or later we can expect popular pressures to mount once again. It is not clear what mix—if any—of the above factors will purchase enough time to work out an honorable settlement. The first three of the factors carry potential problems with our other audiences, the GVN and the enemy:

—*Being forthcoming in Paris* means extracting concessions from the GVN which could lead to Thieu's overthrow by dissident generals and other conservative elements. At the same time we undercut our bargaining position by appearing overeager to the enemy—they need only sit still and bank our overtures.

—*US troop withdrawals,* if pressed too rapidly, could both undermine the GVN politically and the allied position militarily. Again, the enemy could conclude that it need only wait for our complete withdrawal.

—*Modification of our military tactics,* if not handled carefully, could harm not only our military effectiveness, but the morale of allied forces as well. Furthermore, the enemy still retains considerable control over our casualty levels, no matter what our tactics.

Given the history of over-optimistic reports on Vietnam the past few years, it would be practically impossible to convince the American people that the other side is hurting and therefore, with patience, *time could be on our side.* First of all we are not sure about our relative position—we have misread indicators many times before. Secondly, even if we conclude that the allied military position is sound, we don't know how to translate this into political terms—and the political prospects in South Vietnam are much shakier. Thirdly, the Administration faces an extremely skeptical and cynical American audience—the President is rightly reluctant to appear optimistic and assume his own credibility gap. Finally, to a large and vocal portion of the dissenters in this country, the strength of the allied position is irrelevant—they want an end to the war at any price.

IV. Alternative Policies

I am listing here our major choices for Vietnam with the pros and cons of each. It indicates that there is no "good" cause, only a judgment running serious degrees of risk.

Option A. Pursue Current Strategy

Our current strategy aims at keeping two options open: negotiation of a political settlement in Paris and gradual, flexible Vietnamization of the war to permit US disengagement in the absence of a settlement. Our military tactics are designed to keep pressure on the enemy to induce them to negotiate and to minimize our casualties to buy time at home. We could attempt to maintain this overall approach.

1. *Negotiations.* We would continue to emphasize free, fair and supervised elections to determine the future political structure of South Vietnam. The President's May 14 speech and Thieu's July offer would frame our negotiating positions—we would not move further without give by the other side. However, if the enemy proved serious in negotiations we would attempt to use the concept of a mixed electoral commission to bridge the gap between elections and the other side's insistence on a coalition government. Negotiations would then center on the composition, role and powers of the commission(s) and the nature of an international supervisory body. We would stress the GVN's responsibility for a political settlement. However, we would pursue our

private bilaterals with Hanoi on all other questions while refusing to engage in real negotiations on political issues and fully coordinating with the GVN.

2. *Vietnamization.* We would continue to base our troop replacements on the three criteria of enemy response, level of hostilities, and improvement in RVNAF. The President would maintain his flexibility about the pace of withdrawals and would set no fixed timetable.

3. *Military Tactics.* The President's orders to General Abrams would remain essentially the same. The emphasis could be adjusted to cut back on search and destroy missions, except where needed to spoil an enemy buildup and thus reduce American casualties.

4. *Rationale.* The overall rationale for this course would be that we and the GVN were being eminently fair in our offers of political compromise and we neither should not (tactically) nor need not (in terms of world opinion) go further in our negotiating positions without some response from the enemy. We would judge that our present careful urging of Thieu to make political overtures will suffice to give our side negotiating room without seriously hurting ARVN morale or weakening Thieu's position. Similarly, we would view a broadening of the government more as strengthening Thieu's position than detracting from his conservative support. Carefully phased and flexible US withdrawals would attempt to: keep the pressure on the enemy to negotiate; induce greater GVN self-reliance without undermining our ally politically or militarily; and buy us time at home by demonstrating the spinning out of our involvement. Our military operations would still be designed to induce the enemy to negotiate by maintaining pressure on them. A certain modification in our tactics, however, could serve both to lower our casualties further and signal our willingness to explore deescalation.

5. *Problems*

This policy's rationale is sound in many respects. *The fundamental problem is time.*

—If there is not rapid movement in Paris, we just will not have the time with *American opinion* fully to play out this strategy, even if it were finally to bring the other side around to meaningful negotiations. If negotiations do not show faster progress, there will be building pressures in this country for further compromises in Paris or accelerated troop withdrawals or a ceasefire.

—Furthermore *we could face increasing problems with the GVN* in reconciling our objectives of negotiated settlement and gradual disengagement. As noted earlier, pressing Thieu both to be flexible politically (thus alienating conservatives) and to compensate for US withdrawals (for which conservative support is needed) could run into serious contradictions. We—and Thieu—might be better off if we

concentrated either on negotiations or on Vietnamization alone, relaxing our pressures on the GVN on the other front. (Options B and C explore this concept.)

—*Our emphasis on free elections may never be attractive enough to the other side.* The enemy is clearly suspicious of any elections within a GVN framework, no matter how that framework is loosened and modified. Every election held in Vietnam has been won by the people conducting it. The other side probably assumes this will continue to be true, despite sweeteners like mixed electoral commissions and international supervision. Indeed they have recently gone out of their way to denigrate such elements.

—Even if we were to get over these hurdles and the NLF and Saigon were to begin negotiating in good faith, *they are not likely to reach an early settlement unless there were great outside pressure on both sides.* Our Vietnamization program and our veiled threats of escalation are probably not sufficient to bring that pressure.

Option B. Accent on Negotiations: shift negotiating emphasis to territorial accommodation, maintain flexibility on Vietnamization, and moderate military tactics.

This alternative assumes that the enemy might be willing to negotiate seriously on terms short of allied capitulation. We would attempt to draw them into an earnest search for a settlement through further diplomatic and military flexibility.

1. *Negotiations.* Over the next few weeks we would make a concerted effort to draw the other side into negotiations on elections, suggesting our flexibility on the concept of a mixed commission. Assuming this does not prove fruitful, we would then shift our approach in an attempt to accelerate negotiations. Given the other side's distrust of elections and our side's dismissal of an imposed coalition government or peace cabinet, we would try to work toward a settlement through a ceasefire in place. A ceasefire/territorial accommodation approach would be more likely to force or entice the other side to talk to the GVN on political matters. However, under this strategy of emphasizing negotiations, we would also be prepared to talk bilaterally to the DRV about political issues.

2. *Vietnamization.* We would pursue essentially our present approach, maintaining flexibility on pace, refusing to set specific targets. We might slightly increase our withdrawals if the criterion of lower level hostilities persisted, but we would not commit ourselves to a timetable.

3. *Military Tactics.* These would be designed to encourage mutual deescalation and negotiations without endangering our forces. We would thus respond to the continued lull by restricting some of our

own operations. We would attempt to generate a series of reciprocal deescalatory steps. Such a process would move us de facto toward a ceasefire (or ceasefires) and territorial accommodations, in tandem with our negotiating approach.

4. *Rationale.* The overall rationale for choosing this policy would be to explore the possibilities of negotiating a settlement in Vietnam, both through our diplomatic efforts and military tactics. We would continue to use US troop presence in SVN as a bargaining counter in this process. Under this approach of territorial accommodation, the situation which has existed for many years in South Vietnam would be given a measure of legal status. Many villages in South Vietnam have never been under GVN control, and the NLF has controlled some of these. The NLF also has some measure of influence, recruitment and tax power in other villages. Territorial accommodation would invoke implicit acceptance of the status quo and would seek to rule out efforts to change it by force. The NLF and the GVN would retain control over the territory and population in South Vietnam they now dominate. Power would be shared in contested areas.

The most effective way to arrange such an accommodation would be to negotiate or move tacitly toward a ceasefire in place. (A separate paper on ceasefire in place fully explores the military, territorial and political consequences of a ceasefire; the enemy and GVN attitudes; the direction in which a ceasefire is likely to drive a settlement; and the likely evolution in the absence of a settlement.)

We would be acknowledging the *other side's* concern about elections and would be emphasizing our willingness to allow them to share power in South Vietnam. Territorial accommodation should hold many attractions for them, both in terms of short range consolidation of local power and a longer term shot at national control. There could be local elections to ratify de facto control. They might be willing to try this settlement route and make concessions to speed our withdrawals.

We would be pressing the *GVN* on political compromises but maintaining the assurance of a carefully phased Vietnamization process based on the three criteria. We would continue to support the GVN so long as it made honest efforts for a political settlement. We would gamble that two elements would prevent the collapse of the regime despite accelerated pressures for a compromise sharing of power and the political implications of a ceasefire/territorial accommodation: (a) our moderately phased withdrawal, providing support over a considerable period, and (b) the knowledge among restive anti-communists in SVN that another coup would prompt us to wash our hands of Vietnam.

We would be buying time with the *US public* by being forthcoming in the Paris negotiations and moderating our military tactics, as well as continuing a careful phasing of troop withdrawals. Mutual

deescalation and lower casualties would help to preserve domestic support. If, indeed, a general ceasefire in place were put into effect, the psychological effect on American opinion would probably give our policy a major new lease on life. With loss of life ended, pressure to agree to communist demands would be greatly reduced (although, with hostilities ended, there might be pressure to bring US troops home).

5. *Problems*

The fundamental problem is that the other side may not in fact be prepared to accept any settlement which does not meet all of its current terms. As already noted, we may not be able to involve the Soviets.

—*Persuading the GVN to follow this route will be most difficult.* Thieu is already encountering great resistance by some elements to his election proposals. A shift to territorial accommodation, no matter how veiled, would acknowledge lack of GVN authority in large parts of the countryside. This would stir even greater dissent and perhaps cause the GVN to collapse.

—*Thieu might find a way to resist and undermine the negotiations* by making clear his refusal to cooperate. If he went along and the other side did not respond we will have pushed Thieu to make compromises to no avail. His government could be weakened and our relations severely strained, making the Vietnamization process more difficult.

—*The US public would be increasingly anxious for prompt US withdrawals if the stalemate in Paris persisted.* We would then be faced with a choice of either negotiating a coalition government or greatly accelerated and disorderly withdrawals. Even if the territorial accommodation course generated negotiating movement we might still be faced with pressures for accelerated troop withdrawals.

—*If we did reach a compromise settlement, we would be much more closely wedded to it.* A settlement based on territorial accommodation would be ambiguous and risky—if it turned sour we would be all the more responsible for engineering a fake peace. In short we would repeat the Laos solution.

Option C. *Accent on Vietnamization: maintain essentially the current negotiating approach, set a fixed Vietnamization timetable, and moderate military tactics.*

This alternative suggests itself if we are convinced that the other side has no intention of negotiating anything short of the GVN's demise and unilateral US pullouts.

1. *Negotiations.* We would continue to stick by the principle of elections, paint the other side as obstructionist and refuse to go further on political offers than the President's May 14 speech and Thieu's initiative on elections. At Paris we would refuse to talk to the DRV about political questions and insist on GVN involvement, either bilaterally with the PRG or in four-party talks.

2. *Vietnamization.* We would set a specific timetable for withdrawal of all US combat troops. We would make clear our intention to withdraw support forces later but could maintain some flexibility on these. We would attempt to strike a balance in our withdrawals between enough speed to satisfy American opinion, and enough deliberateness to allow a reasonable chance for GVN survival. We could move toward a primarily "volunteer" army in Vietnam as our forces dwindled.

3. *Military Tactics.* We would increasingly leave these to the GVN as we turned over more and more responsibility to it. In practice our operations would be moderated as our forces dwindled. Our principal concern would be to effect orderly troop replacements and minimize American casualties. We would continue to supply air, artillery and logistic support to the RVNAF over a considerable period.

4. *Rationale.* The overall rationale for this alternative would be that we had essentially fulfilled our commitments to South Vietnam, and the GVN should now be able to stand by itself after a phased period of withdrawal.

We would tell the *other side* that our election-centered proposals represented the most forthcoming positions we could put forward without any meaningful response on their part. If they wished to speed up our withdrawals, particularly of support troops, they would have to talk realistically about political matters, or withdraw their own forces. They would be faced with the possibility that we might be able to satisfy public opinion in the US with specific troop withdrawal targets but that the timetable might give the GVN a chance to put its house in order so as to compete.

We would present the *GVN* with a timetable first for the withdrawal of all US ground combat forces, e.g., in two years, and then for the withdrawal of much of the remaining US forces over a second two year period. We would, within reason, provide any economic or military assistance requested. The GVN would be essentially on their own but we would provide significant, if declining, support over a period that should equip and train them to defend themselves even against North Vietnamese aggression. We would tell Thieu that we were not asking him to make any further concessions publicly or privately. We would leave the diplomatic, political, and military initiatives to the GVN.

We would be emphasizing to the *US public* the prospects of definite US disengagement over a fixed period, instead of a reasonable negotiated settlement which the other side's attitude made very unlikely. An increasingly "volunteer" and decreasingly draftee army would further blunt war criticism. In explaining our fixed withdrawals, we would stress our lengthy commitment, the GVN's growing strength and our phased support with minimum loss of American lives. Under this alternative we would not need to involve the *Soviets*.

In short this policy has the great advantage that the initiative is largely in our own hands.

5. *Problems*

—*The enemy would probably attempt to embarrass our withdrawal process* by stepping up attacks on our forces, to keep our casualties high, and on GVN forces, to belie their supposed improvement.

—*The Saigon regime's strength might quickly unravel once our policy is made known.* Indeed, some observers believe that the Saigon government is likely to collapse rather quickly if we moved forward with fixed Vietnamization in the absence of a political settlement or a ceasefire or NVA withdrawals. Withdrawing 250,000 US ground combat forces in two years could drastically cut into the GVN's territorial control not only in contested rural areas but also in outlying urban centers. There could be an agonizing military and political downspiral with increasing US domestic pressures to cut and run.

—Even if the situation held up better than this, *many in the US and other countries might simply construe our actions as abandoning South Vietnam* and reneging on our pledge to permit the South Vietnamese to freely choose their own political future. This would erode the credibility of US commitments, could encourage increased subversion in Asia, and would greatly complicate our efforts to construct a balanced post-Vietnam Asian policy.

D. Escalation

This alternative is in a sense a variant of the option emphasizing negotiations. Military escalation would be used as a *means* to a negotiated settlement, not as an *end,* since we have ruled out military victory. We would halt escalation as soon as it produced diplomatic results.

1. *Negotiations*

We would not be prepared to go beyond the current allied proposals without some enemy reciprocity, although we might hint of further flexibility if the other side proved reasonable. We would make clear that our patience was running thin in the face of enemy inflexibility in Paris and the absence of genuine Soviet attempts to move their allies. We would go to the Soviets with what we would term our best offer and tell them that we considered our positions eminently fair, that we were prepared to give and take, but that there would be no more unilateral give. We would expect them to use their considerable influence on Hanoi to induce the enemy to negotiate. If there were not prompt progress in Paris we would conclude that the other side was not prepared to be reasonable without further military pressure. We were prepared not only to exert such pressure but to reconsider our bilateral relations with the Soviets in other fields. The choice for them would be clear.

2. *Vietnamization*

We would halt troop replacements. At first we would not publicly confirm such a freeze in our withdrawals. We would simply not announce or suggest further pullouts, clearly signalling the other side as we awaited their response to our threat of escalation. Once it was clear that there was no response in Paris, we would make public our decision to halt the withdrawal process pending reasonableness from the enemy. We would thus conserve all remaining ground forces—and probably supplement our air and naval forces—in order to carry out escalation.

3. *Military Tactics*

We would not repeat the process of slow escalation designed gradually to increase the pressure on the enemy to negotiate. This would probably work no better than it did in recent years—militarily it would not hurt the enemy enough, psychologically it would coalesce their forces and people rather than disheartening them. Instead we would move decisively to quarantine North Vietnam through such actions as blockading Haiphong Harbor, resumption of bombing in the north (including close to the Chinese border) and stepped up pressures against third country trade with Hanoi. We would simultaneously pursue the war in the South with maximum air and ground efforts. We might move into Laos and Cambodia.

4. *Rationale*

We would turn to escalation only when we were convinced that no other measures, including the threat of escalation, would induce the other side to negotiate or erase their impression that time is on their side. The record would be made as clear as possible to the world and American opinion: we were willing to withdraw our forces and see genuine free political competition among the South Vietnamese, but the North refused to pull out its forces and the PRG insisted on the destruction of the GVN in advance of political competition. Our choice is then between abject capitulation (whether or not veiled by false rhetoric) and the reluctant resort to force in order to make the enemy negotiate.

We would emphasize to all three audiences that our aims remained limited, that we were not seeking military victory, that escalation was solely designed to engineer a fair negotiated settlement. Thus the *enemy* would be given a choice between widespread destruction and mutual compromise in Paris. They need not choose between military victory and defeat. Whereas limited and gradually accelerated bombing of the north united the North Vietnamese people and did not decisively affect the north's war potential, a comprehensive quarantine might break their will as well as their economic and military potential. The *GVN's* morale would be lifted, but we would emphasize clearly that

we were not seeking a victory for them. They would still be expected to earn future political power on their own. Our most difficult audience would be the *US public.* We would need to erase any impression that we were now going for military victory. To the great majority of Americans who through realism or war weariness have ruled out a decisive ending to the war, we would need to reaffirm our limited goals, underscore enemy intransigence, and demonstrate that the only alternatives were endless stalemate or humiliation.

As for the *Soviets,* this policy assumes that they could influence Hanoi and would be willing to do so rather than see the war escalated. We would calculate that the Soviets would prefer to lean heavily on Hanoi, despite the costs in terms of world communist leadership, rather than to choose between large scale destruction of their ally and the danger of a direct US-Soviet clash.

5. *Problems*

There are many problems associated with this policy but I will not concern you with them in this paper because they are being fully staffed elsewhere.

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120. Minutes of National Security Council Meeting[1]

Washington, September 12, 1969.

SUBJECT

Vietnam

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–109, NSC Minutes, Originals, 1969. No classification marking. No drafting information appears on the minutes. An aside in the text indicates that this account was probably based on notes by Haig. The minutes contain incomplete sentences, which are noted by question marks within parentheses. Occasionally the editors have suggested possible text within brackets when it seemed logical and plausible. No other record of this meeting has been found. According to the President's Daily Diary, the following attended this NSC meeting in the Cabinet Room at the White House from 9:24 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.: Nixon, Agnew, Rogers, Laird, Mitchell, Wheeler, Helms, Bunker, Abrams, McCain, Habib, Kissinger, and Haig. (Ibid., White House Central Files)

The meeting began with a briefing by Director Helms.[2]

He showed the Council photographs of the collective leadership, including Vice President Thang, Le Duan, Truong Chinh, Pham van Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap.

Director Helms: They decided on this leadership as an interim solution before Ho's death. The dominant personalities will be: (1) Le Duan and Truong Chinh. Le Duan is the First Secretary. He is 62 years old. He was a Viet Minh leader in the early 50's. He has been listed as the second most important hero. [(2)] Truong Chinh is the party theoretician. He is a propagandist and has been First Secretary. Since 1960 he has been the No. 3 man. He is a doctrinaire fanatic. (3) Pham van Dong. He is 63 and a close associate of Ho. He became premier in 1955. (4) Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap.

Le Duan may be on the decline. Giap and Truong Chinh may form a cabal. All will seek to show their allegiance to Ho.

The September campaign consists of shelling and limited local ground assaults. High points were on August 11–12 and September 4–5. We expect no marked departure from economy of force tactics, which have been forced by losses on the battlefield.

In Paris, they may seek to reestablish private contacts. Ho's death may permit them to shift their position.

The bombing halt may test the new leadership. There is a question of how long Ho's death will have an impact. It will not:

—change North Vietnam's goals
—change North Vietnam's neutral stance in the Sino-Soviet dispute
—end the leadership struggle.

The nationalist appeal will fade and they will put greater stress on Marxist doctrine.

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[2] In a September 11 memorandum to Nixon, Kissinger stated that "a series of ten to fifteen-minute briefings" had been prepared, and that he recommended that he open the meeting by introducing the briefers in the following order: "1. Dick Helms (situation in North Vietnam in the wake of Ho's death). 2. General Abrams (military situation). 3. Ambassador Bunker (political situation). 4. Phil Habib (status of Paris negotiations)." (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 139, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. X, September 1969) In another memorandum to the President on September 12, Kissinger suggested yet more definitive topics for the NSC meeting later that day. Kissinger wrote that in addition to the briefings, he thought the meeting "should be comprised of a far-ranging discussion on Vietnam" and that two specific issues, "the second replacement increment under the Vietnamization Program and the general topic of ceasefire" ought to be covered. Regarding the cease-fire, Kissinger wrote: "I believe we should encourage full, frank, and open exchange of views" and that "regardless of your intentions with respect to this subject, I recommend that you do not make a decision at this meeting so that you will maintain flexibility and control." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–024, Special NSC Meeting, 9/12/69, Vietnam)

They will not go to higher levels of combat.

The President: Any questions?

Mr. Kissinger: A brief statement on Hanoi's thinking: There was a question of military versus political, and they are trying to get political. (?)

The President: General Abrams will speak next.

General Abrams: The framework is that infiltration is low. Truck traffic in Laos is at an all time low. If you lay it out in a cyclic pattern of years, we are now at a regular low ebb. But there is a lower total of 96,000 this year.

North Vietnamese imports of trucks since January have been higher than during the same period last year. POL imports are high.

The 559th transportation group in Laos had moved out cadre. They have now come back—1900 of them. Within the past few weeks we found a POL pipeline in Laos, along the DMZ.

It is clear to me that Hanoi has prepared itself for the dry season to use the Laotian corridor as in the past.

Enemy total strength at the beginning of 1969 was 257,000. It is now 230,000.

Since January 1, 1968 they have added 90 battalions. They now have 344 battalions. The bulk of expansion is North Vietnamese. The average strength of the battalions is smaller, from 390 to 240.

They have expanded the structure at the expense of the party. We think this suggests intensified and more pervasive political warfare. And this structure also could accommodate a surge of manpower.

In South Vietnam the threats are:

(1) To the DMZ area. They have made no major effort to date. There has been harassment by fire and small units. But the enemy's presence is at its maximum today with a total of 16 infantry battalions and five artillery battalions in the DMZ area alone and below the river. There are more units further North. We are entering the rainy season in the DMZ now. It dries out in January 1970.

(2) In the III Corps Saigon area. There are four enemy divisions in the area. A division has been added in recent weeks, with two regiments, artillery and sappers.

(3) Two regiments have moved to IV corps from III corps—one NVA and one VC (75% NVA fillers). Both have moved into the Delta. They thus may be strengthening their position in response to a deteriorating situation for them. The North Vietnamese soldiers don't get along with the Southerners and are having some problems. (?) heavy unit (?) for the balance of the year seeking high points followed by periods of rehabilitation. An important time will be the (?) early 1970 situation.

Also, ARVN continues to improve modestly but steadily. On balance, troop reduction so far has had a good effect on the ARVN—at least for the bulk of them. It has strengthened their determination and confidence. This effect is not overwhelming but our troop reduction has at least had a positive effect on the South Vietnamese military.

The President: (? [asked a question about a GVN operation])

General Abrams: It had a good effect. Two regiments moved South. Duc Lap is now under South Vietnamese control. I hope in a way that the battle develops.

Mr. Kissinger: In the next 9 months can one see a possibility of the NVA ([beating?]) up an ARVN unit to show that Vietnamization is[n't] working?

Ambassador Bunker: Thieu believes this.

Secretary Laird: Ben Het did.

General Abrams: They don't know, however. They hit Kontum heavily six months ago. I thought they believed it would be at the Fourth Division. There was no public knowledge that Kontum was a GVN or ARVN responsibility. The real purpose was casualties against the U.S. 4th division.

General Wheeler: In that area in the past they went to Cambodia. This time they reinforced, and then (?).

The President: What is the type of ([infiltration?]) of (?) in October, November and December?

General Abrams: At the end of each calendar year it has dropped off. The cycle is the same, although not the degree.

The President: And what about these months?

General Abrams: It declined in October, November and December.

The President: There is a necessity of a political decision. This is a political necessity.

The President: I don't buy the lull consensus. It is what we want to see. Do you think our casualties will be lower in November, December and January?

General Abrams: Right. They will build in January, February and March and April.

The President: What is your report today on the situation with regard to the effect of troop withdrawal on the morale of U.S. forces?

General Abrams: I have seen none.

The President: What about the refusal situation?

General Abrams: This has happened before.

The President: Any grumbling?

General Abrams: So far, no discernable effect.

The President: I address this question to General Abrams and Director Helms: What is morale like in Hanoi? I saw last month's report. As a result, the quality of their forces recedes.

Director Helms: It is about the same. There has been no change.

The President: We hear that troop withdrawal has encouraged some Vietnamese and has discouraged others. Are the North Vietnamese bothered by withdrawals?

Director Helms: I think they want us out.

The President: What about the quality of the North Vietnamese Army?

General Abrams: There are two categories. In III Corps their quality has dropped due to casualties. But in the DMZ area and Ashau area they have time to train hard. They always do very well there. They can go back North. In the South, their deterioration is real.

The President: There has been a change in infiltration totals. 45 percent of (?). Do you see significance in this?

General Abrams: There has been a change in tactics towards small unit attacks to conserve manpower. Something (?) was good this year and they won't need as many men.

The President: Why?

General Abrams: We are not sure if it is a necessity with (them?) or if it is a conscious decision.

The President: All this bears on the interpretation of what have been lower casualties by the North—whether because of political change or because of necessity.

My point is that in October, November, and December infiltration will be important. It could be for Paris. You think it is going to be low in the next three months?

General Abrams: Yes. But they are targeted against U.S. casualties. 50 percent of the total effort is to try (?). The ([gap?]) between U.S. casualties this year and last year is significant. It has not succeeded.

The President: Back to infiltration: you believe that infiltration is designed to support their tactics, but they have missed, and their casualties have been greater. How do our casualties compare in the first 8 months of 1969 with those of the first 8 months of 1968?

General Abrams: They are below, but not much. (The figures then listed in the notes are clearly inaccurate.)

General Wheeler: The enemy is losing more than he figured. The enemy thought he would save more but he hasn't.

The President: I think we are not seeing a real lull. This situation is consistent with a change in tactics, etc. Except that infiltration will have to be stepped up. We must get moving then. (?)

Mr. Kissinger: Are there any changes we are not picking up?

General Abrams: This is possible but we have just started.

Mr. Kissinger: Why did we not pick that up?

General Wheeler: Since the bombing halt, we have seen the railroad go down to the south of Vinh. They move now by ([rail?]) and barge. This bypasses the ([trail?]). We receive fewer reports.

Mr. Kissinger: Does this mean we may (?)

Secretary Rogers: My view is on the figures which are combined; in March it started to drop. May, June and July were all the same. We have had five months drop. This was much different from (?) I think this is significant. So does the intelligence community.

The President: They did this last year too. But 148,000 (?) in 1968 versus 50,000 in 1969 is different.

Secretary Laird: The figures are OK but the interpretation is not.

Secretary Rogers: Assuming the new intelligence is correct, will they be able to conduct the same kind of war with fewer men?

General Abrams: I think they can.

The President: In 1969, 200,000 North Vietnamese were killed and only 50,000 out of the pipeline. So they are in for trouble. It will hurt.

General Abrams: Considering the DMZ units and (?), they get replacements we don't count. We must add these to the infiltration figures.

The President: We must watch October, November and December.

General Abrams: I would like to say that they have problems. Saigon was a target in 1969. They put in ten new regiments through March. They wanted Saigon. Then Tay Ninh. Now they are at Loc Minh in the (?) and rubber plantations. On our side their structure is thinly manned and they can take more people.

Secretary Laird: There is no question about the intelligence figures.

Secretary Rogers: It would seem that enemy forces have dropped more than ours. They can reinforce but . . .

The President: We have to look at the figures in the next 3 months.

Ambassador Bunker: In Thieu's statement on July 1 he went as far as he could go. It caused uneasiness. He has been several months ahead. Your July 30 visit dispelled this. You said he had gone as far as he would or should go.

The next push was the troop reduction line. This has been constructive but can go either way depending on (?) and the rate. So far this, is so. (?) If it is too fast it will cause a collapse. If done by your criteria, it would be a constructive development.

With regard to Phase II of pacification, Thieu wants to expedite it in intensity and in area covered. It has gotten off to a good start and

has moved ahead of schedule. The year-end goals will be met by October 31. Fifty percent of Hamlets were A or B by the end of July. General Abrams's support has been extremely potent. Less and less of the population is under the VC—86% are relatively secure, 5% are under the VC and 7% are in contested areas. (AH: [Al Haig] This adds up to 98%.)

Thieu is conscious of the need for the political contest to come.

I will next speak about the government reorganization. Thieu had 3 objectives:

—to achieve a majority in both houses and improve relations with the army.
—to improve the effectiveness of the government.
—to broaden its base.

The first has been done; there has been progress in the second; but only partial success in the third. Some Buddhists declined to cooperate, as did Tran van Don. But the cabinet is better than the press indicates and the base is broader. The Vice President was a 1969 candidate. Two parties are represented in the government, as (?) in the Deputy Prime Minister. In general it is an improvement. The problem was in finding a successor to (?) that he tried to get a civilian but couldn't find one. Thieu was told that he would be criticized but he went ahead with the military man anyway. The new Prime Minister, Khiem, is a Southern Buddhist and a good man.

With regard to enemy intentions, the lull is more a political act but has been (?) by our actions. Losses are up for June, July and August. Defections are up. They have suffered 65,000 losses.

(There was then an interruption in note taking.)

Secretary Rogers: (?) (?) think he will have to when he does it.

The President: Will Thieu expand his base further?

Secretary Rogers: Not for a while.

The President: He is inhibited by these factors.

Secretary Rogers: We bring in the opposition. Why can't he? Even as advisers.

Ambassador Bunker: He will do this.

Secretary Rogers: Big Minh.

Ambassador Bunker: (?)

Mr. Kissinger: To what degree is their failure to enter the government due to a fear of joining till they know it is a winner?

Ambassador Bunker: To some degree. They also (?) (?) jobs open.

The President: This was also true in the United Kingdom with Churchill.

What did Thieu and his colleagues think about this lull business? For five years we have been kidding ourselves. The statistics have been wrong. It is to our interest for the U.S. to say there has been a lull in reaction to our initiatives. I know this. But the point is we have got to grapple with the facts, the real world. I am impressed with the drop in infiltration. This means something. Director Helms says that morale is down. There are more reports than ever of this.

There were inaccurate reports in 1965 and 1966 that ARVN was good. But the point now is has there been a change? Our program (?) has not changed very much. The bombing will have been stopped for a year in November. They have done nothing unless these figures mean something. What about this?

Ambassador Bunker: A change in tactics is (?) (?). They need to conserve their forces, but there has been no change in their ultimate objectives. They will try to encourage us to withdraw and then come back when we are down from higher levels.

The President: What about General Abrams?

General Abrams: I have the same view.

The President: I don't see there is any argument. But how do we use this change? There are three wars—on the battlefield, the Saigon political war, and U.S. politics. At home here it would be great to lower the level of forces and reduce casualties because I am doing it in (?). We can use this but we must know what we are doing. We shouldn't confuse our policy with the U.S. political dialogue. Can we survive (?) I am not criticizing—there has been a change.

Mr. Habib: I can't report real progress. There have been 30 plenary and 10 private significant meetings. The character of the plenary meetings is quite clear. They push the 10 points and strongly demand that we get out and overthrow the GVN. The 10 points can be drawn down to U.S. unconditional withdrawal and a coalition government. We have emphasized our May 14 propositions and July 11 statement.

At the private meetings there has been no give at all. The style is different. They stress the 10 points, especially the 2 above.

They continue to refuse to deal with the GVN. We have offered bilateral and quadrilateral but they have refused these. They have not reacted to our probes. They have adopted a strategy of waiting us out. They might do this even if they were willing to negotiate. We have probed the lull but have gotten no reply.

The President: When?

Mr. Habib: Two and one half months ago, and it has been repeated. We have never had an answer.

The President: Do you think they are hung up on face?

Mr. Habib: No. They are interested in the facts only. We gave a signal in December.

The President: I had a talk with Rusk months ago. He spoke strongly on the understanding. He said (?).

Secretary Rogers: There was no agreement. We find no proof.

The President: We got nothing but talk. Rusk said they knew.

Mr. Habib: They understood but didn't agree.

Secretary Rogers: There was no agreement just an understanding. They are probing our position. No (?) issues have narrowed.

We believe the fundamental issue is that if they go for a political settlement withdrawal is then solved. They want to prejudice Saigon's response.

They want to continue the Paris plenary and private meetings.

The President: Why?

Secretary Rogers: They don't want to seem to be in bad faith before world opinion, and they get advantages in Paris with our press—Kraft, etc., with regard to their own propaganda.

The President: Do they want a settlement?

Mr. Habib: If they get what they want. And then a ceasefire . . .

Mr. Kissinger: Also in your technical meetings, they were rigid.

Mr. Habib: We have put forward reasonable positions. The talks give us direct communications.

Secretary Rogers: Also, because our position is reasonable, they see it and the world sees it. Our image is much better.

Mr. Habib: Exactly. Our willingness to negotiate and settle is creditable.

Secretary Laird: This was true with the President's and Thieu's speech, not at Paris.

Secretary Rogers: Suppose they hit the cities, etc. Could we raid the North successfully? Would it mean much?

General Abrams: Any operation shorter than a couple of weeks would not be favorable.

The President: Suppose it was in new terms, with all targets open. One third of their supplies are in Haiphong.

General Abrams: In terms of their supplies, they have got lots and can get more. It would not be an overwhelming disaster, even if we knock out their powerplants.

The President: The dykes?

Mr. Kissinger: There is nothing that can hurt them?

General Abrams: They can carry on.

General Wheeler: There would be no fatal blow through seeking a no-holds-barred solution in a couple of weeks. Before the halt Haiphong was a base. Now they are revetted. The port works well. It would take time and good weather to inflict a blow which could do the job. The powerplants are back revetted, walled, etc.

The President: Would you have stopped the bombing if you had to do it again?

General Abrams: No.

The President: Why?

General Abrams: The pressures would have mounted in Hanoi. They were in real trouble. They pulled units out because they couldn't support them.

The President: Dick, do you think they were in trouble?

Director Helms: Yes, but we can't determine what would have happened if the bombing had continued.

Mr. Habib: It was our view that they were focused on our domestic problem.

The President: Habib suggested that we talk about ceasefire. Bunker has been concerned about how we could do this. When we met with Thieu on his July statement we promised no more moves without give from the other side. Could Thieu take this talk?

Mr. Habib: We think we should begin to discuss this with the GVN. Then we looked at the possibility of offering a ceasefire.

Ambassador Lodge thinks it may be of value depending on your plans and in the light of pressures this fall. You must judge this. (?) seems you would have gone (?) the road toward peace.

It is in this framework in which (?).

We think it should be a general offer, providing we later accept the details in negotiating (?).

With regard to the question of whether it should be a public or private offer, Ambassador Lodge thinks it should be public. Then there are those who believe it should be private and then public.

The President: Ambassador Bunker, what do you think? I believe we should talk about the pros and cons.

Let's get to what Habib says. Since November 1 the enemy has done nothing. We have given up the bombing for nothing. We gave our May 15 offer, and what have we gotten? What would Thieu say? Be candid. The Kalb story—he was in contact with the enemy. Let's have the ([real?]) answer, with no diplomatic language.

Ambassador Bunker: I believe it would depend on the character of a ceasefire. Without enemy withdrawal it would be impossible. I would do nothing but restate our offers. Ambassador Lodge wants

to go further. Thieu can't go along with that unless we get firm conditions:

—mutual withdrawal
—no enemy capital on Vietnam territory
—no suspension of pacification
—rights to GVN movement
—means to deal with terrorism
—cessation of infiltration
—the people can move freely
—restoration of the status of the DMZ.

The President: You have already done that, haven't you?

Mr. Habib: In double talk.

The President: I understand. Lodge wants a simple statement. Then they say yes, then what?

Secretary Rogers: If you assume they say no, then you get a public opinion advantage. We shouldn't propose it but we should talk about it.

Ambassador Bunker: Especially if the enemy (?). We must have an agreed position. We could then look into the pros and cons of a preemptive ceasefire, then get an agreed position.

Secretary Rogers: (?) we have done last (?). We should think it through. We should not do it now. We should talk to Thieu in his own terms.

Mr. Habib: Our position in Paris is that (?) have conditions—preemptive or responsive. Their Foreign Minister raised this question. They are concerned we are up to something.

The President: General Abrams?

General Abrams: I find it a very difficult thing to contemplate, Mr. President. I feel I know the situation in South Vietnam but not elsewhere. Where we are in South Vietnam is due to the application of raw power. That is why the enemy is where he is, why pacification has moved. Why all (?). When you turn off the power you have got an entirely new ball game.

The President: But with the conditions.

Secretary Laird: Why not accept the enemy's offer and then negotiate and prolong them.

The President: (?)

General Wheeler: If we had a frontal war we could do so. In this war where the enemy is pock-marked in the countryside, unless you have verified withdrawal plus other factors, you are giving the enemy the ultimate advantage. To get me to support a ceasefire we must have stringent (?).

The President: You say that a ceasefire and then negotiations is wrong.

General Wheeler: Disastrous.

Secretary Rogers: Why is it more advantageous to North Vietnam than South Vietnam?

General Wheeler: Because they won't live up to it.

Secretary Rogers: Then you are not talking about a ceasefire.

The President: Also, what is the line between fighting and terrorism? 35%?

Director Helms: Also, they are in our ball park.

The President: (?). Now, with regard to Vietnamization, as you know, a case can be made from our public opinion for a complete announcement. There could be a strong case on this. This is the Clifford position—to set a time and then announce it.

The other way is to make it non-automatic, to keep the plans secret, but not the commitment to it. We won't execute it without diplomatic and military progress. (?). Both are key factors but they are different. Mel, what is your appraisal on this? Has there been a change since December? (?).

Secretary Laird: No. We (?) only in March.

The President: Have we given the Chiefs what they want?

We can discuss the military side and it is controversial. We can agree on our residual force 18–24 months from now. It visualizes ultimately no U.S. forces in Vietnam.

Any residual of 240,000 men in 18–24–42 months from now doesn't mean the end of the war. I am concerned about our consultations with the TCC's until our game plan is worked out. We must keep the heat on them to keep giving.

We have a problem here of a U.S. and Congress confident that we are moving forward. I have talked to over 100. They are all asked from their districts when we are going. Paris is not reliable. Announcing this plan is what gives confidence. General Abrams is moving forward rapidly.

The President: What do you suggest? An announcement of the whole program?

Secretary Laird: We all read statistics differently. This must stop. We must all read them the same way.

I am concerned about a 36-hour halt—this is the kind of thing which concerns me. It gives the impression we are drifting.

The President: How long will it take publicly.

Secretary Laird: We have a plan to turn over on (?) percent. Announcements would be based on the success of this plan. It is a plan but no figures. Figures would be a mistake.

We must say we have a program. It would have been better without an August date. (?) We are going forward and will stay with it. Paris is not involved.

Ambassador Bunker: I agree with Secretary Laird. It would be a great mistake to set a timetable. It plays into the other fellow's hands. They could sit tight and wait us out.

Admiral ([McCain]): We have four plans.

Mr. Kissinger: If we go down to 250,000 men in support units, would the combat units be out?

General Abrams: Yes, as long as we have some combat support—air and infantry—to protect it.

Secretary Laird: We have some time but we can't wait until the home front erupts. It can't help but get (?) from Congress.

The President: How about the next package. We buy time with troop withdrawal announcements.

Secretary Laird: We will get criticism of the next package.

Mr. Kissinger: General Abrams, when will these withdrawals start to reduce our casualties? If casualties decline, this makes sense. If not, this makes no sense.

General Abrams: This is tough to predict.

Secretary Rogers: During the bombing pause, South Vietnamese casualties were up and ours were down.

The Vice President: Withdrawals can be regarded (?) confidence or weakening in resolve. Is there something hard-nosed we can do to show this is Vietnamization and not a bug out?

The President: Not really, but, it would be necessary to hit the North. I know there is another side too. We have been taking the tough position but . . .

The Vice President: What about the public if not reality?

The President: I disagree with Mel on (?) critics. The May 14 speech and Thieu's statement opened everything. I doubt it—they will never be satisfied. Next we give a ceasefire, then it could be dump Thieu. We will only lose the war on the third front—at home.

The war is going better. Pacification is proceeding.

At home we have had a lull. First as a new administration, then after the May 14 speech, then with the July meeting. Then there will be the next (?) which won't be enough. There have been too many leaks. The 75,000–100,000 story was a deliberate leak.

Bill, what do you think?

Secretary Rogers: If we are talking about the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* . . .

The President: You can't separate them from Congress, they are largely the same.

Secretary Rogers: I have never seen 40% or more opposed to the Administration. If we confuse that with public opinion, it is a mistake.

Most of the public agree with our moves so far. We get heckled but not too bad. We must convince the people we have a program we will follow. If we go ahead with reductions, we will get public support. But if it looks like a public relations program, they will distrust us.

We haven't much in the way of choices. If they think we are going for a military victory the public will leave us. They must know we have a program. We must be able to move ahead quickly and not be held up each time.

The President: You could make the case. Ike had 55 to 60 percent popularity at his best. Johnson had violent opposition from critics and the press who disagreed with the war. He had opposition within his own party. But he had public support until Tet. The President ([withdrew?]). McCarthy dropped to 30% (?), which had a great effect on his decision not to run again.

We expect opposition from columnists.

We have done very well for the last 8 months. But on the other hand, once they get you on the run, it will move fast against us. Then we lose our position with North Vietnam and the confidence of the GVN. What I am saying is, you either favor or oppose the President's conduct of the war. I think you can buy time.

About Hanoi's sensitivity to a new initiative for peace—when will they be able to take over? (?)

General Abrams: We must have a base out before hitting the GVN on this. We have talked about schedules of troop withdrawals and residual forces. The exchanges have gone well. They talk realistically. I don't think we are bugging out.

The President: Everyone is interested in this. I want total security. We should say it was "a general view of the Vietnam situation." I want no discussion of ceasefire. If asked if it was discussed, we should say "we are not going to discuss that." There should be no comment on troop withdrawal. We are not going to discuss what we discussed. A number of decisions will be announced when they are made.

If asked when an announcement is made, we are going to follow a policy which will not reveal when the next announcement is coming.

This requires discipline. I want the maximum impact geared to Paris, Saigon and elsewhere. It will be (?) based on the criteria people.

There will be a written statement on this.

We must cut out the numbers game, cut out (?), and cut out speculation. There will be no discussion of ceasefire at all.

If there is to be progress on this front we must have Bunker talk to Thieu. Premature discussion would kill it.

In the future we must look at casualty and (?) figures. It may be we will want to take advantage of it.

General Mitchell: I agree with Bill and Mel on the domestic front. But I think they are more concerned about drifting. Uncertainty is what hurts. We should say we have a plan and can do it.

The President: We must read the critics knowing what they are after, but we must watch the deeper theme of the people. I personally think Johnson asked for some of his problems, with the bombing halt and overreaction to the critics.

Secretary Rogers: I don't think we should say anything. Later we should say yes, we have a plan and will tell you when it is ready to be announced.

Secretary Laird: I agree with Bill.

The Vice President: Using the three criteria counters the argument for a timetable.

Mr. Kissinger: We need a plan to end the war, not only to withdraw troops. This is what is on peoples' minds.

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121. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to Secretary of Defense Laird[1]

Washington, September 15, 1969.

The President has directed that the Department of Defense should undertake immediately a program to accomplish the following actions with respect to Laos:

—Provide M–16s. (Of a Lao request for 20,000, some 4,000 have been supplied. Provision of the remainder should have a major effect on Lao military effectiveness and morale.)[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 545, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. I, to 31 July 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusive; Eyes Only. Copies were sent to Rogers and Helms.

[2] On September 16 at 2:30 p.m., Laird and Kissinger talked on the telephone. Laird mentioned the inability of the Lao forces to absorb weapons and the fact that they were ending up in the Philippines and elsewhere. Kissinger stated "the President was eager to do the maximum possible. He has been putting heat on me." The President complained that he wanted to do something in Laos, but "everyone tells him he can't do it." Laird suggested sending the rifles in increments of 1 or 2 thousand at a time. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 360, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) In a September 26 memorandum to Laird, Kissinger revised the provision of M–16 rifles as follows: "Provision of 16,000 additional M–16 rifles should be carried out at a rate contingent on the ability of the Lao forces to utilize them effectively. Steps should be taken to expedite the training of the Lao forces in this regard. A monthly

—Provide T–28s for the Lao by shifting them from the Thai and replacing those given up by the Thai. Check the number of qualified Lao pilots and see whether immediate input of more trainees is necessary. If so, initiate an expanded training program in Thailand or elsewhere. Consider the utility of other fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters.

—Ascertain whether more C–47 and C–130 gunships could usefully be deployed.

—See whether logistic and ammunition support to Lao army is adequate, and effect improvement if not. If more pay and allowances would make the Lao fight better, this, too, should be provided.

—Increase artillery support for key points in Laos. Reintroduce a Thai battery or single pieces where they would be able to provide training and also have military value, or institute immediate training for the Lao and prepare to turn over 105's—whichever is better tactically, or even a mix of all. Some artillery support is obviously better than no artillery support, as is now the case.

—Implement better reconnaissance capability and ARDF support on lines of communications into Northern Laos, if lack of information is a limiting factor in our ability to cope. (This may not be so important, with Meo spotters in much of the area.)

The President has asked that you report periodically on the progress of this action program.

Henry A. Kissinger

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report of progress should be made." In an attached memorandum to Nixon, September 19, Kissinger explained: "Mel maintains that such an immediate input [of 16,000 additional M–16s to the Lao forces] would exceed the Lao military's ability to absorb due to lack of training, require prolonged in-country storage and risk unauthorized diversions or pilferage of the weapons." (Both National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 545, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. I, to 31 July 1969)

On March 7, 1970, Laird reported to the President on longer term actions developed by the JCS as part of a comprehensive plan to improve the Lao Government's armed forces. (Ibid., Box 546, Vol. VI, February 1970–31 March 1970)

122. Editorial Note

In a statement that was subsequently recorded for television and radio broadcast, President Nixon announced on September 16, 1969, that after careful consideration with his senior civilian and military advisers, and in full consultation with the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, he was reducing the U.S. troop ceiling in Vietnam from 549,500 to 484,000 by December 15. This amounted to a 65,500 total reduction in the authorized troop ceiling. Because U.S. units were not usually full strength, the actual reduction was approximately 60,000 troops. President Nixon then reviewed the major peace initiatives his administration had made since taking office: renunciation of a military solution, proposing free elections organized by joint commissions under international supervision, withdrawal of all U.S. and allied troops within a year, no retention of bases, negotiation of cease-fire under international supervision to facilitate the process of mutual withdrawal, acceptance of de facto removal of North Vietnamese troops so long as there were guarantees against their return, acceptance of any political outcome based on free elections, and discussion of the National Liberation Front's 10-point program together with plans put forward by other parties. Nixon concluded, "in short, the only item which is not negotiable is the right of the people of South Vietnam to determine their own future free of outside interference." The President stated that in light of all these proposals, it was time for "meaningful negotiations." (*Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* page 718)

The day before giving this speech, President Nixon and his Special Assistant Henry Kissinger discussed the Romanian desire to expedite a negotiated settlement in Vietnam. The President thought that the Romanians might prove helpful, noting that "they want to play a big role." The two men then discussed the Vietnam situation in more general terms. According to notes of their telephone conversation, September 15, at 7:30 p.m.:

"The President said in some way, K's hunch may be correct. They can't simply ignore it. [the Nixon speech?] K said if they do, then they really show they are completely rigid or they have no respect at all. The President said then we would have to find some way of getting that respect. K thought they would do something, but the big question was whether they would do enough. They have been clumsy and they have problems. The President thought that was a good point K made that the intransigence dated from the time of Ho's illness. I think there is something to that. K said if they were politically flexible, they would now try to stall us past our deadline. They have made somewhat of a peaceful move. They have a tough problem. The President said right now if they don't want to be clumsy, they should do exactly what you

suggest, to move to give us a tough problem. K said if Xuan Thuy comes back from Hanoi without anything, then we know they are out to break us and he will be back in the next few days. If the long road had a chance of success, they should keep us on it. They always have open to them that once we are down to lower figures, we will lose our combat effectiveness and then they will hit us. The President said we'll see." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 360, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

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123. National Security Decision Memorandum 24[1]

Washington, September 17, 1969.

TO

The Vice President
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Attorney General
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT

Vietnam

As a result of the September 12 meeting on Vietnam,[2] the President has directed that:

1. Following Ambassador Bunker's return to Saigon, immediate discussions be undertaken with appropriate representatives of the Government of Vietnam with the purpose of determining specific conditions which the GVN considers essential for acceptance of a "Ceasefire." The discussions should be conducted in response to initiatives already taken by the GVN on this subject and should avoid any hint of pressure by the U.S. Government on the South Vietnamese. The views of the South Vietnamese Government should be forwarded to the President as soon as the discussions permit.

2. U.S. officials refrain from public discussion of "Ceasefire" except as required within the framework of the Paris negotiations.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 363, Subject Files, NSDMs. Top Secret; Sensitive.

[2] Document 120.

3. Future decisions on U.S. troop withdrawals be based on full consideration of the three criteria previously enunciated by the President and decisions will be made on an incremental basis as the situation dictates. U.S. officials dealing with the press should therefore be instructed to avoid speculation on future plans, deadlines or timetables for the reduction of the U.S. presence in Vietnam.

Henry A. Kissinger

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124. National Security Study Memorandum 74[1]

Washington, September 17, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Director, U.S. Information Agency

SUBJECT

Planning for Laos

The President has noted that the next crisis in Laos may come during or before the next dry season starting about November. If the Communists push hard militarily or bring pressure on Souvanna Phouma, they may endanger the political balance in Vientiane or force Souvanna into a compromise which leaves our interests unprotected. In order to forestall that eventuality in so far as possible, and to meet it promptly if it arises, he has requested that the following three inter-related studies be carried out:

A. Prepare a paper as to what our behavior will be if the Communists upset the present fragile stability in Laos. Among others, the following questions should be addressed:

(1) At what point do we decide that we no longer have an interest in preservation of the 1962 agreement?

(2) How can we keep from reaching that point? i.e., are there means within our current level of military involvement to persuade the Communists that it is too dangerous to upset the balance? Can we

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 365, Subject Files, NSSM. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusive; Eyes Only. A copy was sent to Wheeler.

forewarn the Communists—possibly through the co-Chairmen and the ICC—that further aggression of the Muong Soui type will require us to take another look at the Geneva Accords and the question whether the Communists have not vitiated them?

(3) What do we do if the point is reached? Do we move into the Panhandle and deprive the Communists of the benefit which they principally sought? Do we encourage the Thai to move into areas of critical importance to them (e.g. Sayaboury) if the Souvanna Government falls? Do we encourage them to do so directly, or to use the enclave for a Lao Government-in-half-exile? How much backing do we provide?

(4) Or do we simply extract what propaganda advantage we can, via the UN and elsewhere?

B. Prepare a plan of retaliation for immediate execution if the Communists attack another Lao keypoint, e.g. B–52 anti-personnel raids. The plan should offer graduated levels of response.

C. Set forth the means for generating maximum publicity concerning Communist pressures in Laos. This would be intended to—

(1) Raise Communist nerves as to what we have in mind;

(2) Prepare public opinion in the US if we have to do something else in Laos (e.g. use B–52's) and provide some protection against the charge of escalation.

The President has directed that the studies be carried out by the East Asian and Pacific Interdepartmental Group.[2]

The studies should be forwarded to the NSC Review Group by October 10, 1969.[3]

Henry A. Kissinger

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[2] In a telephone discussion with Under Secretary Richardson, September 22, at 4:10 p.m., Kissinger stated: "The President has the strong view that we ought to do more in Laos to show the North Vietnamese that they can't use it as a bargaining point in Vietnam. He has asked the bureaucracy what they can do and he always gets a 'no.' He is very restive about this." Kissinger then complained to Richardson that "We have to get Godley to take a more responsive attitude to the President's wishes." Richardson responded that "we need a better understanding of the general policy line" towards Laos, noting that "the situation on the ground there has changed a lot." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 364, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

[3] In NSSM 76, September 27, the President directed that this East Asia and Pacific Interdepartmental Group, a regional interagency sub-group of the Senior Interagency Group, "undertake a thorough review of U.S. policy towards Laos. The study should include full consideration of U.S. objectives and policy options vis-à-vis Laos in light of the various courses of action which might be adopted by the Communists in the area." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 365, Subject Files, NSSM)

125. Editorial Note

On September 27, 1969, Assistant to the President Henry Kissinger met with Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin at the latter's request who asked that the White House intervene to arrange an agreement between Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Secretary of State Rogers on the Middle East. Kissinger had arranged with President Nixon that during this conversation Nixon would call and tell Kissinger to inform Dobrynin that Vietnam was a critical issue in U.S.-Soviet relations and that the Soviet Union should be aware of it. (Kissinger, *White House Years*, page 304) Prior to meeting Dobrynin, Kissinger spoke on the telephone with the President at 3:15 p.m. on September 27. The President told Kissinger: "It is very important to leave no illusions on the decision he has made on the whole Southeast Asia area. It is very important for everyone to realize the whole situation is changed. We would have been delighted to have nice personal relations [with the Soviet Union], but that boat is gone by now, and that is that. He wants to be sure this is understood; and that we reached this conclusion reluctantly." Kissinger stated that he understood. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 364, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

Kissinger met with Dobrynin and informed him that "there was no need for White House intervention" on the Middle East and stated: "that Dobrynin should understand our elemental position. We had made several communications to the Soviet Union on Vietnam to which they had never replied. While this did not inhibit normal diplomatic relations, it made it very difficult for the White House to go beyond what normally occurred on the diplomatic level.

"At this point, the President called. When the conversation was completed, I commented that the President had called me at a providential moment because it enabled me to tell the President directly what was being discussed. To us Vietnam was the critical issue. We were quite prepared to discuss other subjects, but the Soviet Union should not expect any special treatment until Vietnam was solved. They should also have no illusions about the seriousness with which we took Hanoi's attempt to undermine the domestic position of the President. Dobrynin asked me whether there was any hope for a coalition government. I replied that we had covered the subject at great length previously and that I could add nothing. It was a pity that all our efforts to negotiate had failed. The President had told me in his call that the train had just left the station and was now headed down the track. Dobrynin responded that he hoped it was an airplane and not a train and would leave some maneuvering room. I said the President chooses his words very carefully and that I was sure he meant train.

"Dobrynin then asked what our problem had been in the past. I said that every negotiation turned into a discussion on our readiness to accept the 10 points. We could not negotiate in a forum of ultimatums. Dobrynin said that my own conversations with the Vietnamese seemed to have gone rather well. I asked him what he meant. He said Hanoi had told Moscow that they had been very impressed by my presentation and thought I understood Vietnamese conditions very well. I replied that if this were true the next move was up to them.

"Dobrynin then engaged in a lengthy exposition to the effect that the Soviet Union, for its own reasons, was interested in peace in Vietnam and had in the past often been helpful. I countered that we had no illusions about Soviet help in the past. It had been considerably in the interest of Hanoi and had been largely tactical. Dobrynin said that he wanted to assure me of Moscow's continued interest in improved relations with the U.S., but it was getting very difficult to convince Moscow of our goodwill. There had been no real progress on any subject. For example, we could have been more generous on trade liberalization. I said the most important issue was Vietnam. As soon as Vietnam was out of the way and especially if the Russians took an understanding attitude, we would go further. Dobrynin smiled and said that I had an unusual ability to link things together. I told him that we had hoped to have a reply on SALT. Dobrynin said there would be a reply in due course but did not give any indication as to when.

"Dobrynin returned to the subject of Soviet interest in improving relations with us. I said we reciprocated this feeling, especially after Vietnam was out of the way." (Memorandum of Conversation, September 27; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/HAK, 1969 [Part 1])

On October 1 Kissinger sent a brief memorandum to the President assuring Nixon that he had made the four points to Dobrynin: that "Vietnam was the critical issue," that "there would be no special treatment for the Soviet Union until Vietnam was solved," that "we took seriously Hanoi's attempt to undermine the President's domestic position," and "the train had left the station and was headed down the track." Kissinger also informed Nixon that Dobrynin responded that he hoped there might be "some maneuvering room," that Kissinger's private conversations in Paris had impressed Hanoi, and that Moscow wanted improved relations with the United States but had not yet seen any progress. (Ibid.)

126. Notes of a Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, September 27, 1969, 4:40 p.m.

[Omitted here is discussion of the Dobrynin–Kissinger meeting; see Document 125. They also discussed the Middle East, U.S.-Soviet relations, SALT, the Sino-Soviet split, China, and Romania.]

Getting back to D and Vietnam, P asked K whether he saw much movement. K's response was that the fact that D told him about his Paris conversation, and that Hanoi considers that the most useful conversation they have had, he (K) considers positive. D had said in watching the President's news conference,[2] it was clear the President isn't going to make any major concessions, and that it was useful to get this on the table. K thinks we will get a move within the next month.

P mentioned the demonstrations coming up on October 15. He said the Democratic National Chairman had been meeting with the doves, at the same time of his press conference, to make Vietnam a political issue. P said he didn't hit this hard with Haldeman, but he feels the real attack should be on them. K agreed, saying they got us into the war. P said our people have to start fighting harder. K said the press conference was essential and extremely helpful. He thinks events of the last two or three weeks show the long route cannot possibly work. The President agreed, especially with our 60,000-man withdrawal, reduction of the draft by 50,000, and Ho Chi Minh's death. The doves and the public are making it impossible to happen. He asked K, if in his planning, he could pick this up so that we make the tough move before the 15th of October. K said yes. P said he had been wondering if we shouldn't—he doesn't want to appear to be making the tough move after the 15th just because of the rioting at home. K said there is a problem, however—if Hanoi takes us seriously, and they wouldn't have told Moscow if they weren't taking it seriously, we shouldn't confuse them. If we want them to make the move, we should give them time—two weeks. His only worry is that if we went ahead with the tough move before the 15th—and there is a 10% chance Hanoi might want to move, if we hit them before they have a chance to make the move, it will look as if we tricked them. He said the President might want to consider another press conference before the 15th or a television report, saying "these people (demonstrators, etc.) are dividing the

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File. No classification marking.

[2] Reference is to the press conference of September 26; for text see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 748–758.

country and making it impossible to settle the problem on a reasonable basis." P said he would just as soon have them demonstrate against the plan. If we went ahead and moved, the country is going to take a dimmer view after the move than before. P would like to nip it before the first demonstration, because there will be another one on November 15. P reminded that Laird had said for three months after we do this, it will have relatively high public support. K said as an assistant, he had to give P the dark side. He suggested again the possibility of P going on television before the demonstration—possibly around Oct 10.

P said okay; they had had an interesting day; and he would see K on Monday. If Rogers calls, P will try to cool off that thing. K said Rogers can be generally positive but defer an answer for two weeks.

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127. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, September 29, 1969, 5:23–6 p.m.

SUBJECT

Planning for Laos and the Sino-Soviet Hostilities Paper (Revision of September 25, 1969)

PARTICIPATION

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
Marshall Green
William Cargo

Defense
G. Warren Nutter

CIA
Thomas H. Karamessines

JCS
Vice Admiral Nels C. Johnson

NSC Staff
John Holdridge
William G. Hyland
Colonel Robert M. Behr

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Meeting Minutes, Originals, 1969 and 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room. Colonel Behr sent these minutes to Kissinger under cover of a September 30 memorandum.

Summary of Decisions

1. Two papers will be developed on Laos:

a. The WSAG will produce on a priority basis a short-term contingency plan to deal with an anticipated Communist offensive in Laos.
b. The appropriate NSC/IG will produce a report which develops a longer term view of where the U.S. wishes to go in Laos. (This paper can be delayed for a few weeks.)

3. The WSAG will review the short-term contingency plan before October 5, 1969.

The meeting began at 5:23 P.M. Kissinger outlined the purpose of the meeting. The President, he said, is restive about the situation in Laos and is seeking ideas on how to stabilize the situation. What occurs in Laos has a direct bearing on the negotiations in Paris and the security of Thailand. A collapse of the situation in Laos will present him with serious problems—roughly parallel to a similar situation were it to develop in Thailand but without a diplomatic agreement to underpin a U.S. response. The solutions proposed to date have not been particularly useful. Moreover, within the Government there has arisen a reluctance to deal with the problem. While this reluctance may be understandable, it does not provide the President meaningful alternative courses of action.

As a consequence of recent NVN troop movements into Laos and the imminence of the dry season, a short-term contingency plan is needed. This, Kissinger said, should be done on a priority basis by the WSAG. Green was asked to chair this working group. Another, longer term paper setting out where we wish to go in Laos should be developed by the appropriate NSC/IG. This paper can be delayed for a few weeks.

The Group then reviewed the tactical situation in Laos, noting that recent inactivity on the part of NVN/Pathet Lao troops is somewhat anomalous when viewed against a history of years of military pressure predictable both in time and intensity. A number of salient observations were made:

1. The Communist forces were taken aback by unusually effective military operations conducted by the RLG. Particularly damaging was the interdiction and destruction of quantities of matériel.

2. Despite recent RLG successes, the long-term military situation is not good. Any prognosis would have to favor the Communists. They probably have the capability to take Laos but have not done so because they:

a. have generally had free use of the Ho Chi-Minh trail,
b. are unwilling to tempt U.S. retaliation,
c. consider that anti-war sentiment in the U.S. can work toward their objective thereby reducing their incentives to seek a military solution.

3. The Communists will, however, conduct an offensive in the Plain of Jars during the forthcoming dry season. They wish to secure Muong Soui and threaten but not move against Vientiane and Luang Prabang.

Green observed that, while the situation in Laos is serious, it is not altogether gloomy. There have been indications of low morale among NVN forces and there are political options open to Souvanna which might be effective. While he is in the U.S. he can call for serious negotiations with Hanoi, working through UN channels and with the Russians and French. If effective, such moves could inhibit a NVN counter-attack.

Kissinger said that part of the WSAG contingency plan should be an outline of the U.S. approach to Souvanna when he is in the country. He noted that other U.S. courses of action, which represent the current inclinations of the President, have been reported to the departments. These should also be noted in the plan. What needs to be done now is to add new and imaginative political/military options which tend toward a tougher approach than has been suggested heretofore. If the NSC Review Group or the WSAG find that the cons of a harder line outweigh the pros, they are at liberty to so report to the President. But in all fairness, a full range of possibilities must be considered. In that context, and recognizing the President's repeated interest in increased air activity, the option of B–52 strikes in Laos has to be evaluated.

Green then asked Kissinger about the form of the Laos contingency paper.

Kissinger outlined a four-step approach:

1. A brief history of the past few months to serve as point of departure—from a platform of facts.
2. An identification of probable flash points.
3. A catalog of integrated political/military actions (including those now underway) that would tend to deter NVN adventurism.
4. An identification and evaluation of suitable U.S. courses of action, should deterrence fail.

The paper as outlined above should be prepared before Souvanna's arrival on October 7th. Kissinger wondered if the paper could be ready for review by the WSAG toward the end of the week. Green said that his working group would work toward a deadline of October 2nd.

[Omitted here is discussion of the Sino-Soviet hostilities study.]

128. Memorandum From John Holdridge of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, September 30, 1969.

SUBJECT

CIA Study of the North Vietnamese Leadership[2]

CIA's analytical unit has come up with a very able and lengthy study on possible Hanoi policy and leadership after Ho. Although there are no stimulating new lines of speculation in the piece, it provides a very sound and readable evidential backup for the general views on the probable leadership and policy held at present by most "experts". Unfortunately, no summary of consequence is provided with the study (CIA has somehow gained the impression that you don't like summaries), so we have extracted the main thoughts and conclusions and set them out below.

CIA believes that:

—The leadership in the DRV has long been divided on proper tactics for fighting the war, on the priorities for achieving Communist objectives in SVN, and on the degree to which DRV resources should be contributed to the effort.

—The cautious approach has been pushed primarily by Truong Chinh with the most notable example of his strategy being his report of May 1968. This report, first published in September 1968, had the flavor of a policy approach which had won out after considerable debate. It set forth a prescription for protracting the SVN war (after the great Communist losses of Tet 1968), for emphasizing the withdrawal of the U.S., and of settling on terms far short of maximum goals. Subsequently DRV conduct of the war tended to confirm that Chinh's prescription was being followed.

—Military tactics, for example, changed to a de-emphasis of big unit operations and a renewed effort to strengthen grass roots military units. This continued to the present.

—The adoption of Chinh's line was a rebuke to Le Duan, the other main contender for Ho's mantle who, over the years, has consistently

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 139, Vietnam Country Files, Vol. X, September 1969. Secret. Sent for information. A stamped note on the memorandum indicates Kissinger saw it October 14.

[2] Intelligence Memorandum No. 1851/69, September 24, "North Vietnam After Ho Chi Minh: The Policy and Leadership Implications," attached but not printed.

pushed for a more aggressive strategy in SVN. (This history is ably detailed in the CIA study which also contains an impressive batch of materials showing that Duan was the main author of the Tet 1968 campaign.)

—Chinh's 1968 speech also covered problems on the North Vietnamese home front and developed the thesis that a balance should be reached in Hanoi policy between the twin objectives of building the North and unifying the South. Chinh, always an orthodox hardliner on Communist agricultural policy, pushed for more emphasis on socialization as opposed to private enterprise in this sector. Although socialist practices have lost ground in the pressures of the war, the regime is sticking in theory to Chinh's policy line. Le Duan, on the other hand, has advocated a more pragmatic approach on agriculture.

—On the issue of negotiations and how the DRV ought to conduct them, the positions of the two main contenders for the leadership are not as clear as on other questions. There is nothing in the record to suggest that either one advocates a significantly different approach from that so far followed by the Communists at Paris.

Who Will Win Out

—In CIA's view the evidence on the leadership lineup since Ho's death shows it about the same as it has always been. Since the regime has turned away from some of Le Duan's policies, however, this may have a bearing on how real power is distributed.

—For now, the regime will try to demonstrate unity; however, the Agency believes fundamental problems of authority cannot be avoided for long. A really functioning collective leadership seems unrealistic, even for the short term. The elements for a bitter party feud are present and could lead to indecisive, ineffective policies, or to a debilitating struggle for power. Unfortunately, no confident prediction can be made on the way it will come out.

How Policy Will Go

—CIA feels the regime has been moving along new policy lines for over a year. In the DRV these include the slowdown in infiltration, more Marxism in economics, and greater efforts to improve government and party organization. In the South, the combat pace has been slackened and preparations made for the longer haul. At Paris, a new political program and new political organizations have been introduced to help shift the struggle from the military to the political realm.

—Why these steps were taken is not clear: On the evidence, Hanoi could be preparing for a stepup in the war next year, for further efforts at protraction, or for bringing the war to a fairly early conclusion.

—CIA doubts a stepup, primarily because of the lack of physical signs in the South. They also note Chinese Communist distaste for DRV

policy during the past year which suggested Hanoi was seeking less than an all out victory in SVN. (There has been a slight warm-up lately between Peking and Hanoi, at least superficially—see below.)

—CIA thinks Hanoi is preparing both to protract the war if necessary and for an early settlement, perhaps expecting cracks soon in the allied side. They believe this approach will be continued after Ho, although in specific terms, it might take a number of shapes which could unpredictably affect the course of the negotiations.

Comment: The Agency's assessment of the leadership seems generally sound to us. We are inclined to think, however, that there is probably very little chance of any significant Hanoi policy concessions in the negotiations during the predictable future. Everything we have seen from the North Vietnamese since Ho's death at least suggests an inclination to stand pat and possibly a hardening of policy. In the latter respect, we are struck by the seeming warmth which is now developing between Peking and Hanoi, a situation which has occurred since CIA's memo was produced. It is true, however, that it has often seemed darkest just before the dawn in terms of DRV policy breaks at Paris.

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129. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, October 2, 1969.

SUBJECT

Contingency Military Operations Against North Vietnam

You asked me to consider alternatives to our present policy in Vietnam. One such alternative is a series of short, sharp military blows

[1] Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 45, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Vietnam Contingency Planning Sept.–Oct. 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. A handwritten note at the top of the first page reads: "Duck Hook Plan." The memorandum was not initialed by Kissinger and was not seen by Nixon. Kissinger recounts in *White House Years* that on October 17 he recommended the President defer consideration of Duck Hook until Kissinger could assess the rate of infiltration for the remainder of the year. (p. 285) Attached to this memorandum is a September 10 memorandum from R.C. Robinson to Kissinger that outlines responsibilities among the White House staff for preparing contingency plans in conjunction with Duck Hook.

against North Vietnam designed to bring them to serious negotiations and an honorable settlement. This paper is an initial discussion of what this course would involve.

The paper discusses the objective of such a course, the military concept including targets, possible reactions and U.S. counteractions and an index of the other papers.

The Objective:

Our basic objective is to give Hanoi incentive to negotiate a compromise settlement through a series of military blows. We initially assumed that such blows might best be delivered at targets directly related to Hanoi's capacity to support the war in the south, the objective of previous bombings. We did not find this feasible, however, and decided that hitting targets of more general strategic importance would be more effective.

Our basic goal subsumes several specific military and political objectives:

(i) To persuade the North Vietnamese, through effective military action, and an explicit willingness to repeat it, that the alternative to compromise is unacceptable damage to their society.

(ii) At the same time, to convey to Hanoi and others that our goal is *not* the total destruction of the country or the regime, which would invite major outside intervention.

(iii) Thus, to present the Soviets and Chinese with actions too limited to justify a military confrontation with us, yet effective and firm enough to forestall circumvention and promote their eventual influence on Hanoi to compromise.

Accordingly, supporting objectives would be:

(iv) To impose a substantial physical isolation of North Vietnam and destroy vital targets sufficient to confront Hanoi with military and economic disruption and deprivation, involving costly and time-consuming restoration or countermeasures. Our immediate military objective would be significant impact on North Vietnam as a society—*not* simply a resumption of bombing aimed at reducing their support of the war in the south.

(v) To strike and maintain a political posture clearly immune to all likely pressures against continuing the action so long as Hanoi refuses to compromise.

What we would be saying by our actions is that:

—the NVN demands for our unconditional surrender are utterly unacceptable.

—we will go to almost any lengths to end the war quickly.

—we have decided to give NVN incentives to end the war by compromise sooner, rather than later.

—we will keep the negotiating avenue open, essentially on the basis of our May 14th (eight-point) proposal.

Military Concept:

The concept involves a number of air and naval actions, grouped into intense phases of short duration, e.g., four strike days, possibly extended over a week by the variability of the weather. These actions would be markedly different from the previous air and naval operations against NVN, which constituted a spasmodic campaign against targets not in sanctuary and which were primarily related to support of the war in the south. The military actions contemplated in this paper, in addition to being intense over a short term, would (a) be directed against targets of a more strategic nature to achieve lasting military and economic effect, (b) confront Hanoi with a fait accompli—that is, the destruction of a significant target which wouldn't require continuous follow-up bombing—and (c) thereby generate strong psychological impact on the DRV leadership.

The basic military action would be the partial isolation of NVN by aerial mining of the six deep-water ports and initial interdiction of the Northeast Rail Line. The sea quarantine would be subsequently maintained by both periodic reseeding of the minefields and continuing air and naval operations offshore against NVN watercraft. Should subsequent phases be required, intensified interdiction of the rail lines or alternate routes would reinforce the isolation of NVN.

The initial mining operation would be accompanied by the near-simultaneous *disruption of the enemy air order-of-battle* and *attacks upon several groups of critical economic and war-supporting facilities in NVN.* These groups have been selected on the basis that their destruction or neutralization would:

—cause deep psychological impact on the Hanoi leadership.
—signal the return to the hardships and frustration of the earlier bombing period for NVN.
—cause significant physical damage, representing major capital investments and reconstruction efforts.
—halt most modern industrial production.
—prevent most foreign exchange earnings.
—increase sharply the required imports of essential military and economic goods.
—disrupt extensively normal living conditions, public services and transport, and both urban and rural labor forces.

There would then be a pause in major offensive action to await a diplomatic response from Hanoi. During the pause, however, we would probably need offshore air and naval action to maintain the sea quarantine. The level of these actions would depend upon the NVN efforts to sweep or bypass the minefields.

Subsequent phases, if necessary, would deal with NVN reactions to counter or moderate the effects of the first phase, as well as include attacks upon additional critical groups of facilities for increasing impact. At Tab A[2] is a conceptual plan along these lines.

The critical facilities include at least 29 installations in NVN that would be significant targets for attack under this concept. These are, by groups:

—five complexes in the Haiphong port area.
—six electric power stations.
—four airfields (with all but one of the 119 combat aircraft in NVN).
—three manufacturing facilities (cement, machinery, and coal processing).
—five storage facilities (POL, high-value imports and trucks).
—five transportation targets (three bridges, two railyards).
—the levee system in the Red River Delta.

The Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff are currently preparing an integrated plan along these lines. Tab B is preliminary in nature pending receipt of these plans. For illustrative purposes, a sample package of actions which might be conducted over two periods of four strike days each is as follows:

Phase I—aerial mining of the six deep-water ports.

—destruction or neutralization of the NVN air order-of-battle (about 120 jet aircraft).
—neutralization of five transportation targets, three of which are associated with the initial interdiction of the Northeast Rail Line.
—destruction of six key electric power plants.
—destruction of five major storage facilities.

Phase II—destruction or neutralization of possibly reconstituted NVN air order-of-battle.

—destruction of key facilities in the Hanoi–Haiphong complex.
—intensified interdiction of a probably expanded NE road–railroad route to China.
—breaching of the levee system in the Red River Delta.

These actions run the risk of losses of U.S. aircraft (perhaps up to five per cent) and some of their crews, as well as inflicting considerable NVN civilian casualties.

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[2] Attached but not printed are Tabs A–H: Tab A—"Conceptual Plan of Operations;" Tab B—"Assessment of Military Actions;" Tab C—"NVN Actions and U.S. Courses of Action;" Tab D—"Soviet Actions and U.S. Courses of Action;" Tab E—"Chinese Actions and U.S. Courses of Action;" Tab F—"Integrated Diplomatic and Military Scenario;" Tab G—"Draft Presidential Speech;" and Tab H—"Major Questions."

The probability of success is heavily dependent on the weather, although some portions of the over-all operation could almost always be accomplished. For example, the sea mining could be executed in about an hour during 80 per cent of the days in November and December. Using all-weather aircraft, we could mine in about one day anytime. At the other extreme, however, the weather suited for bombing of the key bridges in the transportation target group occurs about one day out of four in November. Thus, for the sample Phase I, we could expect a high probability of partial success—i.e., the establishment of the sea quarantine—but less chance of accomplishing the desired effect on all the targets within a four-day period. For this reason, some flexibility is required, either in the duration of the phase or in the expected effect on the target groups.

Actions and Counteractions:

We have made an initial estimate of possible actions by NVN, the Soviet Union, and the CPR, with possible U.S. counteractions. Below is an indication of what is touched upon in the respective tabs, which I recommend you read.

North Vietnam (see Tab C):

We can expect Hanoi to demonstrate extremely tough resistance. Its leadership will make judgments on the basis of our estimated intentions (whether U.S. attacks are an act of desperation or the beginning of a long and persistent campaign, regardless of consequences); estimates of its ability to receive sufficient external assistance to permit a viable economy and estimates of whether its political structure can withstand the strain of a sustained U.S. campaign. Hanoi, thus, is likely to respond with measures designed to exert maximum psychological pressure on the U.S. Administration, threatening to expand the war by calling for foreign "volunteers," initiating a large-scale anti-U.S. propaganda campaign, suggesting through a break-off in the Paris talks that a peaceful settlement is no longer possible, conceivably stepping up communist military activities in Laos and Cambodia, or even offering a cease-fire.

A movement toward increased NVN military actions will be limited by her ability to develop alternate supply lines through China and a reluctance to call for volunteers.

Soviet Union (see Tab D):

The Soviets have always been disturbed by the prospect of the action envisioned in this option, because they would be confronted with a direct challenge and with difficult choices. We can expect them to undertake various efforts to circumvent or mitigate the effect of our actions. They would almost certainly make a major effort to get supplies

to NVN and to replace the losses inflicted on the NVN air order-of-battle. They might provide personnel for various NVN operations, including air defense. We must be prepared to spill Soviet blood and to inflict damage to Soviet ships, if this proves necessary for the effective implementation of our plan. We must also be prepared for Soviet responses outside the area of Vietnam, such as in Berlin. We should expect major political pressures, but the chances of major Soviet pressure to induce NVN toward moderation of her position are no better than even if Hanoi decides to remain intransigent. If Hanoi shows some disposition to move constructively, the Soviets would encourage it since Moscow almost certainly estimates that over time Hanoi can achieve its objectives in the south by political means.

Communist China (see Tab E):

Peking will attempt through offers of economic and military assistance and some political pressures to keep Hanoi in the war, but probably will follow its past policy of avoiding overt intervention and a consequent direct confrontation with the U.S. so long as Hanoi's estimated existence as a socialist state does not appear to be threatened. Peking will support Hanoi politically and diplomatically, principally by an intense anti-U.S. propaganda campaign, but will likely move toward an accommodation with the USSR if, as expected, the Soviet response is anything less than acceptance of a full-scale confrontation of its own with the U.S. Peking will return Chinese forces withdrawn from North Vietnam, possibly surfacing them as "volunteers," and will offer South China ports and LOCs to move supplies into the north. Some degree of cooperation with the USSR in supplying Hanoi can be expected. Peking will provide a sanctuary to DRV aircraft diverted from North Vietnam. The Chinese might attempt to stimulate attacks by pro-Peking guerrillas in other Southeast Asian countries in order to divert U.S. military resources. In response, we should inform the Chinese that our operation is not directed against them, but we should maintain pressures on Hanoi regardless of the Chinese role. We do not anticipate that the Chinese will try to prevent Hanoi from seeking an accommodation with us if and when Hanoi decides to do so.

We have identified to date a number of questions which should be answered, or at least considered, in further study. At Tab H we have attempted to list some of the more important questions. Such a paper could be considered a priority work list for additional effort on this alternative course of action.

130. Memorandum From Winston Lord of the Planning Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, October 6, 1969.

SUBJECT

Some Questions on Laos

"A new administration has the right to ask for compassion and understanding from the American people. But it must found its claim not on pat technical answers to difficult issues; it must above all ask the right questions." (HAK, *Central Issues of American Foreign Policy.*)[2]

Following are a few questions on Laos. They are not meant to be comprehensive or to treat all of the border issues and estimates. They seek rather to question some basic assumptions, to reopen closed positions, to look at some of the Laotian elements from a different perspective. The incoming intelligence reports and contingency plans will probably deal with some of these questions. Others will be ignored or assumed away. Several of these questions might be treated by desk officers but not by their superiors who clear the papers and represent their agencies at the crucial meetings.

1. Does the President really control our Laos policy?

The normal problems of Presidential control are compounded by the dominant role that the CIA plays in Laos. How autonomous is the

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. III, 11 October 1969–31 January 1970. Secret; Nodis. Sent for information. Sent through Osgood and a copy was sent to Holdridge. Lake returned this paper to Lord on October 14 and noted in a transmitted memorandum that "Mr. Kissinger asked that we tell you your paper on Laos was a first-class effort which he liked very much. He said it is a model of what he wants the planning staff to do. Note this marginalia." (Ibid.) Haig sent a copy of this memorandum to Kissinger under cover of a memorandum of October 7, in which he wrote: "Attached is a think piece done by Winston Lord on the Laotian situation which is extremely well done, thoughtful and quite worrisome. I believe it is worth your time to read the memorandum carefully since it is one of our better staff efforts and confirms Winston's ability to articulate well. The fact that I wince at some of his attitudes does not detract from the overall favorable impression of his intellectual effort. I think we have in Winston a staff officer whom we can use on some of the tougher expository problems." (Ibid., Box 958, Haig Chronological Files, October 1–15, 1969 [1 of 2])

[2] The quote is from an essay by Kissinger first published in *Agenda for the Nation* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1968), and subsequently republished in Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy: Three Essays* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1969). The quote is from the concluding paragraph of the second essay, p. 97, ibid.

CIA in that country? Vang Pao's recent offensives provide just one example. His Meo irregulars have always been a CIA operation. Who has been calling the shots on his overrunning of the Plaine des Jarres—Souvanna Phouma? Vang Pao? CIA? The President? Has Vang Pao license to grab as much territory as he can (with full U.S. support) regardless of the overall policy implications, not to mention vulnerability to counterattacks?

2. What is the purpose of "our side's" offensives?

What are we and the RLG trying to accomplish? The standard answers are that we seek to maintain the fragile stability of a divided Laos, that we must punish the enemy for the offensives, that we must maintain the morale of RLG (and Thai). Do these answers explain, for example, the extensive inroads on enemy territory that the RLG made in 1966–67, including the Nam Bac Valley which the communists had controlled for ten years? These offensives evoked little response at first, encouraging the RLG to press ahead, dizzy with success. "By the fall of 1967, the RLG had made considerable inroads on territory that the communists held in 1962. The communists finally responded by turning an RLG offensive in the Nam Bac area into a debacle for the government in mid-January 1968." (SNIE, October 1968.)[3] The enemy then went on to administer the worst series of defeats to the RLG since 1961–2. Looking through past NIEs, one sees the same rainy season pattern repeated annually. The RLG takes real estate to compensate for the previous dry season losses and to have more land to be able to give up in the upcoming dry season. Are we clear about the political rationale for these offensives? Do we assess the impact on the other side's moves, particularly when our offensives threaten territory that they have traditionally held? *How do we expect the Pathet Lao and Hanoi to write their own NIEs about our side's intentions* when we bend the rules of the game in Laos? To quote Ambassador Godley, "Laos must be the only country in the world where military success creates almost as many problems as military failure." Do we consider these problems *before* supporting RLG offensives?

3. Is there a way to break the wet season–dry season cycle?

With the RLG we are now considering political and diplomatic moves to forestall or divert NVN/PL reaction to our side's recent military successes. This has a familiar ring as one looks at the cables and estimates of past Septembers. And we might expect the same scenario over the next few months as was played out in past dry seasons. Once

[3] SNIE 58–1–68, "Communist Capabilities and Intentions in Laos Over the Next Year," October 21, 1968, *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. XXVIII, Document 389.

the other side is reinforced and their LOC's in order, they will retake territory despite our side's military defenses and possible diplomatic maneuvers designed to dissuade them. Next spring the RLG, with our support, will once again gear up for wet season offensives. One can argue that at least this cycle has preserved a partitioned Laos as a buffer, perhaps longer than many expected in 1962. *But is this cycle sufficient as a continuing policy for this Administration, especially when everyone agrees that the other side holds the military trump cards?* And when the facade of non-war in Laos is being stripped away by a questioning public? Is there a means to break this cycle or do we let it continue mindlessly? Would the other side respond to tactic restraint or diplomatic approaches by the RLG, or would they merely press their advantage? Would attempts to deescalate or ceasefire in place be any riskier than a continuing cycle of offensives and a policy of military deterrence?

4. How should we judge the NVN/PL intentions this dry season?

We are now worried about, and busily planning for, dry season drives by the other side. The enemy's traditional motives for a seasonal push have been sharpened by Vang Pao's overrunning of the Plaines des Jarres, including Khang Khay, long considered an important communist center. A new element this year may be the desire to underwrite their recent political demands, first set forth in July 1968 and since amplified. These add up to an insistence that their stooge neutralists, not Souvanna, represent the "center" in any tripartite arrangement and recognition of other "current realities" since 1962, such as changes in territorial demarcations. The more the other side can decimate Souvanna's neutralists, the more it can claim that its forces include the real center, as well as the left, of Lao politics. In addition, Hanoi might tweak us in Laos to make us flinch in Paris. Reading the mood in this country, they probably have less fear of a sharp U.S. military response to their drives.

In this context, there are estimates that an additional 12,000 North Vietnamese troops may be entering Laos. Leaving aside the fact that one might question whether there is a firm basis for such an estimate, this figure corresponds roughly to past NVN movements back into the country as the rains cease. A September 26 State Department INR note[4] says that "Royal Lao military successes in the Plaine des Jarres (PDJ) and in the southern panhandle are, in our estimation, unlikely to evoke a Communist offensive of such dimensions as to fundamentally alter the terms on which the Laos war has been fought since 1962. Nevertheless, we foresee more intense Communist activities in the upcoming dry season than at any time in the past." (This is *not* an intelligence

[4] National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. III, 11 October 1969–31 January 1970.

community consensus and forthcoming estimates may be more bearish.) This reflects the evocative, cyclical nature of military moves by both sides as discussed previously. It also recalls past estimates of enemy intentions. Thus an August 1965 SNIE[5] stated that: "Whereas we are fairly confident in our judgment that the Communists probably do not intend to *initiate* any major military action in Laos in the next few months, we are certain that they would *react* vigorously to any offensive in Laos which they felt seriously threatened the infiltration route to the Viet Cong or moved into territories bordering on the DRV and Communist China." The enemy's 1968 response to the RLG offensives in 1966/67 fulfilled this type of prophecy. Given Vang Pao's recent advances in enemy territory, it is not surprising that we once again expect an enemy dry season campaign.

This is not to say that our side is always guilty of provocation, or to ignore the other side's encroachments on RLG territory or to predict that they would necessarily show restraint if the RLG did. Nor is there any assurance that this time the enemy might not have more ambitious offensives in mind, given the factors cited above. Past history does suggest, however, that we should not misread NVN/PL intentions or overreact to their moves. As in the past we need not assume that the communist offensive is designed "to fundamentally alter the terms" of the Laos war. We have always worried that they might, knowing that they could. Clearly political intentions, not the military equation, have governed their moves. "Troop movements and attacks on outposts recently reported in South Laos suggest that Communist forces may soon seize Saravene and Attopeu to further secure the overland route between North and South Vietnam. These major outposts are already virtually surrounded and neither would be likely to hold out long under attack." This was written in a May *1962* SNIE,[6] which went on to suggest that the communists would probably not move immediately on the towns. These southern towns have been surrounded by communist forces off and on ever since—yet they remain in RLG hands.

Such facts are useful to keep in mind as we gauge enemy intentions this time around and plan our reactions. Similarly it is useful to ask *how has the map of Laos changed since 1962*? Reports over the years might give the non-expert the impression that the communists have made steady territorial inroads in Laos since the 1962 Accords. The blending of communist and "neutralist" territory in 1962 and the changing character of the "neutralists" make it difficult to assess net

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[5] SNIE 58–65, "Short-Term Prospects in Laos," August 5, 1965, *Foreign Relations,* 1964–1968, vol. XXVIII, Document 192.

[6] SNIE 58–4–62, "The Current Military Outlook in Laos," May 14, 1962, summarized in *Foreign Relations,* 1961–1963, vol. XXIV, Document 367.

gains and losses. However, the overall picture today, while it has fluctuated, has not basically changed since the 1962 Geneva agreements. The communists hold somewhat more territory in the South while the RLG (as of now, before the dry season) has made some inroads in the North. "There has been *no* significant loss of terrain, and indeed, a net gain, over the situation which obtained in 1964" (William Sullivan to HAK memorandum, June 1966).[7] This fact too should tell us something about enemy intentions, given their military capabilities. These intentions may change but we should not *assume* they are changing when they make their next counter-counteroffensive.

5. *What do we do if the NVN/PL actually push to overrun the Mekong Valley or all of Laos?*

This is the crunch question on our ultimate decision on Laos. It is certainly a legitimate question since all agree that the enemy could make such a drive if they wished. "We continue to estimate . . . that the combined PL/NVA forces now in Laos have the military capability to reduce the RLG area of control to a few enclaves in fairly short order. They could do so without diverting resources from South Vietnam or drawing significant reinforcements from the North." (October 1968 *SNIE*.) Yet all the papers on Laos have avoided the issue of our ultimate commitment to Laos, concentrating on deterrence and intermediate steps. In devising means of deterring the enemy, should we not know what we are prepared to do if such deterrence fails? Indeed should not our tactical moves be made against this strategic background? *Are we prepared to put in 100,000 to 150,000 U.S. soldiers,* the only action that observers believe might be effective in case of an all out enemy push? Would even American troops alter the situation? Or would they achieve only short term victories, pending escalation by Hanoi and the creation of a Vietnam-like quagmire? Our own military advisers oppose the use of U.S. ground forces. Such action would run counter to the thrust of the Guam doctrine,[8] our pullouts from Vietnam and Thailand, the American mood, Cooper Resolution,[9] Symington hearings,[10] etc., etc.

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[7] Kissinger placed a question mark next to this reference; reference should be to a June 1969 memorandum from Sullivan to Kissinger, Document 82.

[8] For the Guam or Nixon Doctrine, see Document 101.

[9] The Cooper Resolution limited U.S. support to local forces in Thailand and Laos to supplies, material, equipment, facilities, and training, thus barring the use of U.S. forces in these countries. It was passed by the Senate in September, but was eliminated from the final bill as passed on November 6, 1969. (Congressional Quarterly, *Congress and the Nation,* 1969–1970, Vol. III, pp. 903–904)

[10] The ongoing Symington Subcommittee hearings on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which concentrated on Laos. (Ibid., pp. 908–909)

6. Should we increase our military support of the RLG?

A series of measures are being considered to bolster the RLG against coming enemy offensives. The basic premise is that if the enemy's calculations are mixed, some increase in the U.S. input might help to deter them. There are specific questions to be answered about the more modest proposals—can the equipment be used, will the money get to the right people, etc.? The more dramatic suggestions raise the most serious doubts about their military or psychological effectiveness, their political and diplomatic repercussions, their financial costs. There are the problems, already mentioned, about assessing enemy intentions, tailoring our responses, and perpetuating the military cycle. Furthermore, *does any marked escalation by our side make sense in Laos when we know—and the enemy knows—that ultimately we would stop short of sending in American troops?* Raising the ante would appear dangerous when the opponent knows he can raise back until he drives you out of the game. Against the backdrop of the past year's events in Southeast Asia and this country, our opponents must be more confident than ever about this calculation.

7. How important to us is the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail?

This is perhaps as heretical a question as those posed for so long about the effectiveness of our bombing of North Vietnam. Certainly our bombing of the Panhandle punishes the North Vietnamese and raises the costs of their infiltration into South Vietnam. Accurate measurements of the bombing's effectiveness are probably as impossible to get for Laos as they were for North Vietnam. We can expect the Air Force to give us high figures and Systems Analysis to provide low figures. Evidence of the bombing's usefulness is the fact that Hanoi includes this as a precondition to any peace talks on Laos. However, it is absolutely clear that our bombing cannot stop infiltration into South Vietnam, any more than did our bombing of North Vietnam. The recent lower rates of infiltration are due to Hanoi's policy decisions, not our bombing. Hanoi has been and will be prepared to write off whatever costs we inflict in order to infiltrate the men and materials its policy dictates. In this sense the actual degree of our bombing effectiveness is not really crucial. We have to date automatically refused to consider a panhandle bombing halt as part of a package deal on Laos. It is time to question this position. *Would a tradeoff of our Trail bombing for a stabilized Laos and thus a buffer for Thailand be in our interest, assuming such a deal was possible?* How should we weigh the possibility of stabilizing Laos and therefore insulating Thailand against the current impact of our bombing campaign? Could we engineer a package that would be enforceable? Would we consider partial or temporary cessation, with the option to resume if the other side did not uphold its part of the deal?

8. How much Laotian dirty linen have WE got?

It would be helpful to be—privately—a little less self-righteous on the question of violations of the 1962 Geneva Accords. It is not a question of blaming ourselves or ascribing benign motives to Hanoi. Certainly their violations are more blatant than ours—they have 48,000? (we don't really know and it depends on the season anyway) regular troops in Laos, while our role is essentially supportive and often reactive. The fact remains that we and the Thai are also breaking—not bending—the Accords: bombing and tactical air support of RLG troops from Thai and SVN bases; equipment, training, and logistic support of RLG and Thai ground and air forces; CIA advising and leading of irregular forces. These actions are at Souvanna's request or concurrence, which lend them some legitimacy. There are other actions, such as Panhandle cross-border raids, that we have conducted without his permission—some with his cognizance, others without. We can, and should, make the best case possible about Hanoi's culpability. We certainly can set forth a much more persuasive record than the Vietnam one. But let us recognize the handicaps of our own violations, no matter how justifiable, and the pervasive skepticism of world and American opinion that this Administration has inherited from the previous Administration's credibility gap. We can expect such handicaps to muddy the record and lower our score of theological and propaganda points.

9. How can we be candid about our Laotian activities?

There is a growing and correct consensus that we have little choice but to be more candid about our role in Laos. Congress and the newspapers will defoliate our cover. We can either sit back and let the facts be yanked from us slowly, reluctantly, bitterly and thus create this Administration's own credibility gap. Or we can take the initiative: underline our limited objectives; cite Hanoi's violations; stress that our supporting actions respond to these violations and the RLG's requests; blame the Laos situation on the Kennedy–Johnson administrations; and explain that we have been clandestine both because Hanoi has refused to acknowledge its systematic violations of the Geneva Accords and because keeping the war undeclared seemed to offer a better chance to deescalate and stabilize than a polemical, face-involving slugging match with the other side. Above all we should paint North Vietnam (with its 50,000 troops) as the Goliath and the RLG as the David in Laos, the reverse of our side's image in Vietnam. The greater our involvement in Laos, however, the more difficult it is to project the desired image. To make our best case will require declassification of much sensitive information (not unlike our SAFEGUARD campaign) and persuading Souvanna that such candor is necessary.

Assuming we do follow this course, *how do we protect Souvanna's position as legitimate head of government in line with the Geneva Accords?*

Will franker acknowledgment of his and our bending of the Accords tempt (or force) Moscow to withdraw recognition of his titular role and the NVN/PL to completely write him off as a legitimate factor in any future government? Souvanna is crucial both because he is probably the only leader who can hold the non-communist forces together and because he seems to be the only possible figure to head up a new Laos settlement based on revitalized 1962 Accords. Difficult as this latter objective appears, it becomes impossible if the communists withdraw their ambassadors from Vientiane, completely disavow Souvanna and set up their own revolutionary government. These are not arguments against candor about our activities but rather for a sensitivity to the need to preserve Souvanna's legitimacy and to avoid giving the other side a pretext to announce that we have, by our own admission, abrogated the Geneva Accords.

10. Should the Guam doctrine apply to Laos and Thailand?

The President has said that we should not be more concerned about Asian nations' security than they are themselves. The RLG and Thailand have of course registered their concern for the neutrality and independence of Laos. It is difficult to sense much anxiety about Laos among other Asian nations, whether they be Burma and Cambodia[11] (contiguous to Laos and signatories of the 1962 Accords); Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia (in the immediate vicinity of Laos); or Japan, Korea and the Philippines (allies of the U.S. and Thailand).[12] Should we not test their interests in the fate of Laos and have Souvanna ask them what they would be willing to do in terms of diplomatic efforts and military support? They would be asked to weigh their own courses of action, consult among themselves and then state what they were prepared to do to:

—exert diplomatic pressures upon Hanoi and Moscow, explaining their concerns over North Vietnamese actions in Laos and their desire to see the 1962 Accords honored.

—contribute economic or military assistance (not troops) to the RLG if the above diplomatic efforts do not bear fruit.

—define the precise role they wished the U.S. to play, short of sending in combat forces.

Depending on what the Asians were willing to do themselves we would then indicate our own role in line with the Guam approach. We would not demonstrate a greater concern or take proportionately

[11] Kissinger underlined "Cambodia" and wrote in the margin: "How do you sense it?"

[12] Kissinger highlighted this sentence and wrote in the margin: "This is one of the slogans I'd like to see [them] examine themselves."

greater actions to preserve the independence of Laos than what the Asians—who should have a greater stake—would do themselves.

The same approach to Asian nations could be applied to support of Thailand. This course of action would implement the Guam doctrine with respect to these countries. It would have to be managed carefully to avoid the appearance of a Clifford/Taylor-type campaign for Asian support at one extreme and a transparent American bug-out from Southeast Asia at the other extreme. The question remains: *do we reserve the Guam doctrine for post-Laos and post-Thailand as well as post-Vietnam*?

Conclusion

The Laos papers provided by the bureaucracy are likely to lean as follows:

—Satisfaction over the recent RLG military successes, however, temporary.

—Predictions that the enemy's counter-offensive will be more extensive than ever before.

—Suggested increases in U.S. military support of the RLG.

—Acknowledgment of the enemy's capability to overrun Laos, coupled with a refusal to face the policy questions this contingency would present us.

—Assumption that our bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail is non-negotiable.

—Belief that Hanoi's aggression and our relative innocence will be as clearcut to the world and the American public as in fact they really are.

—Inattention to what other Asian nations should be expected to do in support of Laos and Thailand.

The questions posed above suggest a need to:

—Have a clear policy rationale for our side's military tactics.

—Recognize that a continuing seasonal military cycle in Laos may be riskier than attempts to break that cycle.

—Judge enemy intentions and react to enemy moves on the basis of the past record as well as plausible hypotheses.

—Question marked increases in our military support in light of the other side's ability to overrun the country and our unwillingness to commit American troops.

—Weigh the importance of our Ho Chi Minh Trail bombing against the need to secure a Laotian buffer for Thailand.

—Recognize the problems as well as the necessity for public candor.

—Consider the applicability of the Guam doctrine to Laos and Thailand.

These implications do not add up to a policy. They do suggest that the policies that are likely to be considered might be on the wrong track.[13]

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[13] Kissinger highlighted these questions and wrote in the margin: "How do we get all this?"

131. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, October 6, 1969, 2:34–4:30 p.m.

SUBJECT

Laos

PARTICIPATION

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
U. Alexis Johnson

Defense
G. Warren Nutter

CIA
Thomas H. Karamessines

JCS
Vice Admiral Nels C. Johnson

NSC Staff
John H. Holdridge
Col. Robert M. Behr

Summary of Decisions

1. The proposal to resettle the Meo should be identified only as a "last ditch" measure.

2. A State/Defense message will be dispatched asking for in-country recommendations on the proper distribution of M–16 rifles between the RLA and Meo irregulars.[2] Recommendations will be elicited from Defense on the provision of additional rifles above the Presidential authorization of 20,000.

3. Additional T–28 aircraft should be made available to the RLF but not from Thai resources.

4. If Souvanna desires artillery support, consideration should be given to 105s as opposed to 155s.

5. A State/Defense message will be sent asking for in-country opinion on the possibility of earmarking and training specific Thai units for operations in Laos.[3]

6. The use of "mercenary" pilots should not be pursued.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] Not found.

[3] Not found.

7. Final decisions on many recommended courses of action will have to be suspended until the conversations with Souvanna have been evaluated.

The meeting began at 2:34 P.M. Kissinger said he thought the Laos paper to be a first class analytical effort.[4] His problem is how to get from here to a decision point. Ever since August the President has been pressing for action to stabilize the Laotian problem. He recognizes that it is difficult to make an intrinsic case for Laos. Nevertheless, Laos borders on Thailand, whose security could be threatened by the loss of Laos to communist forces. Moreover, how can a political settlement in Vietnam be defended if we permit the DRV to erode or abrogate the Geneva Agreements on Laos?

Secretary Johnson stated that the paper under consideration does not address itself to the security of Thailand. With regard to Laos, his general feeling is one of optimism. Having observed the rhythmic pattern of events over a period of years (during which time the DRV could have almost at will scored telling military successes against the RLG), what now is different is that we are in the aftermath of unprecedented military achievements by the forces of Vang Pao. We must now anticipate an almost certain response by the DRV. We should not, however, over-react. Things move slowly in the area and we should do what we can—physically and psychologically—to beef-up the RLG.

Kissinger asked when the 12,000 NVN troops moving along Route 7 would get into place. Admiral Johnson replied that the first elements have reached the Plain of Jars, but the main body is still enroute.

The Group then speculated at some length about the tactics and motives of the NVN forces in recent months. One cannot be certain that NVN activity has not been a part of a pre-determined plan of operations in Laos. On the other hand, their current moves may be a reaction to the recent successes of Vang Pao. Whatever their motives, Vang Pao's destruction of large quantities of pre-stocked NVN matériel has caused modification of their tactic of moving up to supplies. Now the supplies must accompany the troops.

Secretary Johnson said the advance NVN elements are the only forces exerting military pressure now. Our worry should be what may happen, not what is happening. In the absence of a real crisis we should act deliberately along the lines we have been, that is, a policy of strengthening the RLG but without commitment of our forces. The real

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[4] Kissinger is apparently referring to a draft report prepared by the WSAG Working Group, which was summarized for the President on October 20; see Document 138. The October 10 plan is in the National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 545, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. II, 1 August 1969 to 10 October 1969.

problem arises in the event the NVN are moving to take control of the Mekong River as a part of their operations against SVN. What moves could we make to deter this?

Kissinger suggested a forcible reaction now might be productive, but noted that Laos paper said quite the opposite—that a forcible U.S. move might precipitate a NVN advance against the Mekong.

Admiral Johnson reported the concern of Vang Pao that his people (the Meo) are suffering a great deal. Accordingly he is willing to "have another go" at the NVN to relieve the pressure. This failing, a mass withdrawal to the region of the Thai border is the only remaining solution. The Group then discussed the utility of resettlement of the Meo as a possible course of action, as suggested by the paper. The consensus was that, as an immediate measure, the proposal is off-track. A movement of such proportions would be, in effect, a retreat and would follow major military reverses, which are not now foreseen. It was agreed to drop this option.

Kissinger expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of detail in the maps used in the paper. Karamessines said he would correct this inadequacy.

Kissinger returned to the basic question of NVN strategy. Why would they withdraw over 40,000 troops and then re-introduce 12,000? Would the 12,000 represent a holding force until the main force can be re-supplied and moved back as a part of an expanded plan of operations against Laos? Or is it more likely that the 12,000 have been dispatched as a replacement force but with reduced objectives? The objective, in the case of the latter, might be a strategic penetration to separate Laos into large chunks, interdicting the RLG LOC between Vientiane and Luang Prabang.

Secretary Johnson stated there are two theories explaining the DRV strategic motivations and, in particular, their seeming reluctance to press their advantage. (1) They believe that if SVN falls, so will Laos. In other words, they can wait. (2) They have pushed up to what they think the traffic will bear without forcing the U.S. into more militant responses. Moreover, the Soviets have had an interest in maintaining a facade of legitimacy. As long as the communists are not losing territory and the 1962 lines are still more or less recognized political boundaries, there is no compelling need to completely de-stabilize the situation. As a consequence, Secretary Johnson opined, the DRV may make definite and major moves to restore their losses in the Plain of Jars, but little more than that. We shouldn't do anything indicative of overreaction until it is apparent that the intentions of the DRV go beyond restoration of their losses.

Kissinger asked how we could convey to the other side the impression that we are willing to acquiesce in their traditional moves, but

will react positively to anything beyond that. He responded to his own question by saying we could introduce 6,000 U.S. troops and tell Senator Fulbright it is only a "token force."

Karamessines asked Secretary Johnson if he would advocate continued support of the RLG, to which Johnson replied emphatically and affirmatively, saying that most of the measures advocated by the Laos paper make good sense.

Admiral Johnson then turned to the specifics of the recommended measures of assistance. He noted that of the 20,000 M–16 rifles approved by the President for Laotian forces, the number had grown in the paper to 34,500. The JCS can handle the 20,000 with no problem and would probably favor an increase, but the central point is to get a fix on the right number. *All* agreed that this should be done.

Karamessines pointed out that the 20,000 rifles appeared destined for the RLA, with other numbers being considered for the Meo irregulars (who know how to use them). After considerable discussion the Group agreed that a significant number of the 20,000 should go to the Meo (perhaps as high as 6000), this being within the spirit of the President's instructions. The local commanders should make the determination of the most effective break-out and will be requested to do so by a joint State/Defense message.

No conclusive answer was given to Admiral Johnson's question as to the desirability of exceeding the specific number of 20,000 rifles.

Secretary Johnson brought up the matter of T–28 aircraft for the RLAF and the Thais, stating that the provision of additional aircraft is a high priority action. Kissinger was strong on the point that T–28s should not be taken from the Thais to be given to the RLAF. Admiral Johnson agreed, reporting that the JCS will probably recommend getting the aircraft (the number now looks like 22) from the VNAF and giving them to the RLAF. The VNAF shortage could then be made up from other types in the U.S. inventory. The whole operation, once approved, would take about 45 days.

While on the subject of air support, Admiral Johnson noted the shortage of aerial reconnaissance direction finding capability in Laos. The only quick-fix is to divert resources from SVN, which is not a good solution. No answer to this problem is in hand, but it is being studied.

A lengthy discussion ensued on the subject of artillery support for the Laotians. The paper recommends introducing a Thai artillery unit equipped with 155s. Thanom had advocated this development although Souvanna has not asked for it. At the present time Thai volunteers are training the Meo in the use of 155s. This gun is not particularly suitable for operations in Laos. Moving them about from mountain to mountain by helicopter is an awkward task. Nevertheless, field recommendations favor introduction of Thai 155s with a combat

defense force of about 300 troops. CINCPAC recommends a return of the Sierra Romeo 8 package to train the Meo, and then move it back out of country. The consensus of the Group was that the value of 155s is more symbolic than practical, that 105s would be eminently more suitable both in terms of their versatility and relative ease of logistic support, and that a decision to supply any artillery should depend on what Souvanna says he wants during his current visit here. In the meanwhile Admiral Johnson will ask the Joint Staff to prepare an evaluation of the advantages of 105s over 155s.

Kissinger reported the inclination of the President to support Souvanna should he request B–52 operations against NVN/PL forces. That raises the question of what, precisely, does Souvanna want—is he elated or depressed? Will he ask for money, B–52s or ground forces?

Secretary Johnson said he would have Marshall Green report his conversation with Souvanna ASAP,[5] and Kissinger said he would try to get an early read-out of the conversation between the President and the prince.[6]

Kissinger then asked if the Group was prepared to endorse all of the measures they had discussed, or had not previously excluded. Secretary Johnson said yes, with the exception of Thai artillery, which would depend on Souvanna. Moreover, he said, the Group need not concern itself with Laotian political actions since all of the things the paper recommends Souvanna do, he is already doing on his initiative.

Secretary Johnson wondered about the paper recommendation for increased Thai training and support of RLG forces. What specifically did the drafter have in mind? No one knew, but the paper will be amended to state in factual terms what is recommended.

Secretary Johnson addressed himself to the recommendation that Thai forces be trained for possible operations in Laos. This puzzled him. Are we not already training the Thai forces for such operations.

Admiral Johnson explained the situation. The only really effective training to date has been associated with special Thai units earmarked for SVN. We could do the same for Laos. General training for the bulk of the Thai forces presents problems because it requires field maneuvers,

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[5] Green met Souvanna at the airport on October 6 and a memorandum of conversation of their discussion during the ride to Washington is ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 LAOS. Kissinger sent Nixon a copy of this memorandum of conversation and a copy of a conversation on October 4 between Souvanna and Lao Country Officer, Mark S. Pratt, in New York City. After briefly summarizing Souvanna's main points, Kissinger noted that the only topic Souvanna specifically stated he planned to raise with Nixon was the timely supply of military equipment to Laos. (Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, October 7, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL–287, Memoranda to the President, 1969 Oct., Folder 1)

[6] See Documents 132 and 133.

which in turn calls for increased rations and payment of per diem. Should we desire to go that route, the U.S. would have to pick up the tab.

Secretary Johnson demurred, saying that the Thais could and should pay for their own training. He recommended that State and Defense draft a joint message asking the in-country team what can be done along these lines.

Secretary Johnson then mentioned the paper's recommendation to use third country pilots to fly Laotian aircraft. The general opinion on this recommendation was that it introduced too many complications and should be dropped.

Kissinger asked for a discussion of B–52 reconnaissance operations over Laos, which has long been on the President's mind. Secretary Johnson said that if the President wished, it would be done. He, however, would not do it now. Kissinger asked the Group to reason it out. If we are not now under serious pressure would we be trumping an ace? If a NVN offensive starts, would we then use the measure as a signal? All agreed that we would. Kissinger then asked what the DRV would conclude if we did it now. Admiral Johnson doubted that the impact would be great. We've done it before with one or two aircraft and there was no reaction. That operation produced good results but he would have to check on the extent of the radar scope photography that was obtained. He cautioned the Group to remember that B–52 recon sorties had to be escorted to protect the bombers from MIGs. He stated further that obtaining data on actual target locations is more important than getting data to assist navigation. That information is hard to get from the air, particularly if troop concentrations are what is sought. Kissinger wondered when would be the best time to play the card—now or later. Secretary Johnson and Nutter recommended withholding until after a definite NVN move. Kissinger remarked that a better basis for decision will be available after the conversations with Souvanna have been analyzed. Then we will be in a better position to decide when the signal should be given, for what purpose, and with what effect. He asked Admiral Johnson to find out the size of the B–52 force the JCS were thinking about. Admiral Johnson agreed to do so and then raised a question about the paper's recommendation regarding increased reconnaissance over NVN. He wondered why this action is being called for because to his knowledge the program is currently meeting its objectives. Secretary Johnson remarked that we should do whatever is needed to acquire intelligence, plus whatever "signalling" is called for.

Kissinger inquired about the recommendation to increase psychological operations in Laos. Admiral Johnson said that leaflet drops had been restrained to date by the imposition of restraints by the RLG. All

agreed that no further action would be taken in this area until the wishes of Souvanna are made known.

Kissinger concluded the meeting by asking that Secretary Johnson take action to reorganize the paper, focusing on recommendations as to what needs to be done and what decisions need to be made. The recommended actions should be broken down into those that will go on normally and those that will be dependent on a NVN/PL offensive of increased scale. He asked that the revised paper be made available for another WSAG meeting before October 11th. This meeting adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

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132. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, October 7, 1969, 10:51 a.m.–12:04 p.m.

SUBJECT

Situation in Laos

PARTICIPANTS

The President
Prince Souvanna Phouma, Prime Minister of Laos
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Mrs. Sophia Porson, Interpreter

Asked by the President to give his views on the outlook in Laos, the Prime Minister said he expected a major offensive by the North Vietnamese, (1) because they always have an offensive at this time of year at the beginning of the dry season and (2) to reaffirm their adherence to the policy of Ho Chi Minh after his death. He was certain that the 312th Division now moving into Laos would attack the Plain

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 63, Memoranda of Conversations, Presidential File, 1969. Top Secret; Nodis. Copies were sent to Rogers, Laird, and Helms. The President, Souvanna Phouma, and an interpreter met in the Oval Office from 10:51 a.m. to 12:04 p.m. Kissinger joined them at 11:25 a.m. (President's Daily Diary, October 7; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files) On October 2 Acting Secretary of State Richardson sent Nixon a memorandum on the Souvanna visit and enclosed talking points. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 7 LAOS) On October 6 Richardson sent Kissinger additional talking points for the President. (Ibid.) Souvanna met with Rogers, Green, and Corcoran at noon on October 7 in Rogers' office. A memorandum of conversation of that meeting is ibid. On October 6, from 4 to 4:45 p.m., Souvanna met with Vice President Spiro Agnew; the memorandum of conversation of that meeting is also ibid.

of Jars. General Giap had told the Prime Minister in Hanoi in April 1964 that the North Vietnamese could not tolerate the presence of any troops other than Pathet Lao in the Plain. Therefore, this offensive will be designed to retake the Plain of Jars. The Prime Minister hoped that with US support the RLG could contain the offensive. He stated that the RLG does not need troops apart from its own; it only needs weapons, and air support. He had discussed obtaining weapons with Ambassador Godley before coming here—they need tanks, armored cars, and small planes, especially T–28s.

The Prime Minister then said he had sought to make it clear in public statements that there were no US troops in Laos despite what the *New York Times* has reported. He tried to correct the misinformation given by the *Times* when in Tokyo recently.

He explained that Laos asked for US military assistance starting in 1964 and it was only natural that US Government representatives supervise such assistance. It was the presence of the military personnel supervising military aid to Laos that had given rise to reports that US troops were in Laos.

The Prime Minister added that US aid to Laos is consistent with the Geneva Agreements. The US has not violated the agreements because there is an article that provides that Laos may import conventional weapons for its own defense. Laos has been attacked by the North Vietnamese and is merely defending itself. These weapons were requested not to wage war against its neighbors but to ward off enemy attack.

Moreover, the Prime Minister stated, it is the duty of all signatories of the Geneva Agreements to ensure and guarantee the respect of Laos' independence and neutrality. This commitment was undertaken by all in Geneva in 1962.

The President asked for the Prime Minister's view of recommendations by some that the Prime Minister should try to enlist Soviet help to obtain adherence to the Geneva Agreements. He was not recommending it himself, but wondered whether the Prime Minister was sympathetic to such recommendations or felt that the USSR's hands were tied owing to its obligations to North Vietnam.

The Prime Minister replied that he had repeatedly asked the USSR to intervene to ensure respect of Laos' neutrality. Unfortunately, Moscow has always answered that it was necessary to wait until the Vietnam problem had been solved before considering a solution to the Laotian problem. However, as the Lao see it, the Laotian problem was settled by the 1962 Geneva Agreements and they think it unfair that Laos be forced to bear the consequences of the Vietnam war. Additionally, there has been flagrant violation of the Geneva Agreements by North Vietnam. In that connection, the Prime Minister had written

to the Co-Chairmen calling for implementation of Article 4 of the Protocol to the Geneva Agreements. He was certain that a number of the signatories would endorse the need for application of that article. (He then read the text of Article 4 to the President.)[2]

The President remarked that there was no doubt about the legal commitment, but the tragedy was that except for the US no one is paying attention to it, viz. Peking, the USSR, North Vietnam.

The Prime Minister said the French Government had undertaken several démarches in Moscow at his request, but always got the same reply (wait till the Vietnam problem is resolved).

However, the Prime Minister continued, if the US, as the principal party concerned, were to take the initiative and contact other signatories (he cited France, UK, Canada, Cambodia, South Vietnam, Burma, India, Thailand) a majority could be mustered to present a resolution to the Co-Chairmen which would put pressure on the North Vietnamese.

The President asked the Prime Minister whether he thought we should take this initiative directly. The Prime Minister said yes, because the US is the primary country concerned and because the US is being accused of violating the Geneva Agreements.

The President then asked what the Prime Minister's view of the long-range situation in Laos was. Did he think that the North Vietnamese would inevitably overrun Laos or go back and forth?

The Prime Minister thought that the intention of North Vietnam was to take over Laos through the Pathet Lao. As he saw it, the 5-pointed star chosen by Ho Chi Minh as his emblem was significant. The five points stood for Tonkin, Annam, Cochin China, Cambodia, and Laos, i.e., the five countries in the old Indochinese Federation. North Vietnam cannot survive on its own, as it is overpopulated. Prior to 1945, Tonkin depended on Cochinchinese rice to feed itself. Annam was of little interest because that was just a small strip of arid land between the sea and the mountains. Therefore, North Vietnam has always looked to the Mekong Valley for the fertile lands it needs to feed itself. This was not a new phenomenon dating from Ho Chi Minh, but had obtained under the French. In fact, when Indochina was under French domination, in the office of the Governor General in Hanoi there was a special bureau for the colonization of Laos by Vietnamese. Hence, in 1945, there were 200,000 North Vietnamese in Laos. Some took refuge in Thailand with certain Lao, others returned to North Vietnam.

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[2] Article 4 of the Protocol to the Declaration of Neutrality of Laos, July 23, 1962, reads: "The introduction of foreign regular and irregular troops, foreign para-military formations and foreign military personnel into Laos is prohibited." (*American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1962*, p. 1079)

At present, there are between 40,000 and 50,000 North Vietnamese in Thailand. They are the ones that are creating problems for the Thai Government. These are people who opted to return to North Vietnam but whom Ho Chi Minh refused to take back owing to the presence of the 7th Fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin.

President Nixon then asked the Prime Minister for his views and advice about our policy in connection with the Vietnam war—commenting that we received lots of advice, including from the *New York Times* which the Prime Minister had mentioned earlier. He wondered whether the Prime Minister thought we were pursuing the right course, whether we ought to do more or less militarily or diplomatically.

The Prime Minister said it was hard for him to define his thinking because he did not have enough information about the domestic situation in South Vietnam. However, in view of US public opinion, he thought the war must be ended quickly, by diplomatic and military means. The diplomatic measures were difficult owing to the Saigon Government's refusal to form a government of national union which the other side demands. It would be difficult to act unless the Government of President Thieu feels sufficiently strong to agree to a coalition government.

The President said that they would not do that, and remarked that a coalition government might pose problems, as it did in the case of Laos.

The Prime Minister disagreed, saying that the Laotian situation was somewhat different from the South Vietnamese. In the case of Laos, it was because there was a war between the North and the South that Hanoi took its Pathet Lao ministers out of Vientiane; Hanoi feared that the government might succeed in taking control of all the territory of Laos, thus preventing North Vietnam from sending troops south.

The Prime Minister stated that his government was not afraid of the Pathet Lao. He was certain that once peace was restored and the domestic situation was settled general elections would be held and that his government would win. To support his contention, he said that his government controls 700,000 refugees from the other zone. If you subtract them from the total population of 3,000,000, the number of Pathet Lao supporters was infinitesimal. He was certain that he would win in a general election, and reiterated that he had no fears from the political standpoint. If North Vietnam were not helping the Pathet Lao, there would be no Laotian problem. That problem is created by Hanoi. Hence, the situation in Laos was not the same as in South Vietnam.

The President said that it was a pleasure for him to see the Prime Minister again. He recalled having met him when he was Vice President, once at Blair House and once in Vientiane in 1953.

He said he had very pleasant memories of that visit. He added that we are vitally interested in seeing that the government and people of Laos remain independent and be able to choose their own way.

We want to help not only because of our obligations under the Geneva Agreements but because of our interests in Laos' future.

The Prime Minister thanked the President heartily for the US Government's support, past, present, and future. His country had been dominated by others in the past and was smaller than it ever had been, in fact there were more Lao outside Laos than inside. What little they had left they wanted to preserve. He had always been aware that only a policy of neutrality could protect Laos. Unfortunately, Laos' geographic position placed it between Communist countries and SEATO countries. Therefore, the Prime Minister had sought this neutrality for 10 years. He was happy it had been achieved at last and hoped that with the help of friendly nations it could be made a reality so that Laos could develop its economy (which it needed to do) and its culture, which had been sorely disrupted by the years of war.

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133. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, October 7, 1969, 10:51 a.m.–12:04 p.m.

SUBJECT

The Public Position on US Activities in Laos

PARTICIPANTS

The President
Prince Souvanna Phouma, Prime Minister of Laos
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Mrs. Sophia Porson, Interpreter

(See separate Memcon for other subjects.)[2]

President Nixon asked what answer we should give when asked about the use of US air power in Laos, i.e., the air strikes conducted in Laos against the North Vietnamese at the RLG's request.

The Prime Minister suggested that the reply be that this is being done at the request of the RLG and is part of the commitment undertaken at Geneva to ensure Laos' territorial integrity, independence and neutrality.

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[1] Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 63, Memoranda of Conversation, Presidential File, 1969. Top Secret; Nodis. Copies were sent to Rogers, Laird, and Helms. See footnote 1, Document 132 regarding Souvanna's visit.

[2] Document 132.

The President said that so far we have refused comment. Did the Prime Minister think we should change our position and admit we have been conducting air strikes.

The Prime Minister thought it best to stick to the original position we took, i.e., simply state that we are conducting armed reconnaissance flights and that our planes respond when attacked. The infiltration by the North Vietnamese continues and the armed reconnaissance flights increase as the infiltration increases.

The President pointed out that the difficulty with that was that the Symington Subcommittee and others are aware of our attacks and will press for an answer.

The Prime Minister said he would say what he told the North Vietnamese Ambassador to Laos: If the North Vietnamese withdraw their troops, the RLG will ask for the bombing to stop. Also only North Vietnamese troops are bombed. The bombing is the RLG's only means of defense as it has fewer troops than the other side and no reserves to send in against the fresh troops coming in.

President Nixon said he completely approved the bombing and would do more but the problem is a domestic political one, i.e., whether the US will become as deeply involved in Laos as in Viet-Nam. Part of the answer lies in the Prime Minister's statement that there are no US ground troops in Laos and that none have been or will be requested. But this is a very delicate political issue and we have been trying to dance around it as much as possible.

The Prime Minister said he would go farther and state that Laos has always resisted the idea of an extension of the war to Laos. He vigorously opposed the famous McNamara Line. They do not want the war to be extended to Laos, and it is important that US public opinion understand that.

In short, the Prime Minister concluded, there was no violation of the Geneva Agreements, and no possibility of extending the conflict into Laos.

The President said he wanted to be sure that he understood the Prime Minister's position regarding US assistance. He summarized the Prime Minister's statement as follows:

(1) He has stated publicly, as we have, that the US is providing logistical assistance and arms, but that the RLG does not want and does not need US ground forces;

(2) His public position on the air support has been the same as ours; these are armed reconnaissance flights which react when attacked.

The President explained that he wanted to review this with the Prime Minister because the Symington Sub-Committee and others were aware of the truth, which is that we are providing air support to the RLG against the North Vietnamese. On that point, he asked the Prime

Minister what he thought we should say if pressed. Did the Prime Minister think we should and could admit publicly that air support is being given. He asked the question because the Prime Minister had indicated he thought the air support was consistent with the Geneva Agreements. This was a very important matter.

The Prime Minister thought we could say that this support was given at the request of the RLG when necessary, when the government forces were "submerged" or attacked by the enemy forces. It is not systematic bombing but intermittent bombing conducted in case of need. He stressed the need to indicate that it was not systematic, but only in the case of North Vietnamese attack.

The President returned to the point about whether or not this was a violation of the Geneva Agreements, saying that some people at the State Department had sent him a report stating that the bombing was in clear violation of the Geneva Agreements. The President reiterated that he supported the bombing himself, and would do more, but that he wanted to see how to resolve the problem of criticism of the bombing.

The Prime Minister remarked that the Agreements had been violated by the North Vietnamese before the ink had dried on them. The US intervention started in 1964, at the RLG's request. Since everyone knows that the US is carrying out air strikes in Laos, the Prime Minister said, one could answer criticism by saying that this is in response to violations committed by the North Vietnamese and that we are acting at the RLG's request. Additionally, one could say that it is the role of the signatories of the Geneva Agreements to defend the territorial integrity, independence, and neutrality of Laos. The US intervention came after the interference in Laotian affairs by the North Vietnamese. If there is a violation by the US, it is at the request of the RLG which is acting only in self-defense. It seemed to the Prime Minister that the responsibility of the US was involved here, and that the US was entitled to help Laos.

President Nixon indicated to Dr. Kissinger that he thought we must develop a more believable position, especially since the Prime Minister would be confronted with some tough questioning. He thought it would be a good idea to work out the position privately, adding the comment that the position he had taken could not be sustained in the long term under sophisticated probing.

Dr. Kissinger said the position would be discussed at a meeting of representatives of the agencies involved this afternoon,[3] and told the Prime Minister that he would check the position with him later.

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[3] No record of this meeting has been found.

Dr. Kissinger also remarked that the fact that the attacks are only against the North Vietnamese would help us out of the difficulty we are in since the North Vietnamese have never admitted the presence of North Vietnamese troops. This shows that they violated the Agreements first.

The President summed up by saying that he thought three points need to be emphasized in the position:

(1) The RLG is entitled to the support of the US and others pursuant to the 1962 Geneva Agreements;

(2) What the US has done and is doing is entirely consistent with the Geneva Agreements and always at the request of the RLG;

(3) There has never been and never will be in any form a request by the RLG for US ground forces. The RLG wants to fight its own battles, and wants only logistic support. Additionally, from time to time, as necessary, and not systematically, when outside forces threaten to overrun Laos the US assists with air support. This support is given only on those occasions and only against the North Vietnamese forces who have been acting in violation of the Geneva Agreements.

The Prime Minister agreed with that statement.

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134. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

JCS Concept for Air and Naval Operations Against North Vietnam

On Saturday morning, you will be meeting with Secretary Laird and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss the JCS concept plan for air and naval operations against North Vietnam.[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 245, Agency Files, JCS, Vol. 1, 1969–1971. Top Secret; Sensitive. On October 10 Lynn sent Kissinger a memorandum critiquing the JCS plan and Laird's assessment of it. (Ibid.) Lynn also drafted this memorandum for the President and recommended that Kissinger sign it. Kissinger also sent Nixon a memorandum on October 10 attached to which were talking points for his meeting with Laird and the JCS. (Ibid.)

[2] October 11, see Document 136.

Description of the JCS Plan

The JCS have developed "a concept plan for high intensity air and naval operations against North Vietnam [which][3] emphasizes the use of surprise and concentration of effort to achieve *maximum practicable psychological and military impact*." (See Tab A.)[4]

The plan is divided into two phases:

—During Phase I, U.S. attack forces will

—"neutralize the North Vietnamese air force,"
—"close the ports through which North Vietnam receives the bulk of its war supporting materials,"
—"destroy various high value economic and war supporting facilities in North Vietnam, including interdiction efforts against the northeast rail line."

Phase I will require five days of full operations. Because of the probability of bad weather and curtailed operations during any five day period in November, the JCS estimate that Phase I would require 9–21 calendar days to complete.

—Phase II is designed "to have an additional impact on Hanoi's will and ability to carry on the war" through

—destruction of war supporting facilities, e.g. supplies, vehicles, coastal craft and port facilities,
—interdiction of the northeast railroad line from China.

In summary, the JCS state that "the combination of Phase I and Phase II operations will achieve meaningful military as well as psychological impact by

—reducing the availability of imported materials into North Vietnam, and

—exacting attrition of North Vietnam's war-making capacity and its ability to support aggression in South Vietnam."

The JCS recommend that their concept plan "be approved for continuing planning."

Discussion of the Plan

The JCS concept and implementing plan have several serious shortcomings:

—They fail to reflect the strategic criteria essential to the success of such an effort, i.e.

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[3] Brackets in the source text.

[4] Tab A, attached but not printed, is JCSM–600–69, October 1, revised October 7, and sent to Laird.

—that the *priority targets* should be strategic in nature, the destruction of which will achieve *sudden and significant disruption of the economy;*

—that restoration of the targets should be costly and time-consuming, so that their *destruction achieves a lasting military and economic effect* and continuous follow up bombing is unnecessary;

—that the operation should involve a series of *short, sharp military blows of increasing severity,* holding out to Hanoi the prospect of a long and increasingly disabling siege if they fail to come to an agreement.

They are not responsive to political requirements.

—The JCS propose to strike a large number of sensitive targets in Hanoi, such as the Ministry of Defense, the Hanoi Telephone and Telegraph Office, the airfield handling Hanoi's civilian air traffic, and the Air Force and Army Air Defense Command Headquarters.

—Striking such targets will maximize adverse domestic and foreign reactions to the operation: (a) Hanoi is where the press, the diplomatic corps and foreign business interests are concentrated. (b) There will be heavy civilian casualties. (c) Because Hanoi is the most heavily defended part of the country, we risk disproportionately heavy U.S. aircraft and crew losses in hitting these targets.

—By striking directly at the offices of Government officials, we may convey that our goal is the destruction of the country and the regime, thus inviting major outside intervention.

—The plan appears to call for only routine use of our attack resources (e.g., Thai based aircraft are assumed to fly only one sortie per day). Also by extending Phase I over five operational days, we increase the likelihood that the duration of the operation will have to be stretched out to well over a week and possibly two or three weeks because of bad weather, thus dissipating the advantages of a sharp, sudden, quick blow.

Secretary of Defense Evaluation

In transmitting this plan to you, Secretary Laird has provided a detailed critique (at Tab B)[5] which he believes "casts grave doubt on the validity and efficacy of the JCS concept plan." He concludes, ". . . the plan would involve the U.S. in expanded costs and risks with no clear resultant military or political benefits."

His critique, supported in part by CIA analysis, includes inter alia the following points:

—We would be unable to prevent North Vietnam from sustaining essential imports by bringing goods in overland and through the minefields.

[5] Tab B, attached but not printed, is an October 8 memorandum from Laird to Nixon.

—We risk confrontations with Russia and Red China and critical reactions from Free World maritime states.

—Aircraft losses would exceed 100; "losses of major U.S. ships would have to be considered;" civilian casualties would be high.

—We might face pressures to seal off Cambodia, make B–52 raids over North Vietnam, and make ground incursions into Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam.

In my judgment, Secretary Laird's critique is inadequate for three reasons:

—He does not address the fundamental issues associated with what we are trying to do.

—Since the purpose of the operation is not to stop supplies flowing into South Vietnam, Laird's concerns about sealing off Cambodia and sending allied ground troops into the sanctuaries are not relevant; such actions are not part of the concept.

—The risk of a confrontation with Russia, which he cites as a disadvantage, may be essential if we are to get Russia's help in ending the war.

—He doesn't compare the risks he sees in the proposed plan with the risks of continuing on the present course.

—He makes a series of debating points of doubtful significance. In my judgment, they add up to an impression of treating the JCS proposal unfairly.

—Civilian casualties could be easily reduced by changing the targets.

—The use of lighters to circumvent the minefields, operation of North Vietnam's aircraft from Red China, and relatively quick and painless reorientation of imports, for example, are of doubtful likelihood and significance.

The Issues

This analysis suggests that we are up against a serious and potentially explosive problem:

—The JCS Concept Plan is in effect the first step toward what they hope will be a sustained and unrestricted bombing campaign. If we proceed in their way, the logic of events will probably impel us towards continuous, no-holds-barred attacks. If the plan fails, the alibi will be that the nation's leaders failed to take all required military steps to make it succeed.

—Secretary Laird has used the JCS premises together with a smorgasbord of speculations, assertions and evidence to argue that nothing at all of this nature will work.

Neither the JCS nor Secretary Laird had addressed our problem, which is to develop and assess a military concept involving

—a mining operation sufficient to seal off the sea approaches to North Vietnam thereby *stopping her supply of waterborne imports,*

—collateral bombing designed to destroy or damage supplies, industrial capacity, and critical parts of the transportation system, thereby *intensifying the economic strains brought about by the mining,*

—all of this toward the objective of persuading the North Vietnamese that they face *the prospect of increasing economic and industrial deprivation if they do not come to a settlement.*

However, though the JCS plan is not responsive to this concept, it is not so egregious that it can be rejected out of hand.

Recommendation: I believe the meeting Saturday must be conducted with great care to avoid explosive confrontations. Talking points, which will set the context and are designed to elicit constructive responses from the participants, will be furnished separately.

During your Saturday discussions of the concept you should hear out all sides. However, I recommend against your making any decisions until a more satisfactory plan and assessment can be prepared.

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135. Notes of a Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, October 10, 1969, 7:30 p.m.

K said he had just talked with Ben Reed. Reed said that Humphrey is taking a terrible time about his statement today.[2] Said it's as bad as during the campaign. P said "You mean they're getting after Humphrey?" And then the P asked if H was sorry. K said no, he was asked about it at a later press conference, and his answers shouldn't cause any trouble. P said "they made him trim?" K said yes. K said the response was bad from the press and the left wingers. P said, well, the H move is very important, very helpful to us. K asked the P if he had

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 365, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File. No classification marking.

[2] On October 10 former Vice President and Nixon Presidential opponent Hubert Humphrey met with Nixon and endorsed his plan to end the war. After the meeting Humphrey stated that Nixon was "proceeding along the right path" in Vietnam and "we have to give the President time to carry out his proposals, to carry out his plans and policies." Humphrey noted that "the worst thing that we can do is try to undermine the efforts of the President." (Stanley Millet, ed., *South Vietnam: U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia,* Vol. 4, 1969, pp. 160–161)

asked H to speak. President said no, he's a decent human being. Says he flops around, but he's a decent man. P said, of course, this drives the press right up the wall; the tide is good; the democratic leadership is not against us.

K said he had just seen some *Newsweek* people and had a feeling that they were a little bit shaken. Said he felt they thought the peace demonstration had gotten out of hand. P asked in what way. K pointed out that all the people getting into the scene were forcing, or trying to force, a government of confrontation. He said all of the American ideas aren't going to mean a damn if confrontation becomes our national style of politics. He said *Newsweek* is usually against us, and it's possible that these men were just baiting him, and warned the P not to expect the *Newsweek* piece to be friendly. The P said no, but we don't care, we've just got to try.

K said he is drafting a statement.[3] The P said he was seeing Lodge at 3:00 Monday and he thinks he should make a statement after seeing Lodge.[4] K said it should hit the papers Tuesday; confuse people. K said that *Newsweek* people said it was a very good day for us, Hershey and Humphrey. P said he hated to throw the old man out just as a sop to the students,[5] but that Humphrey, of course, was a good move.

The P said, by 72 the war is going to be over, and he is going to be the man who ended it. If we do it—put it right to the bastards—after all we're in there they're not. There's a lot of rough stuff coming up but the thing to do is to sail along. K said what the P must do is keep giving them a dignified manner. (P said oh of course.) K said no asking for sympathy. P said "God no." K says for him to point out that he was elected and because of this he has responsibility for the country.

P said it isn't just this issue, but the next one and the next one that comes up. What about Korea? What about Berlin? K said he is convinced that if we yield on this one we're just inviting the Soviets into a confrontation.

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[3] Not further identified.

[4] Nixon and Kissinger met with Lodge and Habib from 3:44 to 4:56 p.m. October 13. (President's Daily Diary; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files) No other record of this meeting has been found. A briefing memorandum from Kissinger to the President, October 11, in anticipation of the meeting is ibid., NSC Files, Box 77, Vietnam Subject Files, Memos to Pres/HAK on Lodge.

[5] On October 10 Nixon accepted General Lewis B. Hershey's resignation as the Head of the Selective Service System and announced his intention to appoint him as an adviser to the President on manpower mobilization. (*Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* p. 788)

P said it's like Acheson's statement about where is the line of demarcation.[6] K said yes, but it's different because here there is no line of demarcation if we yield. P said we won't yield. P said he doesn't want the enemy to think that we are affected by them [the protesters].[7] He had said he would not be affected by such things and he's not going to be. K said it is sure they were just feeling us out, that we must show that there will be no policy by confrontation.

P asked again about Humphrey; asked if Humphrey's man had said it was worse than before. P said those sons of bitches were playing a partisan line, that they were now out to destroy Humphrey. K said people were saying that the P is like Johnson; said they just want the P to be another Johnson. P said but Johnson was so inept with his hardness, that we are not going to fool around.

K said the November 3 speech[8] should be a factual listing of what the President has done. K said that was very impressive. P said he's not going to restate all that on television. He said we would put that out, but he'll be speaking to two audiences: home and abroad. He said for the home audience he simply wanted a simple, uncomplicated and very brief statement, not a long restatement of what he's done. K said, but make the public understand that you offered to send emissaries. The P said, and we received their emissaries. K said the P had made two overtures before the inauguration—that would be very impressive to the people. P said he would mention that for the first time he revealed what had before been diplomatically classified material; that he wanted the people to know. P said to K that he wanted him to get all the Rogers and Lodge contacts so that we could put that in. K pointed out that Lodge, Habib, and Rogers had had many meetings and he (K) had also—that that should be mentioned, and then the P should list all the things he did. K can list secret contacts.

P said in the Joint Chiefs meeting on Saturday [Oct. 11][9] he was going to let Wheeler give a report; said he was going to force them to talk about Vietnam. He wants the discussion to be about that. K said Wheeler should give about 10 minutes on Vietnam, and the P said then he would ask them what to do about Vietnam. P said they would probably give him the standard answers about the 42-month plan, and he would say that was no good. K said they should believe that P is serious about the November 1 plan; if not, they won't give him any plan-

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[6] The so-called Acheson "Defense Perimeter Speech" made before the National Press Club in Washington on January 12, 1950; see *American Foreign Policy, Basic Documents, 1950–1955,* Vol. II, pp. 2310–2322.

[7] All brackets in the source text.

[8] See Document 144.

[9] See Document 136.

ning cooperation. Must be careful about telling them it's inadequate; they're terribly sensitive.

K said he thinks that really by November we ought to be in as good shape as possible. P said yes, it's got to be ready. P said whether the United States will be able to see this thing through at the present level is a question, but if they escalate, we have got to respond. K said if we can keep casualties down over the next four weeks it will be good. But if they go up dramatically, we have an excuse for what we are planning to do.

P said Laird put out the word—that he had changed the orders—thank God that he did. I told [*omission in the source text*] that I changed them when I talked to Abrams—I am not going to let Rogers get credit for what we thought up. We changed the orders. K said yes, the P did it on the plane to Saigon.

P said the best news all day is the Cambodian strike. He said he is convinced—he knows K disagrees with him on this—but he is convinced that this is more important than anything else. P said bombing in the North was [*omission in the source text*]. Here we are hitting them and hurting them and they don't get anything out of it. K said that they had found a new area, just north. Same rate of explosion, something like 70 secondaries. P said "suppose it blows in Cambodia." P said, we could just say we were just hitting areas on the border. K said we can stop it at any time. P said should we; K said I don't think we should. P said it indicates a certain toughness to them. K said we might stop it as we get closer to the first [of November]. P said why not stand down everything. K said you get into the same flap that you did last time. P: this time just stand down and don't say why. K said I think the best thing on the third is just to give a straight account. It's a damned impressive record.

136. Memorandum for the Record[1]

Washington, October 11, 1969, 9:45 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

SUBJECT

JCS Meeting with the President, Saturday, 11 October 1969 (U)

1. Present: President Nixon, SecDef, Mitchell, Kissinger, CJCS, CNO, CSA, CSAF, CMC.

2. The President began by stating that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss Vietnam and "evaluate what we could do if it became necessary to take more military action against North Vietnam."

3. CJCS responded by first reporting his observations during his recent visit to South Vietnam.[2] He reported that Vietnamization was going well as was the Pacification Program. The number of enemy defectors is steadily increasing with a rising rate since Ho Chi Minh's death. The Vietnamization Program is on or ahead of schedule which is: Army and Navy, June 1970—Air Force, June 1972. CJCS reported that *leadership* in the lower and middle ranks is a prime problem for the South Vietnamese. With respect to infiltration, CJCS reported that the total for 1968 was 245,000. This year, to date, the number is estimated at 110,000 plus at least 5,000 in the pipeline.

4. CJCS then described COSVN Resolution Number 9 and stated as the North Vietnamese objectives:

a. Force rapid US withdrawal,
b. Stop Vietnamization,
c. Break up Pacification,
d. Prepare for Coalition.

The rural areas were described as the prime objective with major efforts to be directed against Vietnamization. COSVN Number 8 called for victory. COSVN Number 9 called for a "high point" strategy. The North Vietnamese have shifted to the Delta which contains 34% of the people and produces two-thirds of the rice in South Vietnam. Resolution Number 9 urged that the Americans be forced to withdraw before Vietnamization succeeded. Forces were directed to reduce the tempo

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1008, Haig's Special File, Haig's Vietnam File—Vol. 2 (Apr–Oct 1969) [1 of 2]. Top Secret; Sensitive. Drafted on October 13 by Moorer. According to the President's Daily Diary, Nixon met with Wheeler, Ryan, Chapman, Moorer, Laird, and Kissinger; Mitchell was not listed as a participant. The time of the meeting is also from the President's Daily Diary. (Ibid., White House Central Files)

[2] Wheeler returned from an inspection trip to Vietnam on October 9.

because of losses and gear objectives to capabilities. In order to achieve maximum flexibility the North Vietnamese have increased the number of battalions but have reduced their manning level.

5. The North Vietnamese movement into the Delta may be an effort to establish Rach Gia in IV Corps as a capitol for a Provisional Government.

6. The President then inquired about the effectiveness of Menu (B52 strikes in Cambodia). CJCS described the methods of bomb assessment, and SecDef said the program had been effective.

7. The President then inquired about the use of aircraft in Laos, and asked, jokingly, if we should get permission from Symington. He stated he had talked to Souvanna about the use of B52s and Souvanna had said that he had preferred the Dakota. The President said with respect to the B52s that we must face the fact that little will cause the same criticism as a lot. He said we cannot let Laos be overrun because we have a treaty with Thailand. We must watch Souvanna's requests. He said we must look at the long term as well as the short term, and we could get involved in something worse than what we face at the moment.

8. SecDef said that his point with respect to the B52s was that there are no good targets. If we can find good targets, then we will take a look.

9. Mention was made of the fact that State is preparing a letter to the Control Commission.

10. The President then again stated that he did not want to borrow trouble, but we must watch Thailand. In addition, we must know what's going on and must watch the situation in Laos. He said that in evaluating the situation remember we must keep the Laotian situation where it is. We must keep a government in Vientiane and noted that the Ambassador is still trying to support the Harriman Agreement.

11. Doctor Kissinger then commented to the effect that the US cannot let the North Vietnamese get away with overrunning Laos, since Laos is tied directly to North Vietnam.

12. A discussion of the meaning of "lull" then followed. SecDef then said that SecState would probably get into this on "Meet the Press" the forthcoming Sunday.

13. The President noted that our casualties were also low last October and November. He stated that we should look at the lull in the political context and that the enemy was deliberately effecting the lull for political reasons. Doctor Kissinger stated that the North Vietnamese were trying to put us into a position where we cannot act. Mr. Mitchell stated that SecState should not take a soft line on "Meet the Press." The President stated that he must preserve hope but, at the same time, must

not let the enemy take credit for reducing the tempo of operations. The President asked what would we do if we have to go other than the long road. He said he was convinced that if we hold the line politically Vietnamization will work, provided we have time to do it deliberately. The President is quite aware of the fact that a large amount of American presence will be necessary for a long term. He feels that, despite the flak that we may take, the people will stand still for support, but will not stand still for a long drawn out ground action. The President stated that, in terms of decisions he will make, he will not be affected by the public or Congress. He stated he was in a different position than that held by President Johnson since he has a "purse problem." If the Congress cuts appropriations then we are finished.

14. The President then mentioned certain discussions he had had with Congressmen. Congressman Mahon said we could "catch hell" from the Hawks as well as the Doves if we followed the long road.

15. The President said that we have a very grave political problem. What he sees is that the student uprising will get more violent and that this will actually work against the students. He also commented that the polls are loaded as to the nature of the questions.

16. The President said that the real question is whether the US, after all this effort, should make a withdrawal and accept a coalition. It will be very detrimental to our long-range interests. He said we could:

a. Get out now,
b. Negotiate a settlement,
c. Go the long road, which also carries with it a risk of failing.

He stated, "Now this is a problem, Mel. Do you think we can hold that long?" "Are we going to lose 10,000 men this year for nothing and then have a new Congress stop the appropriations?"

17. SecDef replied that the problem is interpretation in the US of what's going on. He stated that we should get a vote now from the Congress, and that he believes that 18 months from now no US forces will actually be engaged.

18. SecDef said that anything done in North Vietnam will take at least a year and that we should game plan progress for Vietnamization. SecDef is confident that it will work if we stick to it. He stated that Senators Russell and Stennis say we should figure "how to get the hell out."

19. The President stated that if the election results in Doves coming in we are in trouble, and what is really on the line is the maintenance of Congressional support. The President said that if we rule out escalation then we should remember the outcry that would follow another Tet. If that happens, the US must react. He said the same thing goes in Korea and that the next incident generated by the North Ko-

reans will result in a suitable retaliation. He then came back to the point that in Vietnam the real question is how long can we hold public opinion. The President said we could sustain current efforts for a year and take a look. If between now and next September we haven't made progress then we must act—we cannot sit still.

20. I told the President I would like to comment further on the lull. When the US ceased bombing North Vietnam, we played our last trump card and lost all leverage which might be used to force concessions on their part. The North Vietnamese are now fighting from the sanctuaries of North Vietnam and Cambodia and, hence, they can control the tempo of operations. (When we withdraw 10,000 miles the NVA withdraw less than a hundred miles.) In short, the NVN have the initiative and, as a result, are able to operate in the way calculated to best affect public opinion in the United States. I believe, therefore, that the lull is a political move and not a military one, and that the tempo of operations can be increased by the NVN at will.

21. The President said he would now like to hear from CJCS.

22. CJCS gave a brief of Pruning Knife,[3] the attack plan prepared by the Joint Staff. He stated he did not think it was a sound *military* plan—that there were problem areas. He first mentioned the weather, and stated it would take at least a week to get five days of operations. He pointed up the problem of the Air Force tankers and the necessity to move the aircraft carrier from the Korean area to the Tonkin Gulf. CJCS then stated that surprise during the first 36 hours will help. He noted other problem areas. The capabilities of the new North Vietnamese missiles, including the radar frequency changes. CJCS said that the Chiefs thought that the plan was militarily unsound because it was too short. (This was a political and not a military plan and was not intended to have full-scale military objectives.)

23. The President then asked, "What can we do in two weeks?" He went on to request that the plan be refined in terms of maximum shock impact, with limited civilian casualties. He stated that maximum shock effect should be measured in terms of capacity to wage war. He said we will be hitting to impair economy—POL, power, dikes, railroads, interdiction points, etc. Doctor Kissinger said we should use as target criteria high economic value targets and bottleneck areas and noted that it doesn't mean much to strike at supplies distributed on trails. The President repeated that we should refine the plan and noted that the objective was not to stop support of the war in the South. The President wants two plans of 7 and 14 days duration for both the wet and dry seasons with reduced follow on sorties to reseed minefields

[3] Summarized in Document 134.

and hit Northeast railroad. He stated we should not be concerned about degrading SIOP.

24. The President said that here is what may happen. The North Vietnamese may waddle along until the campaign starts and then make a provocation. There is a chance it will go in April. CJCS said that during a discussion in July President Thieu said that the North Vietnamese would continue the "high point-low point" strategy and then attack in January to embarrass the President.

25. I stated that it must be recognized that in the Pruning Knife plan the target list and the allocation of sorties were illustrative only. We still had much refining to do and the target studies combined with inputs from the field would require changes. Some discussion followed concerning the interdiction of the Northeast rail lines and mining of Haiphong. It was suggested that we had previously tried to interdict the rail lines, bombing targets all the way up to the Chinese border, and had not succeeded in stopping the operation. This I felt gives a wrong impression of what we are trying to do with Pruning Knife. I told the President that the current plan presents a different situation than that encountered before. I said that the current input into Haiphong was about 165,000 tons a month which it has been for a long time. This constituted about 90% of North Vietnamese requirements while about 10% was being brought in by rail. The railroads throughout this war have been operating at about 10–15% capacity. Consequently, if we mine Haiphong and throw the entire load on the railroad then it presents an entirely different target system. Traffic on the railroad is increased 7–10 times its present rate. Therefore, breaks in the rail line will generate large numbers of lucrative targets. Furthermore, with such heavy traffic the railroad must run night and day and it becomes more difficult to repair. There is also the initial problem of rerouting the traffic and finding enough rolling stock to meet such a tremendous expansion of effort. I do not think we could compare the railroad as a target system without mining to what it would be with mining.

26. SecDef then asked me to explain the mining problem in Sihanoukville. I said that the mining of Sihanoukville was very simple and it would have an impact on the operations of the enemy in the IV Corps area since we feel now that practically all military supplies for these areas are coming from Cambodia. In reply to a question by the President I repeated that the mining of Sihanoukville would pose no problem and no military risk and that the port facilities in Sihanoukville were very, very limited relative to those in Haiphong. Consequently, except for military requirements in the southern part of Vietnam, Sihanoukville could in no way take over the import load from Haiphong. Furthermore, it is not feasible to carry supplies overland from Sihanoukville back into North Vietnam.

27. *The President told SecDef that we must keep the Air and Navy forces available.* The North Vietnamese may decide to talk now and fight later. CSA mentioned the possibility of a preemptive buy of Cambodian supplies. Doctor Kissinger said that we must look at the CIA operations in Cambodia. In reply to a request from the President for comment, Attorney General Mitchell said that his remarks would be related to the domestic side. He said the question is whether or not the American public will stand for Vietnamization or escalation. The President said that Prime Minister Wilson will give his support, and commented in general that support overseas for the US was increasing.

28. Doctor Kissinger stated that if North Vietnam's economy is crippled then this should accelerate Vietnamization (I agree).

29. CMC stated that if we attack the North Vietnamese then they will be compelled to react in South Vietnam with a large-scale attack since this is the reaction one could expect from Orientals.

30. Doctor Kissinger said that this all depends on whether or not they want to take the risk and, if they fight in the open, they will be finished. He said he was not prejudging but we should give them a very hard choice.

31. The President asked CSAF how long it would take to destroy the airfields in North Vietnam. The President appeared a little surprised when CSAF answered: "three weeks." Therefore, I hastened to add that CSAF was talking about total destruction of all runways, POL, facilities, etc. I said that the destruction of aircraft themselves could be done in a much shorter time, and that after the first attack I expected many of the aircraft to be evacuated into China as they had done before.

32. The President noted that next September we must elect those that will support our action, and then went on to say that he is prepared to take a public relations shock if the goal can be reached. The President then discussed with the SecDef the duration of budgetary support, and was told that we were okay for Fiscal '69 and that, due to the Continuation Resolution, we probably were okay until at least October of next year. Further discussion was held on the nature of polls and the need to explain our position.

33. The President said our line should be at this time: "We have a plan to bring the war to an end to get the Vietnamese in and the US out. The only ingredient missing is support of public opinion. The question is do we end the war achieving our objective, or let the Communists take over. If the Communists take over, this will encourage Communists and discourage our friends worldwide."

34. The SecDef said that the new plan is working and that we should continue along the present plan. He stated that a date on withdrawal should not be given since it, in effect, stops negotiations.

35. A discussion followed on the nature of speeches to be given to the public.

36. The President stated that there was one option he rules out—that is, that we are going to get out because of public opinion. This is attractive politically since the previous Administration could be blamed and those that do not support the present course would be happy. However, if there is a chance that Vietnamization will work we must take this chance. The President stated that if we fail we have had it. We cannot sit still without an option to do more. If the North Vietnamese try to break us with an offensive then we must hit them—and I do not mean tit for tat. He stated that he wants the military to think differently than the previous policy of tit for tat. (The JCS have always thought differently and have never agreed with the previous tit for tat policy.) The President stated that a great power must go on this basis of: "Don't strike a king unless you intend to kill him."

T.H. Moorer[4]

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

137. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, October 17, 1969, 4:49–5:45 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

The President
Sir Robert Thompson
Henry A. Kissinger
John H. Holdridge, NSC Senior Staff Member

SUBJECT

The President's Remarks to Sir Robert Thompson Concerning the Vietnam Situation

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 63, Memoranda of Conversations, Presidential File, 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Holdridge sent this memorandum to Kissinger on October 24 with the recommendation that it receive no distribution outside the White House. Kissinger agreed. (Ibid.) The time of the meeting is from the President's Daily Diary. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files)

After the opening pleasantries, in which the President complimented Sir Robert on his book,[2] the President outlined his thinking on the Vietnam situation and its relationship to the US domestic political scene. Going back over the last three years, he said, as well as during the campaign and again since his first NSC meeting, he had hit hard on the theme that there had been a waste of our military power against North Vietnam because this power had not been used in relation to our diplomatic policy. For example, the bombing should not have been stopped until an indication had been made to the opposite side that certain things should happen as a result. Although the North Vietnamese did not get something for nothing, there was no real quid pro quo from the bombing halt.

The President referred to the proposition that it was essential that we see the real character of the war, and added that we had not previously understood what this character was. He noted that the situation in Malaya which Sir Robert had dealt with was not quite similar, but nevertheless had many of the same characteristics—e.g. there was terrorism in response to which it was necessary to train police. The President went on to say that our direction had now changed, and there has been a subtle but significant shift in US policy toward Vietnam. Our position is now better and more in keeping with the type of war we are fighting. The President noted that the improved situation was becoming apparent, and referred to the recent appearance of optimistic reports from sources such as Joe Alsop, Crosby Noyes, and even such doves as the *New York Times.*

The President then presented his ideas as to where the Administration stands politically in the US. He noted that it would have been a popular move for him to say on the day that he came in, or even nine months later, that the Vietnam situation had been badly mismanaged by the previous Administration, and that while we had tried to handle it, it was such a mess that we felt we had to get out. The people would have been relieved. There is now a definite change as to whether we should have gone into Vietnam in the first place. Before, there was considerable agreement, but opinion is now running 60–40 against our involvement. Nevertheless, there is still a substantial proportion of the population which says that we should not take a bloody nose.

Continuing, the President expressed the strong conviction that regardless of why we were in Vietnam, the political consequences of a defeat were such that we had to see it through. He remarked that the enemy had misjudged him in one important way: they had caught him in the beginning of his term with three years more to run. His attitude

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[2] Sir Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam* (New York: D. McKay Co., 1969).

was not affected by shellfire. He had been through situations such as this before, and had learned that polls and editorials don't make policy. He had visited Vietnam in 1953, in 1956, and six times between 1961 and 1968. Based on his experience, he knew that if the US ended the war, and accepted the imposition of a coalition government, this would break the South Vietnamese Government.

Parenthetically, the President gave his evaluation of the Thieu government, mentioning that it was difficult even for objective observers to form judgments of new governments, but that it was remarkable what the Thieu government had accomplished despite its newness and the wartime pressures. Admittedly it needed to carry out political and administrative reforms, to let political prisoners out of jail, and to implement a land reform program. However, it had made great progress.

Returning to US objectives in Vietnam, the President again stressed his conviction that the US must see it through for the limited objectives for which we are there—to deny South Vietnam to those who would want to create the impression they had won it by force, as well as to leave a government established by the people through their own choice. Having this objective in mind, the President said, he hoped in the three years ahead of him to achieve a responsive Congress and a change in public opinion. He observed that unlike the political organization in the UK with which Sir Robert was familiar, Congress controlled the purse strings in the US and was thus extremely influential. Looking ahead, he therefore saw a very difficult situation unless a change was brought about by 1970 or 1971. If the American people fail to see an end in sight by this period, we would lose on the homefront what was being won in Vietnam. Sir Robert emphatically agreed.

The President asked Sir Robert if he ruled out the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Sir Robert said that the only circumstances under which he saw such a possibility were if it came through to Hanoi that we were staying and that conditions in the South were going well from the US standpoint. Hanoi might then want to save what was left. He did not, however, see these circumstances as existing now.

The President asked what Sir Robert thought of the "option to the right." By this, he explained, he meant escalation. Sir Robert answered that he would rule escalation out from the US standpoint. The Administration was running its greatest risk with American opinion and dissent, as well as with world opinion. If escalation worked, he asked, what would the Administration look like? The President remarked that this depended on what we did. Bombing was one thing, but a precise surgical operation was another. Looking at things from the standpoint of the Soviet Union, he felt that the USSR was not presently exercising its influence, but as in the case of the Korean war, might possibly do so if there were incentives on the "negative side".

Sir Robert mentioned that within the present timetable, looking not too far ahead, and assuming that present US policy is pursued, victory could be won in two years if the South Vietnamese people retain their confidence in the US. Alternatively, if they thought we were going to withdraw, then there would be a collapse. He doubted that enemy capabilities were such as to launch another Tet offensive but foresaw the possibility of several "bad fortnights" which would hurt.

Turning to judgments made by presumably competent observers and the way that these may differ from realities, Sir Robert mentioned a case in Malaya, when Victor Purcell, a man with a wealth of background in the country, had said in 1954 that nothing which Sir Gerald Templar was doing was right, and that the British couldn't possibly succeed and should pull out; the very next year, though, the Communists had cracked and asked for negotiations. Dr. Kissinger asked Sir Robert how the British had handled the Communist overture at that time. It was his impression that talks had not taken place. Sir Robert recalled that the British had held firm on terms, and the Communists had in consequence reduced their arguments to the point where all they wanted was the legalization of the Communist party. Tunku Abdul Rahman had been very helpful at this stage in rejecting these terms.

The President raised the proposition of Sir Robert going to South Vietnam to look at conditions for a reasonable period of time and on the basis of his experience in Vietnam, reporting back his independent judgment of how things actually were going. He hoped that South Vietnam would remain firm in the light of US withdrawals and in the timetable which he had in mind. He needed, though, to know just what it was that we had to sell, and on how to beat the polls. If he knew these things and could speak with certainty, he could exercise a greater effect on US public opinion. The President suggested, and Sir Robert agreed, that Sir Robert should go to Singapore as part of his trip to see Lee Kuan Yew and get the feel of Lee's impressions of Vietnam developments.

Reverting to the topic of the US role in Asia, the President asked if, leaving out all else, he, Sir Robert, was convinced that the US must see it through in Vietnam. Sir Robert agreed "absolutely", and added that in his opinion the future of Western civilization was at stake. The President went on to discuss the need for an educational program to get this point across to the American people. President Johnson's great failure, the President remarked, was that with the exception of Johnson's San Antonio speech the basic issues had never quite come through. Johnson simply called on everybody to stand with the flag. What was at stake now, the President added, is not only the future peace of the Pacific and the chances for independence in the region, but the survival of the US as a world power with the will to use this

power. If South Vietnam were to go, after a matter of months countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia would have to adjust because they believe they must play the winner. In fact, the domino theory would apply. In addition, 500,000 people in Vietnam would be massacred.

Another issue at stake, the President observed, is whether on the other side the hawks or the doves would succeed in setting policy. If the hawks were to get leverage out of a success in Vietnam, they would be tempted to try again elsewhere. They would try to show that the US was not the wave of the future, and US allies and friends would lose confidence. Sir Robert concurred, but expressed the thought that the Communist hawks might try to win out on a slow, non-controversial basis, aiming their policy at eroding the US position rather than launching direct challenges.

The President mentioned that even among European neutralists, there were those who saw the issues clearly. The Belgian Foreign Minister and Prime Minister had told him that whatever we see in the press, not to end the war in Vietnam as a US defeat. Golda Meir had said that time really might not be on the Soviets' side and that while they might be a threat now or for five or ten years, they had long-term problems. Nevertheless, she had said that the Soviets rank with the US as a naval power and she took comfort from the fact that the US is present, as a counter to the Soviets. He had told her, the President noted, that we couldn't continue in this position—if we were defeated in Vietnam, the US people would never stand firm elsewhere. The problem is the confidence of the American people in themselves, and we must think in domestic terms.

There was a further discussion of Sir Robert's mission to Vietnam, in which it was decided that Sir Robert would operate, as on previous occasions as a consultant to RAND and take with him Desmond Palmer, who had been Sir Robert's chief of staff in Malaya. The President assured Sir Robert that everything would be open to him and that our Embassy people in Saigon would most certainly provide all help that was needed. He wanted a really good judgment, the President declared. A time-frame of a month was decided upon.

Once again, the President referred to the "option to the right". American public opinion has been closely polled, and it seemed probable that the people were not so much anti-war as tending to feel that the US should get in or get out. They did not like the idea of the greatest power in the world being made to back down by a little country, but favored withdrawing from the war unless we did something. Sir Robert commented that the "option to the right" didn't help in the South; that unless the gains made there were solidified so that the US could leave, the situation would still be shaky. In his opinion, the best

thing for the US to do was to show that it could beat the Communists in their own way. Dr. Kissinger referred to the Malayan situation in which the opposition had been identifiable and there had been no outside supply sources, to which the President observed we could consider the option of quarantining the North Vietnamese supplies. The Soviets could help in this, since they would not want a confrontation.

Sir Robert stated that the Soviets indeed would not want a confrontation and also don't want problems with the Chinese. He felt that they did not want the US out of Vietnam too quickly, as they were in no position to inherit US power and were afraid that without the US the area would fall into Chinese hands. Dr. Kissinger described the "option to the right" as being a problem of time. Given sufficient time, Sir Robert's method was best, but if we were being squeezed, a bold strike might help. With success in the South, and Soviet fear of a confrontation and fear of the Chinese, we could improve our position.

The President added that success in the South was important, and that if the reports we received were half true, a new factor had come about through a dramatic change for the better there. This is what he really wanted Sir Robert to look into.[3] The discussion turned to indicators of the improved situation in South Vietnam, such as the increased Chieu Hoi rate, which included North Vietnamese—something which had never occurred before—and which was taking place without military pressure. Enemy morale had also declined. In Sir Robert's opinion, the most significant news was that the refugees were going back to their villages in large numbers. In this respect, the President stated that he wanted the worst news as well as the best. The military were trying to hold down the withdrawal rate and haggling over numbers such as 28 or 30 thousand. It was possible that they were being overcautious in evaluating developments, since they had been burned so often, e.g., in the 1968 Tet offensive and the "mini-Tet" this year. On the other hand, perhaps we were overly optimistic on the pacification side, but the reports were indeed better. The whole area of government in the South had improved.

The President referred to President Thieu, saying that he was getting an undeservedly bad reputation. Although some people said that the Administration must pressure Thieu to take the Buddhists back into

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[3] In backchannel message WH 92789 to Saigon, October 18, Kissinger informed Bunker that Nixon had asked Thompson "to provide independent assessment of security situation and general political, economic, and military conditions" in South Vietnam. Kissinger counted on the Ambassador and the Mission Council to cooperate with Thompson and provide him all the facilities he needed. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel, Vol. II, 10/69)

the government, bring in Big Minh, crack down on corruption, broaden the base, and go forward with land reform, he, the President, didn't care what Thieu did as long as it helped the war. The conversation closed with a remark by Sir Robert that the US and the Vietnamese were fighting at different levels. The Vietnamese were, in fact, fighting for survival. When we had similarly fought for survival, we, like they, had used everything in the book.

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138. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, October 20, 1969.

SUBJECT

Washington Special Action Group's Recommendations for Providing Military Assistance to Laos

The Washington Special Action Group has developed a plan for providing military assistance to the Lao Government forces.[2] This plan lists actions which are already under way, and also contains agreed recommendations on further actions for your approval. The actions already taken include providing the regular and irregular Lao Government forces with M–16s and more artillery, giving the Air Force additional T–28s, improving and maintaining US aerial reconnaissance capability and tactical air operations, increasing Thai training and support of the Lao forces, and supporting political moves by Prince Souvanna Phouma to improve his posture as a genuine neutralist.

Actions for which your approval is requested are:[3]

1. Working out with our Embassies in Vientiane and Bangkok the introduction of a small Thai fire-control element into Laos to assist Meo gun crews, phasing the Thai out when Meo have been adequately

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 64, Memoranda to the President, 1969 October. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action. Drafted by Holdridge on October 16, and sent to Kissinger under a covering memorandum of the same date.

[2] See footnote 4, Document 131.

[3] Nixon initialed the approve option for all 5 recommendations. In an October 23 memorandum to Rogers, Laird, and Helms, Kissinger directed them to undertake these five actions. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 1, Chronological File, 1969 October–November)

trained to replace them. The assumption is that immediate reintroduction of the full Thai artillery battery which was withdrawn earlier ("Sierra Romeo VIII") might reveal the Thai presence and leave Thailand vulnerable to charges of violating the 1962 Geneva Accords.

2. Continue studying with Embassies Vientiane and Bangkok the possible utilization of "Sierra Romeo VIII" elsewhere in Laos where it can be both effective and not readily visible or vulnerable. Defense believes that this battery is a useful asset; Ambassador Unger wants it to show the Thai that US interests continue in maintaining a military balance in Laos.

3. Consider via our Ambassadors in Bangkok and Vientiane giving specialized and intensive training to Thai forces for possible future operations against the North Vietnamese in Laos. Although the Thai forces would not necessarily be committed, their extra capabilities would be available in the event that their help becomes needed.

4. Once a North Vietnamese offensive begins and suitable targets are identified, implementing B–52 reconnaissance to develop strike information and possibly to give Hanoi a signal. This action would be withheld for the present, however, to give us an opportunity to study countermeasures for dealing with the risks involved and to provide for necessary advanced planning.

5. If an enemy offensive assumes a size indicating an intention of going beyond the previous pattern of attacks, giving commanders in the field authority to increase manned tactical reconnaissance activities over North Vietnam and the Lao border area below 19 degrees north and initiate tactical reconnaissance in the border area above 19 degrees north. Such activity would enhance intelligence collection capability, provide target data for possible future actions, serve as a signal to the DRV that we might bomb portions of North Vietnam, and possibly cause the DRV to disperse supplies and reconsider plans for an offensive.

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139. Editorial Note

On October 20, 1969, at 3:30 p.m., President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger met in the Oval Office of the White House with Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin at the latter's request to discuss the range of U.S.-Soviet relations. In an October 17 diary entry Assistant to the President Haldeman wrote: "K has all sorts of signal activity going on around the world to try to jar Soviets & NVN—appears to be working because Dobrynin asked for an early mtg—which we have set secretly for Monday [October 20]." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, Haldeman Files) In

an October 18 briefing paper to the President, Kissinger stressed: "Your basic purpose will be to keep the Soviets concerned about what we might do around November 1. You should also make clear that, whether or not they agree to SALT, unless there is real progress in Vietnam, US-Soviet relations will continue to be adversely affected." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/HAK, 1969, [part 1]). According to the October 20 memorandum of conversation, the discussion on Vietnam follows:

"The President then turned to Vietnam. He said that prior to the bombing halt, 'which you are aware will be one year old on November 1st,' Ambassadors Bohlen, Thompson and Harriman had pointed out that the Soviet Union could do nothing as long as the United States was bombing a fellow Socialist country, and that it would be very active afterwards. The bombing halt was agreed to and the Soviet Union has done nothing.

"Of course, the President said, we now had an oblong table to the attainment of which the Soviet Union contributed something, but the U.S. did not consider that a great achievement. All conciliatory moves for the past year had been made by the United States. The President enumerated them.

"The President said he therefore had concluded that maybe the Soviet Union did not want to end the war in Vietnam. They may think that they can break the President; they may believe that the U.S. domestic situation is unmanageable; they may think that the war in Vietnam costs the Soviet Union only a small amount of money and costs the U.S. a great many lives. The President did not propose to argue with the Soviet assessment. As a great power, it had the right to take its position. On the other hand, the Ambassador had to understand the following: the Soviet Union would be stuck with the President for the next three years and three months, and the President would keep in mind what was being done right now. If the Soviet Union would not help us to get peace, the U.S. would have to pursue its own methods for bringing the war to an end. It could not allow a talk-fight strategy without taking action.

"The President said he hoped that the Ambassador would understand that such measures would not be directed against the Soviet Union, but would be in the U.S. interest of achieving peace. The U.S. recognized that a settlement must reflect the real situation. It recognized the right of all Vietnamese to participate in the political process. But up to now, there had been a complete refusal of North Vietnam to make its own proposals in order to have any serious discussion.

"The President pointed out that all the Ambassador had done was to repeat the same tired old slogans that the North Vietnamese had made already six months ago, and which he knew very well could lead nowhere. It was time to get discussions started. The humiliation of a defeat was absolutely unacceptable. The President recognized that the Soviet

leaders were tough and courageous, but so was he. He told Ambassador Dobrynin that he hoped that he would not mind this serious talk.

"President Nixon said he did not believe much in personal diplomacy, and he recognized that the Ambassador was a strong defender of the interests of his own country. The President pointed out that if the Soviet Union found it possible to do something in Vietnam, and the Vietnam war ended, the U.S. might do something dramatic to improve Soviet-U.S. relations, indeed something more dramatic than they could now imagine. But until then, real progress would be difficult.

"Ambassador Dobrynin asked whether this meant that there could be no progress. The President replied that progress was possible, but it would have to be confined essentially to what was attainable in diplomatic channels. He said that he was very happy to have Ambassador Dobrynin use the channel through Dr. Kissinger, and he would be prepared to talk to the Ambassador personally. He reiterated that the war could drag on, in which case the U.S. would find its own way to bring it to an end. There was no sense repeating the proposals of the last six months. However, he said, in the meantime, while the situation continued, we could all keep our tone down and talk correctly to each other. It would help, and would lay the basis for further progress, perhaps later on when conditions were more propitious.

"The President said that the whole world wanted us to get together. He too wanted nothing so much as to have his Administration remembered as a watershed in U.S.-Soviet relations, but we would not hold still for being 'diddled' to death in Vietnam." (Memorandum of conversation, October 20; ibid.)

The full text of this discussion is in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, volume XII, Soviet Union, 1969–October 1970. That evening the President called Kissinger and suggested that in a meeting with Dobrynin the next day on another subject, Kissinger should try to raise the issue of Vietnam. Nixon told Kissinger "to shake his head and say 'I'm sorry, Mr. Ambassador, but he [Nixon] is out of control. Mr. Ambassador, as you know, I am very close to the President, but you don't know this man—he has been through more than the rest of us put together.' He's made up his mind and unless there is some movement just shake your head and walk out. He is probably just figuring out what was said [at the October 20 meeting with Kissinger and Nixon]." Kissinger suggested typing up what the President said on a plain piece of paper and giving it to Dobrynin. The President agreed, noting that Dobrynin would ask, "What does this mean? Are you threatening me?" Then Nixon stated that Kissinger should say "Please now, Mr. Ambassador, the President isn't threatening you. He just wants a little movement." Kissinger suggested that "if they ignore what you said this afternoon, they either believe that your freedom of action is so circumscribed that you can't do anything or Hanoi is out of control." The President

suggested it was the latter and remarked: "As I said, I'm here for three years." (Notes of a telephone conversation, October 20, 8:25 p.m.; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 360, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

In an October 21 memorandum to the President, Kissinger assessed the meeting with Dobrynin and emphasized: "Dobrynin's basic mission was to test the seriousness of the threat element in our current posture and to throw out enough inducements (SALT, Berlin, direct informal contact with you) to make it politically and psychologically difficult for you to play it rough over Vietnam." Kissinger went on to suggest that Nixon's threats might give the Soviets ammunition to lobby Hanoi for a more flexible position, or at least a token concession. Kissinger also concluded that Dobrynin had no substantive adjustments to present on Vietnam and that it was "essential to continue to back up our verbal threats with military present moves." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/HAK, 1969, [part 1]) From October 13–30, Nixon authorized the Joint Chiefs of Staff to place portions of the U.S. military on heightened alert (JCS Readiness Test). Documentation on this subject is in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, volume XXXIV, National Security, 1969–1972.

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140. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to Secretary of Defense Laird[1]

Washington, October 24, 1969.

SUBJECT

North Vietnam Contingency Plan

The President has requested that a contingency plan be prepared for the conduct of a three-day, retaliatory air and naval campaign against North Vietnam. This plan would be in addition to those now in preparation as a result of the President's meeting with you and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on October 11, 1969.[2]

The objective of the attack would be to impose maximum damage against remunerative military and war-supporting targets within a

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 1, Chronological File, 1969 October–November. Top Secret; Sensitive.

[2] See Document 136.

short time in order to demonstrate the ability and willingness of the United States to resume full-scale air and naval operations against North Vietnam. The following additional guidance is provided:

a. Operations against NVN will be in response to enemy provocation, and will apply the maximum feasible level of effort.
b. Initial launch of aircraft will be within 72 hours following a Presidential decision.
c. The plan should emphasize primarily attacks against enemy military targets, including stockpiles in the Haiphong Port area, and secondarily against high value economic targets.
d. Risk of civilian casualties should be minimized.
e. Naval surface forces will support the retaliatory attack to the extent feasible.
f. Mining operations will not be authorized.

In addition to the above, it is requested that the President be provided with an estimate of U.S. aircraft losses under two conditions:

a. Concentrated attack against the enemy air and air defense system, such as envisioned in the Pruning Knife plan.
b. More limited attacks against the enemy air and air defense targets necessary to provide minimum essential protection to the strike forces.

Henry A. Kissinger

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141. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, October 28, 1969.

SUBJECT

Troop Replacements

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1320, Unfiled Material, 1969, 6 of 19. Top Secret; Eyes Only. At the bottom of the first page are the following handwritten notes by Nixon: "1. Mel should *increase* the V. Nam weapons & training program. I still think the military is foot dragging. 2. Ask Bunker to pass a sanitized version of this assessment through channels to State."

Attached at Tab A is a report from Ambassador Bunker[2] of his conversations with President Thieu on troop replacements:[3]

Thieu made the following points, inter alia:

—South Vietnamese defense leaders believe that without changing draft laws there are adequate manpower resources to replace about 150,000 US troops next year.

—In order to replace 150,000 US troops, the Vietnamese force strength planned for the end of 1970 would have to be increased to 1,100,000.

—Any new replacements should not be made until March or April 1970.

—Announcing US intentions to pull out the bulk of its combat troops would not have adverse political or morale effects in South Vietnam but the timing of reductions should be kept secret.

—Modern weaponry supplied by the US is essential if the morale and effectiveness of the People's Self Defense Force is to be improved.

Mr. Bunker offered, inter alia, the following preliminary observations:

—We should encourage Thieu to proceed with planning for an expanded strength of 1,100,000.

—Before fixing next year's schedule, we should evaluate enemy plans for increased military effort.

—The announcement of an overall replacement goal of 150,000 might have adverse effects on the morale of our own troops, as well as those of the ARVN.

—If the timing of replacement plans became known, it would give considerable military advantages to the enemy.

—Thieu's approach to troop replacements, economic improvements, and pacification is impressive.

—On many counts the new government is already turning in a more effective performance than its predecessor.

Unless there is a major enemy offensive in the interim, I believe the next replacement increment should be announced in early Decem-

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[2] Tab A, attached but not printed, is a retyped version of backchannel message 226 from Saigon, October 25, sent from Bunker to Kissinger. The original message is ibid., NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel, Vol. II, 10/69.

[3] An earlier discussion between Bunker and Thieu on October 17, regarding Vietnamization, manpower issues, infiltration, a cease-fire, land reform, Thieu's image in the United States, Thieu's political base, pacification, and the economic situation is in telegram 20975 from Saigon, October 18. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

ber before the pressure surrounding December 15 has had a chance to build. The period for accomplishing the next replacement probably should cover a longer time interval and thus encompass a larger withdrawal increment.

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142. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, October 30, 1969.

SUBJECT

Ambassador Bunker's Assessment of the Vietnam Situation

Ambassador Bunker has submitted his personal appraisal of the overall Vietnam situation to you in the attached cable (Tab A).[2] His assessment is pegged to the total political, military, economic and social climate for successful Vietnamization of the war.

The Ambassador concludes that very substantial progress has been made in many areas, although serious problems and deficiencies remain. Probably the most unsettling problem is apprehension about US intentions. Bunker particularly fears the effect on South Vietnamese morale of a precipitous withdrawal of US forces, or a fixed timetable that would put the reductions on an automatic basis. He believes that carefully paced Vietnamization will work if carried out with enough flexibility to counter any enemy moves.

Ambassador Bunker makes the following major points on the war situation:

The Government

—Khiem's government is an improvement over its predecessor. It is more of a team, and is focusing hard on major problems.

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 56, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Vietnam Policy Documents, 1969 September–November. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Sent for information. On the first page of this memorandum is the following handwritten notation: "Note page 9 [of Tab A] we must have this base covered in our December assessment." On page 9 of Tab A, Nixon underlined the following sentence in paragraph 30: "It is important that the public in Viet Nam sees that the GVN has a role in decision making."

[2] Tab A, attached but not printed, is a re-typed verbatim version of backchannel message 287 from Saigon, October 29, from Bunker to the President. The original copy is in the National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel, Vol. II, 10/69.

—Organizationally, the GVN has not been very successful in broadening its political base. Nevertheless, it is getting increased grass roots support and is doing a better job of local administration. It is broadening the base from the bottom up, not from the top down.

The Military

—Ambassador Bunker echoes General Abrams' view that there has been continuing improvement in the RVNAF, that gains from here on will be more qualitative than quantitative, and that significant problems remain, among them high desertions and poor leadership.

—The ARVN casualty rate, and that of the enemy faced by ARVN, has gone up in recent weeks, indicating that the combat load of the ARVN is increasing.

—US force reductions have so far not hurt ARVN morale. A precipitous US withdrawal would probably totally undercut all the GVN military gains, however. A carefully phased withdrawal, on the other hand, might tend to raise ARVN confidence in its ability to take over and hence raise ARVN morale.

Enemy Intentions

—The enemy is definitely trying to provide facilities in Laos for potential infiltration considerably in excess of current rates.

—The latest captured enemy resolution on strategy suggests an intent to try and block our piecemeal withdrawals by hitting ARVN and US troops and upsetting redeployment schedules. The objective is to force a complete US withdrawal.

—There are other signs, however, that the enemy may be planning only to continue his present, low-posture military efforts. It is possible that he has not yet decided and is leaving his options open.

Pacification

—The emphasis is now on consolidation of the substantial gains made this year. The GVN is trying to build depth and breadth into the program.

—This is partly reflected in the already sizeable expansion of the territorial security forces and other civil defense elements.

—There is a much improved climate throughout the countryside in terms of economic revival and popular livelihood.

—The program is still thin and vulnerable, however. The infrastructure has been damaged, but not destroyed.

The Economy

—We are at a critical point in which the GVN will have to fill in behind US withdrawals with substantial additional expenditures. Un-

less the GVN takes strong measures to up its own revenues, and the US adds to our economic aid, inflationary pressures could [worsen].

—The GVN is moving hard to do its share, and has taken austerity measures beyond our expectations in raising taxes.

The Future of Vietnamization

—Bunker supports Thieu's proposal to expand the RVNAF to 1,100,000 by the end of 1970 with special emphasis on territorial forces.

—He believes there is a serious question as to whether any fixed schedule for overall US troop replacements should be announced until we have a better reading on enemy military intentions in early 1970.

—He mainly fears the psychological blow to the Vietnamese if, in the face of a major enemy offensive, "automatic" US redeployments were to continue.

—If a fixed schedule is to be announced, Bunker favors a range tied to a later reassessment of progress.

A Ceasefire

—The Ambassador believes we should continue to insist on a ceasefire tied to proper agreements on verification of the withdrawal of NVA forces.

—He has not had the opportunity to discuss this question in detail yet with Thieu, but Thieu has generally taken the position that the present allied stance on a ceasefire is a viable one which should be maintained.

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143. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, October 30, 1969.

SUBJECT

Assumptions Underlying Vietnamization

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 252, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Vietnam Policy Documents, 1969 July–December. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Sent for information. Kissinger prints almost all of this memorandum in *White House Years,* pp. 285–286.

We have seen so many Vietnam programs fail after being announced with great fanfare, that I thought I should put before you in summary form my questions about the assumptions underlying Vietnamization. To believe that this course is viable, we must make favorable assumptions about a number of factors, and must believe that Hanoi as well will come to accept them.

U.S. calculations about the success of Vietnamization—and *Hanoi's* calculations, in turn, about the success of *their* strategy—rely on our respective judgments of:

—*the pace of public opposition in the U.S. to our continuing the fight in any form.* (Past experience indicates that Vietnamization will not significantly slow it down.)

—*the ability of the U.S. Government to maintain its own discipline in carrying out this policy.* (As public pressures grow, you may face increasing governmental disarray with a growing number of press leaks, etc.)[2]

—*the actual ability of the South Vietnamese Government and armed forces to replace American withdrawals—both physically and psychologically.* (Conclusive evidence is lacking here; this fact in itself, and past experience, argue against optimism.)

—*the degree to which Hanoi's current losses affect its ability to fight later*—i.e., losses of military cadre, political infra-structure, etc. (Again, the evidence is not definitive. Most reports of progress have concerned *security* gains by U.S. forces—not a lasting erosion of enemy political strength.)[3]

—*the ability of the GVN to gain solid political benefit from its current pacification progress.* (Again, reports of progress have been largely about security gains behind the U.S. shield.)

Our Vietnamization policy thus rests on a series of favorable assumptions which may not be accurate—although no one can be certain on the basis of current analyses.

I am asking the Vietnam Special Studies Group to see what can be done to minimize the dangers involved.

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[2] Nixon highlighted the first two subparagraphs and wrote: "*Nov 9* We seem to have a better chance now on these points *than before Nov 3.*" Reference is to Nixon's speech of November 3; see Document 144.

[3] Nixon underlined the last 5 words of this sentence and wrote: "Ask Thompson [Sir Robert] what he predicts on this score."

144. Editorial Note

On November 3, 1969, at 9:32 p.m., President Nixon gave an address to the nation on Vietnam that was broadcast on national television. This address came to be known as the "silent majority speech" from Nixon's appeal for support for his policy from "the great silent majority of Americans" to counter the large-scale anti-Vietnam war demonstrations. The full text of the speech is in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pages 901–909. In his memoirs, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon,* the President recounts the drafting and the rationale of his speech. (pages 404–413) Henry Kissinger in *White House Years* provides his insight on the speech and its preparation. (pages 306–309)

At Kissinger's request a number of key advisers offered advice on the speech. In an October 23 memorandum to Kissinger, Laird suggested that the main themes of the speech should be that the United States had a program to accomplish its main objective in Vietnam—Vietnamization—and that a positive momentum had been established in implementing that program. (Washington National Records Center, Chronological Files of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense: FRC 330 74 0045, Signer's Copies, October 1969) Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge sent Kissinger a letter on October 17 in response to a request from Nixon for "some thoughts on why we cannot 'bug out.' " Lodge suggested that a further reduction of troops, 40,000 to 50,000, plus the offer to negotiate a cease-fire would help prevent a "bug out." (Massachusetts Historical Society, Papers of Henry Cabot Lodge II, Reel 9) Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Marshall Green, gave Kissinger his thoughts on the speech, Vietnamization, future reliance on the Guam (Nixon) Doctrine, and additional troop withdrawals in a letter of October 21. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 74, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam (General Files), 9/69–11/69) John Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff responded to a Kissinger request in a memorandum of October 17 and attached a long statement detailing the Nixon administration's progress toward a solution on Vietnam. (Ibid., Box 139, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Memos and Miscellaneous, XI–B, 10/17/69–10/31/69)

In backchannel message 169 from Saigon, October 22, Bunker informed Kissinger that, as instructed, he had informed Thieu that "U.S. policy on war will not change" and war protests would not change the policy. Bunker also stated that speculation that Nixon would announce a unilateral cease-fire proposal in his November 3 speech was false. In backchannel message 353 from Saigon, November 3, Bunker reported that he showed Thieu an outline of Nixon's address, and Thieu was not only "satisfied" but he was "much pleased." Thieu promised to give the outline to no one. (Both ibid., Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files,

8–A, All Backchannel, Vol. 3, Nov. 1969) In a November 3 memorandum to Nixon, Rogers outlined how U.S. allies were being consulted on the speech and, at the President's request, described how the Department was developing "a game plan designed to encourage international support for the policies set forth in your address." (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 VIET S)

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145. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, November 5, 1969, noon.

PARTICIPANTS

Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Ambassador William Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
John H. Holdridge, Senior Staff Member, NSC

SUBJECT

Remarks by Ambassadors Green and Sullivan Concerning Vietnam

After a few opening comments concerning the President's speech[2] and the desirability of getting reactions in as soon as possible, the conversation focussed on recent developments in Vietnam. Dr. Kissinger asked what might happen next in Paris, to which Ambassador Sullivan replied that the Communists in his opinion were likely to stone wall in Paris while increasing military pressure in the field. He mentioned that a step-up in the rate of infiltration had taken place since October 23, and that over 5,000 NVA troops were now in the pipeline—as many as had infiltrated in the whole period from April to October.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 140, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. XII, 1–15 November 1969. Secret; Nodis. Holdridge sent this memorandum to Kissinger under cover of a memorandum of November 12, on which Kissinger wrote: "note change on p. 3. No distribution. HK" Prior to this discussion, Kissinger and Sullivan talked on the telephone at 3:10 p.m. on November 4. According to notes of the discussion, Kissinger told Sullivan that "Habib was not to make any modifications on what he had previously said" and that "the President was determined that we don't make any new proposals in Paris. . . . On threat of death K said there will be no new proposals." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 361, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

[2] See Document 144.

A build-up north of the DMZ was also possible, with perhaps an attack directly across the DMZ. If military action of this sort occurred, we would need to take appropriate measures, perhaps even bombing north of the DMZ.

Dr. Kissinger mentioned that the Communist build-up in the Delta was obvious to everybody, and asked if there was any plan on what to do about it. Sullivan said that nothing more than the normal increase of South Vietnamese forces was contemplated, but dismissed the Communist build-up as not being big enough to worry about. To him, the Communist threat to the special forces camps of Bu Prang and Duc Lap was politically more significant, and the Communists had the capability to take these camps. However, it was General Abrams' view that the situation was not all that serious. The number of 5,000 infiltrators was not in itself of major significance.

Dr. Kissinger wondered if the Communists had ever meant to settle the war by negotiations. He noted that in May and June it had looked as if things might get moving. Could we have done more, and what froze the Communists up? Ambassadors Green and Sullivan said in reply that the Communists had in their negotiating position blasted Vietnamization and US troop withdrawals as a major factor, and they were inclined to take the Communist rationale at face value.

Continuing, Sullivan mentioned that what had intrigued him most in that period was the May 31 speech of Le Duc Tho[3]—Tho had asked if we would agree to discuss everything on the table, i.e., both the 8 point and 10 point programs, and have a cease-fire. Sullivan speculated, though, that Ho Chi Minh's illness plus the influence of the US peacenicks and the growing American intellectual split had caused the Communists to back off.

Ambassador Green noted that our intelligence had brought out a coincidence between the July 20 Plaine de Jarres offensive and the South Vietnam situation. This has been an important anniversary, and we all had reached the conclusion it was a big date. Perhaps the Communists had then anticipated that a major move was to be expected from the US, such as proposing a cease-fire. There therefore might have been something significant in the Communist pull-back from Muong Soui. He had been told by both Khampan and Champassak that they were dissatisfied with the explanation that the Communist forces pulled back from Muong Soui solely because they ran out of food.

The conversation then turned to the question of a cease-fire, with Dr. Kissinger asking why the Communists might want one. Sullivan

[3] See Document 75.

spoke of the attrition of Communist forces, which was continuing to the point where they were not contesting the GVN's pacification efforts. He thought that in a few more months the Communists would be put in a position of making the choice between stepping up the war and making a major infiltration effort, or else taking some steps to protect the integrity of their forces. A cease-fire would be such a step. Dr. Kissinger recalled that there had been no discussion of a cease-fire by the Communists, to which Sullivan speculated that they would prefer the offer to come from us rather than from them. Dr. Kissinger noted that all they needed to do was to send the Soviets to us on this issue and ask us what we meant.

Sullivan mentioned the effort being launched by the Archbishops of Saigon and Danang to contact all four parties in Paris. He thought that this effort was probably in connection with a cease-fire proposal, which we for our part would not oppose.

Dr. Kissinger doubted that if the Communists were in such bad shape as Sullivan had suggested, they would favor a cease-fire. He could not see the logic. Sullivan speculated that if the Communists took the initiative they could gain a propaganda advantage by linking a cease-fire appeal, which would be popular in the US, with a coalition government. He thought, therefore, that we should propose a cease-fire first so as to preempt the Communists. Dr. Kissinger felt that we could easily explore with Thieu the meaning of a cease-fire without asking for one.

Dr. Kissinger remarked upon the US domestic implications of a cease-fire and wondered whether there was a desire for one which we were blocking because we simply didn't understand the implications. Should the President have proposed one? Sullivan thought that such a proposal would have been a gimmick, but Ambassador Green thought that it might be useful as an argument to the people back here as well as to head the Communists off.

After a few references to the Fulbright Hearings on Vietnam, Sullivan elaborated on the advantages of a cease-fire, by noting that if our position remained unchanged and the Communists did revert to stepped-up military action, they could give us a great problem with Saigon as well as with public opinion here by at some later stage proposing a cease-fire linked with a coalition government. Again, he thought that we should get there first.

Dr. Kissinger pointed out that if we were to make the offer first, the Communists could always counter by calling for a complete US troop withdrawal and a coalition government.

Following some further discussion of the pros and cons of a cease-fire, with some reference to the possibility of increased Communist military action occurring next February or March, as Deputy Ambassador

Berger believed might happen, Dr. Kissinger stated that if a paper containing a recommendation on a cease-fire came from them, Ambassadors Green and Sullivan, he would see that it was considered by the President even if it did not have JCS clearance. (Ambassador Green noted that the absence of such clearance on a paper already extant was the reason it had not been sent.)

The conversation shifted back to the fact that Ambassador Bunker had been authorized to discuss a cease-fire with Thieu, along with other issues, but nothing had been heard from him. Ambassador Green raised the possibility that Bunker might have been communicating directly with the White House by "back channels", to which Dr. Kissinger emphatically rejected the idea that any such communication had taken place on the subject of a cease-fire.[4]

In conclusion, Ambassador Green raised the matter of our Ambassador in Warsaw making contact with the Chinese Communist Chargé. The first opportunity to make such contact at a social occasion would come at the end of the month, but was there any objection to operating overtly? Direct contact could be made via a call at the Chinese Embassy. Dr. Kissinger said that he saw no objection to such direct contacts, but added that there was no problem either, in getting together overtly—in fact we preferred it.

[4] At this point, Kissinger crossed out "or would take place" and wrote "on the subject of a ceasefire."

146. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, November 12, 1969.

SUBJECT

Planning of Military Operations in Laos

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. III, 11 October 1969–31 January 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action.

After reading a recent CIA memorandum on Vang Pao's offensive in the Plain of Jars, I raised questions about the planning of Lao military operations (Tab A).[2]

State, Defense and CIA have prepared a coordinated reply (Tab B)[3] which indicates that:

—U.S. ability to control (including veto) a Lao operation is to all practical purposes complete because U.S. matériel and air support are vital.

—In practice, most operations are conceived by commanders of individual Military Regions in close conjunction with U.S. Military Attachés, or in the case of Vang Pao and the other irregulars, with the local CIA Area Chief.

—In brief, the following U.S. clearance procedures are followed:

—The cognizant U.S. military attaché or CIA Area Chief forwards the request to U.S. Country Team, consisting of Ambassador, DCM, Military Attachés and CIA Station Chief.

—Vang Pao's operations are also cleared by the CIA base at Udom, Thailand which assesses the Agency's ability to provide necessary support.

—The Ambassador requests authorization from State for politically sensitive operations or activities exceeding established operating procedures and refers requests for air support to MACV.

—Although U.S. and Lao planners generally decide in advance on the objectives, goals, and scope of Lao operations, it sometimes becomes difficult to restrain an operation once underway.

U.S. authorities in Laos are deeply involved in planning and providing support for military operations undertaken by the Lao Government and irregular forces. I believe that the U.S. role is an inevitable consequence of the Vietnam war and the increasing North Vietnamese activities in Laos. However, the following aspects of current procedures are cause for some concern:

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[2] Tab A, attached but not printed, is an October 23 memorandum from Kissinger to Rogers, Laird, and Helms transmitting Nixon's questions about direction of policy on Laos. Kissinger wrote: "The President has noted with interest reports of Vang Pao's recent offensive in North Central Laos, and has posed certain related questions: a. Who plans Laotian offensives? b. Who establishes the objectives, concepts and associated parameters for conduct of military operations in Laos? c. What specific procedures are followed in conjunction with a. and b., above?" Kissinger requested that the Department of State coordinate the three agencies' responses and reply by October 28. The signed original is ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27 LAOS.

[3] Tab B, attached but not printed, is the coordinated paper Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., Executive Secretary of the Department of State, sent to Kissinger under a covering memorandum of October 28 in which Eliot stated that the paper was prepared in response to Kissinger's memorandum of October 23. The Department of State copy is ibid.

—Since senior Lao authorities are often not informed until planning is well along, a conflict might develop if Souvanna were to interpose objections on political grounds to what we considered imperative from a military standpoint.

—Although the Ambassador and his Country Team exercise control over planning and operations, they apparently are not under continuing and direct control of any higher military or political authority. The Ambassador, in effect, runs his own Theater of Operations.

—Once an operation is actually under way, it becomes subject to the decisions of Lao commanders such as Vang Pao, and our ability to influence events becomes circumscribed.

—There seems more emphasis on tactics than on a coordinated strategy.

Recommendation:[4]

If you approve, I will consult with the Secretaries of State and Defense, and the Director of CIA on measures which might be taken to improve the degree of control exercised over military planning and operations in Laos.

[4] Nixon initialed the approve option.

147. Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Saigon, November 15, 1969, 1128Z.

564. Ref: WH92979[2]

1. General Abrams and I have discussed subject of reference telegram and submit our joint preliminary views. In considering the timing and magnitude of the next U.S. troop withdrawal, we believe following factors should be taken into account.

a) The enemy has begun his winter/spring offensive.
b) Truck traffic has resumed in the Laos panhandle.
c) Some infiltration groups have been identified indication resumption of infiltration on a modest scale.
d) Enemy's 24B regiment has moved into the western DMZ and all three regiments of his 324B regiment are now in Laos opposite Thua Thien.
e) Level of hostilities has increased quite sharply during the last month. Enemy losses have increased each week since October 18 from a low point for the week ending October 18 of 1,624 KIA; enemy losses for this week were approximately 3,500. Friendly losses have also increased, particularly RVNAF. For the current week, they will be 82 percent of friendly losses.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel, Vol. III, November 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Kissinger sent a retyped verbatim copy of this message to President Nixon under cover of a November 28 memorandum in which he summarized the major points raised by Bunker. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 140, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. XII–2, 15–30 November 1969)

[2] In backchannel message WH 92979, November 14, Kissinger informed Bunker that the President wanted Bunker's and Abrams' view on two alternatives: (a) an announcement in mid-December of a withdrawal of 60,000 U.S. troops to be completed in mid-April 1970, or (b) an announcement at the same time of a withdrawal of 100,000 to be completed by the end of June. Kissinger noted that (a) would be more palatable to Saigon, but (b) would be more flexible. (Ibid., Box 65, Vietnam Subject Files, 8–A, All Backchannel, Vol. III, November 1969)

2. General Abrams' last assessment of progress in Vietnamization was forwarded to JCS October 27.[3] A new assessment will be sent November 23.[4]

3. In my personal assessment which I sent to the President October 29 (MY 287),[5] I said that I believed there is a serious question whether we should fix any overall schedule for replacements during the next year before we know more about the magnitude of the upcoming enemy effort; and that flexibility in our planning of any announcement of targets is of great importance. This would probably also apply to a half year period. The principle of flexibility was also expressed in the President's 3 November speech. It is true that Vietnamization has progressed steadily and that the Vietnamese forces are improving and taking on a greater share of the combat, taking an increasing proportion of casualties and inflicting more than 50 percent of casualties on the enemy. But they have still much to learn professionally.

4. In my talk with President Thieu (reported in MY 226)[6] he stressed the need to improve and train forces to replace U.S. withdrawals. He suggested that it would, therefore, be advisable to defer, if possible, further replacements until March 1970.

5. In view of the above considerations, General Abrams and I believe it is preferable to follow the "cut and try" method of deciding on troop withdrawals which has been used to date. We, therefore, prefer alternative A, but we are not yet prepared to give an opinion of the number which we believe could be safely withdrawn.

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[3] MAC telegram 13922, October 27, Abrams to Wheeler. Holdridge sent Kissinger an October 28 memorandum in which he enclosed a copy of MAC 13922, and summarized its major points. Holdridge stated that MAC 13922 dealt mostly with Communist activity in the Laos panhandle and commented as follows: "MACV's assessment of the activities along the logistic network seems sound, although we have seen this developing for some weeks, and it really does not tell us much about over-all DRV intentions for it is reasonable to assume that Hanoi would try to keep Communist forces up to reasonable strength in SVN regardless of what it planned in the way of military action for 1970—unless, of course, it was planning a wholesale withdrawal of NVA forces. It looks like we can rule the latter out." (Ibid., Box 140, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam Memos & Misc. XI–B, 10/17/69–10/31/69)

[4] The assessment was transmitted in telegram MAC 15163, Abrams to Wheeler, November 24. Holdridge prepared an assessment of this telegram for Kissinger on November 24 and Kissinger saw it the next day. Holdridge characterized Abrams' assessment as: "sounds like many we have read over the years, all of them implying that we are more or less on a military treadmill in SVN. The key question now appears to be whether we can get off effectively via Vietnamization and allow the South Vietnamese to take our place." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 140, Vietnam Country Files, Vol. XII–2, 1–15 November 1969)

[5] Summarized in Document 142.

[6] See footnote 2, Document 141.

6. If a decision is made in line with the larger figure suggested in alternative B, we believe it would be preferable to make separate announcements for three individual increments.

7. We suggest that it is important that I be authorized to talk with President Thieu and General Abrams authorized to talk with the Minister of Defense and General Vien as soon as possible. We believe that with the completion of General Abrams' assessment and after obtaining views of our Vietnamese counterparts, we shall be able to submit our views in more definite form.

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148. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, November 15, 1969.

SUBJECT

Your Meeting with Secretary Rogers, Secretary Laird, The Attorney General, and Mr. Kissinger, 10:30 a.m., November 15, 1969

Secretaries Rogers and Laird, Attorney General Mitchell and I will meet with you to discuss issues left over from the plane trip from Key Biscayne. You will wish to review the forthcoming key issues on the Vietnam situation.

Major Issues

1. *Ceasefire:*

—There has been a fairly constant flow of suggestions from various sources favoring a U.S. initiative for a ceasefire proposal. Secretary Rogers may support this position—certainly Marshall Green does and we have just received a paper from Ambassador Sullivan which is strongly slanted to favor a U.S. proposal for a ceasefire and which he

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 140, Vietnam Country Files, Vol. XII, 1–15 November 1969. Top Secret; Sensitive. Nixon met with Kissinger, Laird, Mitchell, and Rogers from 10:20 a.m. to 12:28 p.m., November 15. (President's Daily Diary, November 15; ibid., White House Central Files) No other record of this meeting has been found.

has already sent to Saigon.[2] In addition, the Senate resolution which was drawn from the House Resolution and modified by Senator Mansfield also contains a proposal for ceasefire.

—*Your View:*

(1) In general, we have already expressed a willingness to discuss mutually agreed-upon ceasefire with guarantees and in coordination with the GVN.

(2) You have and will continue to reject unilateral ceasefire.

(3) For the time being and in the light of the support your November 3 speech has generated, we should avoid any new proposals on Vietnam, including ceasefire, until Hanoi has had an opportunity to ponder carefully the strong domestic support for your position.

(4) Concerning the Senate (Mansfield) Resolution, we should take the position that the ceasefire proposal contained in the resolution is a reiteration of our already stated position rather than to highlight it as a new initiative from which new proposals should result.

(5) You should discourage any effort to make the ceasefire seem like a bold, new step.

2. *Troop Withdrawals:*

—There are two issues: (1) the timing and size of the next withdrawal increment; and (2) the longer term program for troop withdrawal.

—*Next Increment:* You are presently considering three alternative plans which would provide for the withdrawal of:

(1) 50,000 troops over a three-month period.
(2) 60,000 troops over a 4½ month period or,
(3) 100,000 troops over a 6½ month period.

—*Your View:* You may wish to point out that you favor (1) or (2) since we are now in the wake of a positive public attitude and since this will give you flexibility later on to consider the announcement of a larger increment should the conditions favor it. Also, a smaller increment now will confirm that you are not succumbing to Dove pressures just four weeks after your strong stand on November 3.

—You may wish to inform the group that you anticipate making the next increment withdrawal announcement during mid-December and you might ask for the group's views on this timing and the form in which the announcement should be made.

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[2] Sullivan sent the study to Kissinger on November 10. In a November 13 covering memorandum to Kissinger, Holdridge summarized the study and suggested that, "essentially this is the same type of special pleading which you received from Ambassador Sullivan personally in your conversation with him and Assistant Secretary Green on November 5." Kissinger wrote the following comment on Holdridge's memorandum: "*Unacceptable.* Backchannel Bunker & Lodge to take care *not* to push progress." (Ibid.) For Kissinger's conversation with Green and Sullivan, see Document 145.

—*Longer Term Program:* You have consistently maintained that you wish to retain flexibility applying the three criteria rather than be restricted to a fixed, predetermined time schedule on troop withdrawals. Secretary Rogers appears to favor the adoption of a predetermined time schedule for the overall program. On the return flight from Key Biscayne last weekend, he stated that he could not testify on the Hill that we have a "plan" if you do not approve such a schedule.

—*Your View:* I recommend that you reiterate the need to maintain flexibility on the longer term program so that we do not find ourselves harnessed to a fixed, inflexible schedule which would not be responsive to changing conditions and which would very likely soon become the target of attack by the Doves with the claim that it is inadequate.

—For the above reasons you are considering two alternative plans—one which would contemplate a minimum withdrawal program and another which would contemplate a maximum program. You may wish to direct Secretary Laird to proceed accordingly.

—I have discussed the foregoing with both Secretary Laird[3] and Attorney General Mitchell and they are in full accord with this flexible approach. Both agree that it constitutes a sound plan upon which to proceed and are prepared to endorse it completely.

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[3] On November 14 at 7 p.m. Kissinger talked to Laird on the telephone. The notes of their conversation read: "K wanted to give Laird, for his own information, the current thinking of the President. The Pres. feels that he is in pretty good shape on Vietnam and doesn't want to get triggered on dramatic initiatives. He thinks he has the doves for once. He would like to see impact of unity on Hanoi." Kissinger then told Laird that the President did not want to make the "ceasefire look like a hot new item." As for troop withdrawals, "K said the Pres is beginning to lean for the smaller one and the bigger one in March and give them another slug in September." Kissinger asked "how would withdrawing 50,000 troops by April work? Laird thought that would be fine." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 361, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

149. Notes of Telephone Conversation Between Senator J. William Fulbright and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, November 24, 1969, 6:35 p.m.

K wanted Fulbright to know that the President had approved the idea of K meeting with members of the committee. Fulbright and K decided that 4:30 on December 4 would be convenient for both of them and it would take place at the Senator's Office in the New Senate Office Building. One point that the President wanted K to make was that we have been prepared to discuss political matters with the North Vietnamese since May and every private meeting we have had has been at our initiative—there hasn't been a single one called by them. Secondly, we have been prepared to discuss political matters (repeated this). We have told them we would discuss their 10 points if they would discuss ours and said they don't have to accept them, just discuss it. They have refused. Fulbright said they were very difficult people. K felt that if serious negotiations ever start, it will be fairly rapid. If we can only get over the hurdle and then put our big offers on the table. Fulbright said it was difficult for him to bring himself to believe that the Government has decided to get completely out. K said our problem is that we have to make Vietnamization look worse than negotiating or they won't negotiate seriously. We have to try to handle this to avoid any additional rifts in society. K added that we wouldn't have been doing things we have been doing if we didn't want to get out. K said he worked with LBJ on getting the negotiations started. LBJ handled all of the negotiations just to have alibi for continuing. K said we have to handle it in way that enables us to get greatest degree of consensus of getting things done. K was not saying that the other side doesn't have its problems. It is an enormously concerned situation. In terms of objectives, K said he didn't feel Fulbright and the WH were that far apart. K said if we have learned anything from 1956 [*1954*] it is that we can't afford a settlement that they won't maintain. The only sort of settlement is one which they feel is fair. Otherwise we are just buying a year or two, if that much. Fulbright said he certainly felt the urgency of it. He had never seen such concern about all sorts of things which Fulbright thinks

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 361, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File. No classification marking.

are related to Vietnam. K thought there was no question that this society is facing a profound psychological crisis.[2]

K told Fulbright that he could determine who would be present at their meeting and that he looked forward to it.[3]

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[2] The President and Kissinger discussed on November 14 Fulbright's request for Kissinger to meet with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Nixon was inclined to have Kissinger do it so long as it was on "an informal" and "trade off basis." They also discussed anti-war protests—both the October 15 moratorium and the November 15 mobilization. Nixon stated that "You cannot do it on the basis Rogers and Laird have suggested—that we buy time by troop withdrawals. K said it was a reasonable idea originally. I [Kissinger] thought it would buy us some time. As far as the organizers [of the anti-war movement] work, they would be at us just as hard. P said I think there is a much deeper conspiracy than any of us realize." Nixon continued: "I will have to nail these people. I am going to say the protestors will delay the [end of?] war. K said I think you have no choice." The conversation concluded with Kissinger and the President agreeing that Hanoi made a tactical mistake in overestimating the impact of the anti-war movement. (Notes of a telephone conversation, November 14; ibid.)

[3] No substantive record of this meeting has been found.

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150. Notes of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, November 25, 1969, 6:30 p.m.

[Omitted here is discussion of the elimination of chemical warfare.] K mentioned that Xuan Thuy made another statement today saying that private talks were essential.[2] Whatever his reasons were. . . . We have no problem with that. The President said they are at least talking about talking which they haven't before. He suggested that maybe K move up his channel—strike before Lodge screws it up. K mentioned that Lodge will be out on Dec. 6 and Habib will be here Monday.[3] K indicated that he wanted to talk to Thompson and then he could get in touch with Walters. Walters could say we want appointment after

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File. No classification marking.

[2] On November 24 in an interview with the *New York Times,* Xuan Thuy charged that the United States was unwilling to discuss any questions but troop withdrawals in private sessions. On November 25 Xuan Thuy reiterated his call for resumption of private talks. (Stanley Millet, ed., *South Vietnam: U.S.-Communist Confrontation in Southeast Asia,* Vol. 4, 1969, pp. 146–148)

[3] December 1.

the weekend of Dec. 13. K said he would warn them against an offensive and add that a lot of things are possible if we set necessary deadlines for working it out. The President said it just could be that they are hurting. K indicated that on several occasions they were beginning to blink. One of the things that is happening in State is that they are going on big operation on ceasefire. The President asked, why, they have already turned it down. K thought it would be taken as a sign of weakness. We should have a low-key Christmas ceasefire. We won't get any points for making it four days rather than 2. We can say we are willing to negotiate generally whenever they are ready. The President said, let us use this period for a general ceasefire. K thought and suggested that we should announce soon that we are ready for Christmas for two days and in that announcement say we are always ready to negotiate general ceasefire. The President told K to try to get State around to this. K said that was a biggest obstacle, to keep them from getting away with more than the Japanese have already conceded (K switched the conversation to mention point about getting State to go along). K mentioned that he let Johnson see the memcon.[4] K said what is more important is that Sato made personal commitment to the President. The President said Sato was pleased—they expected worse treatment and we gave them a good deal. Back to the ceasefire—K said we should play ceasefire low key. We have them going without offering a lot. If they said they would settle in three months, that's when we should make our offer. The President said, at the present time on the other ceasefire thing, the main thing now is to get us some time. He didn't even want to consider this until after troop thing and we don't expect that until Dec. 20. K said he would recommend that the President announce a Christmas ceasefire within the next two weeks so he can get ahead of the others. Then the President is not following their lead. The President said what difference does it make on 2 or 3 days. Lets make it 2 days then.

[Omitted here is additional discussion on chemical warfare.]

[4] A memorandum of conversation between Nixon and Prime Minister Sato of Japan during Sato's visit to Washington, November 19–21, is in *Foreign Relations*, 1969–1976, volume XIX, Japan and Korea, 1969–1972.

151. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, November 26, 1969, 6:30 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

GVN Ambassador Bui Diem
Dr. Kissinger
John H. Holdridge, NSC Senior Staff Member

SUBJECT

Dr. Kissinger's Comments to Ambassador Bui Diem on Cease-Fire and Other Issues

Ambassador Bui Diem apologized for calling on such short notice, but explained he would feel very bad if he returned to Saigon and reported that he had not been in a position to see Dr. Kissinger.

Dr. Kissinger said that he had assumed the initiative was on his side, and that he would certainly have gotten in touch with Diem had not the latter contacted him. He wanted very much to talk on one thing, and to explain that on foreign policy matters the Administration sometimes worked on the principle of "letting 100 flowers bloom". Some of his colleagues, it seemed, had advocated a permanent cease-fire, but he had spoken to the President and wanted Diem to know that the Vietnamese Government was under no pressure in this respect. As before, we merely wanted Ambassador Bunker to discuss a general approach concerning the cease-fire issue with President Thieu so that if the other side were to act, we could respond. There was no need to link a cease-fire with a Christmas truce, unless, of course the Vietnamese wanted to do so. Incidentally, what Lodge had said that day in Paris was totally unauthorized and did not reflect Administration policy.[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 183, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous, Vol. IV, 12/69–1/70. Secret; Nodis; Paris Meetings. Drafted by Holdridge on December 1. In sending this memorandum to Kissinger on December 1, Holdridge suggested that no distribution be made; Kissinger agreed.

[2] Lodge raised the possibility of a coalition government in South Vietnam that would include representatives of the NLF. In a backchannel message to Bunker, December 2, Kissinger asked Bunker to "leave no doubt in the minds of the South Vietnamese politicians as to where we [the United States] stand" on a coalition government. Kissinger informed Bunker that Nixon and Rogers had wanted him to immediately see "General Minh and Tran van Don and tell them that the U.S. will not countenance any activity designed to lead to the overthrow of the present government. Under no circumstances would we cooperate with any group which did not support the Thieu Government." Kissinger also instructed Bunker to convey to Ky the same thoughts, and to continue exploratory talks with Thieu on a cease-fire, but to assure him that no offer was contemplated at that time. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 1, Chronological File, 1969 December)

Diem noted that Lodge's remarks had been partially corrected, nevertheless they created confusion. People in Saigon would assume that because Lodge was leaving,[3] he could now say more than he would usually say.

Continuing, Diem said that he would take the liberty of telling his own feelings. After the October 15 demonstrations and the President's speech,[4] he had felt enthusiasm, which had been confirmed by the polls. He therefore had wanted to talk over next year's events with President Thieu and to prepare him for the next steps which might be taken. However, this news of the massacre had come out, and he had felt very bad over this and also over Lodge's statement. He was now quite concerned. Dr. Kissinger reiterated that what Lodge had said did not reflect Administration thinking—we were writing off Lodge's statement as a slip of the tongue.

Dr. Kissinger asked Diem if he had been urged to accept a cease-fire. Diem replied that "speaking frankly", he had talked with Secretary Rogers who had said that the cease-fire problem had come under discussion. The Secretary had spoken of the impending Christmas truce issue and had asked him what he had thought about the problem and the possibility of extending the truce into a cease-fire, to which he had replied that he doubted the Communists would accept a cease-fire, but would talk with his friends at home to see what they thought. He felt reluctant to push the matter. It was a difficult problem and a solution was not easy. On the link with a Christmas truce, last year his government had made a statement accepting a 24-hour Christmas and New Year's truce, but never before had linked it with a cease-fire. Dr. Kissinger responded that there was no need to make such a link, and that Diem should tell his President to listen to what our President said—this is where policy was made.

Diem brought up the question of the third US troop withdrawal announcement. He expressed the personal feeling that up to now the impression had been created that decisions were all taken by the same side, and that the Vietnamese had been pushed into agreeing. He wished to find a way for Vietnam to get some of the credit, to show the world that it had goodwill and that press charges to the contrary were false.

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[3] On behalf of the President, Kissinger accepted Lodge's resignation on November 20, effective December 8. As Lodge urged, Philip C. Habib was appointed Acting Head of the American delegation until a successor was chosen. Lawrence E. Walsh, Lodge's Deputy in Paris, also submitted his resignation on November 20 and was accepted by the President. (Backchannel message 794 from Paris, Lodge to Kissinger, November 18; Massachusetts Historical Society, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Reel 9) For the official exchange of letters between President Nixon and Lodge regarding the latter's resignation, see the Department of State *Bulletin*, pp. 549–550.

[4] See Document 144.

Dr. Kissinger recalled his previous White House experience in the 1961 Berlin crisis as showing how difficult it was to get goodwill from the press. Nevertheless, if the Vietnamese could find a formula which would enable us to say that we were acting at the request of President Thieu in withdrawing X number of American troops, we would be willing to go along.

Diem declared that there was a need to show the people that Thieu and Ky understood the nature of the situation. Dr. Kissinger responded by stating emphatically that we had no interest in humiliating or weakening Thieu and that we knew the only way Vietnamization would work was if there was a strong Vietnamese Government. In the White House, we would do all we could to strengthen Thieu. For a variety of reasons we did not want a public brawl, but Diem could be assured that in our larger discussions we would do nothing to hurt President Thieu. Diem mentioned that he would be returning in ten days, and Dr. Kissinger asked him to call again as soon as he returned.

Diem asked Dr. Kissinger if he saw any problems in connection with Vietnamization. Should the GVN do more? Were there any difficulties which were the GVN's fault? He asked Dr. Kissinger as a friend of the Vietnamese, adding that out of his great concern for Vietnam he would appreciate an honest answer. Dr. Kissinger replied that on some issues such as land reform the White House might want the GVN to move faster, but there were no major complaints and what complaints there were could be taken care of through normal contacts. There were no issues in the Vietnamization policy, which both of us were trying in all goodwill to make work. If we wanted to "bug out" there were 500 ways to do so, but we were not going to bug out. We were not out to humiliate the GVN or Thieu or to make Thieu's life difficult. Ambassador Diem knew the problems, such as the negative position of the other side in Paris. If the other side were serious, we would work out the details of our position together. He asked, though, if they were serious.

Diem replied that he did not think so, certainly not at this time. However, he had seen during the preceding 18 months of the negotiations that every time the Communists saw they could not go beyond a certain limit, they would try to switch their position. Looking at the current situation from the standpoint of the North Vietnamese—that is, analyzing the Moratorium, the President's speech and the demonstrations—he felt that the other side had big questions in mind. While a lot of noise had been created in the US, no impression on policy had been made. Lodge had resigned, but he could have resigned at any time. Why now? The polls showed that public support for the President was soaring, and if he, Diem, were a North Vietnamese he would have to ask: "Am I right?" He would be afraid that if the trend continued in the present way, he would need to face a difficult situation

later on. The enemy had given the impression he was inflexible, but might have to do something to show that he was not all that inflexible. This was the usual tactic of the Communists. They would need to play a double game: on the one hand, to keep up their military efforts, and at the same time reassess the political situation here in Washington, the role of US public opinion and its influence on the President, and the extent to which they could inflict casualties in South Vietnam. He speculated that around January, if they had achieved nothing by then, they might switch a little bit to see what the Americans would do. Dr. Kissinger said he agreed essentially with what Diem had said.

The conversation concluded with Dr. Kissinger reiterating his words on Diem's reassuring President Thieu about President Nixon's stand—he had been instructed by President Nixon to tell Diem this—and to call again following his return from Saigon.

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152. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 1, 1969.

SUBJECT

Cease-Fire Chronology

Recent events with respect to cease-fire proposals are illustrative of the difficulty of developing a coherent Vietnam policy. I am putting them before you in some detail because over a period of time, they make impossible any coherent policy and because they represent a fundamental challenge to your now established policy-making machinery, as well as to Presidential control.

The issue is not whether we should offer a cease-fire. At some point, we probably should. But timing is crucial and we must know what we are getting into. The State proposal would, in effect, partition South Vietnam. Before we take such a fateful and irreversible step, we must know where the line of control would be and where we will go if it is rejected.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 183, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Memos and Miscellaneous, Vol. V, 12/69–1/70. Secret; Nodis; Paris Meetings; Plus. Sent for information/action.

Background

In order to provide serious, orderly consideration of the issue, in mid-October, I asked Ambassador Sullivan to have State's Vietnam Working Group prepare a paper containing the pros and cons of various cease-fire schemes.[2] This paper was to be submitted for NSC consideration and to be sent to Bunker for guidance in talking with Thieu on the subject.

At the same time, I worked out with Elliot Richardson a procedure under which a Special Group[3] would analyze the situation in the countryside to determine the area of control which would enable us to judge the implications of a cease-fire.

We arranged for Sir Robert Thompson to report at the beginning of December to you, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Vietnam Special Studies Group.[4] All these papers were to be completed by December 1.

On the basis of all this, the issue would have been put before the NSC in mid-December. The State Department, however, chose to try to circumvent this procedure and organize a bureaucratic consensus which would have limited your ability to determine the best course on the basis of an orderly review.

Sequence of Events

1. As you will remember, before the end of October you had a number of times turned down Secretary Rogers' proposals concerning a cease-fire.

2. You had informed the Secretaries of State and Defense in writing on November 4 that, "This is a time for us to stand on what we have offered and let Hanoi take stock and give some indication it is willing to participate in genuine negotiations. I think it would be very detrimental to our overall objective if there were any dope stories that we were offering a stand still cease-fire or any other diplomatic concession at this time."[5]

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[2] See footnote 2, Document 148.

[3] The Vietnam Special Studies Group.

[4] See Document 158.

[5] The instruction has not been found. On November 26 Kissinger talked to the President on the telephone to ask if he had seen Bunker's cable of November 25 (see footnote 6 below) "in which he has shifted his position on the ceasefire to come closer to the Lodge proposal." The President responded: "Henry I want this ceasefire business knocked off. I have never visualized linking the brief holiday pause with a formal proposal on a ceasefire and I want all discussions on the formal ceasefire knocked off as of now. The only thing I want our people dealing with is a Christmas truce." The President reiterated his instructions and then told Kissinger that "All discussions of a permanently negotiated ceasefire are to stop until the National Security Council has an opportunity to consider the issue." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 361, Telephone Conversations, Chronological Files)

3. Nevertheless, on November 8 the Secretary of State tried to use the Mansfield Resolution as a vehicle for pushing his position on a cease-fire.

4. When you refused to go along with this, State, on November 10, allegedly in response to my request for options three weeks earlier, sent to the White House a study on cease-fire alternatives which did not present options but took an advocate's position. I asked for a revised version which would outline the options and provide recommendations for submission to the NSC. This has never been provided.

5. On November 20, I asked State to make proposals on a Christmas cease-fire for your consideration. No formal proposals were made.

6. On November 24, Secretary Rogers stepped into my office following the NPT signing and without being asked stated that he would let the cease-fire issue drop now in view of Xuan Thuy's statement which indicated that Hanoi opposed a cease-fire.

7. However, despite this statement, your letter of November 4, my arrangements with Under Secretary Richardson, and the request to let you consider the approach to a Christmas truce, the State Department initiated an exchange of cables with Saigon and Paris on extending the Christmas truce into a permanent, negotiated cease-fire. The sequence of these cables (which are attached at Tab B)[6] makes it clear that this exchange was pre-arranged by back channel. Indeed, State has admitted this to my staff.

8. In addition, the State Department tried to get the Defense Department to join it in presenting an agreed position on a permanent cease-fire which would be submitted outside the NSC framework. Secretary Laird refused and has provided us separately with a memorandum describing his position (Tab C).[7] He emphasizes the importance of not directly linking holiday truces with a negotiated, permanent cease-fire.

9. On November 28, Secretary Rogers forwarded a memorandum (Tab D)[8] to you which urgently requests your approval of a proposal which would link the holiday truce with a proposal to negotiate a permanent cease-fire.

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[6] Attached at Tab B, but not printed, was a chronology of Department of State cables plus copies of the cables themselves. Included were telegram 194286/Todel 3508 to Paris, November 19; telegram 17921 from Paris/Delto 2320, November 19; telegram 4151 from Saigon to the Department, November 24; telegram 1881120 from Paris/Delto 2343, November 24; and telegram 23716 from Saigon to the Department, November 26.

[7] Tab C, a memorandum from Rogers to Kissinger, November 28, is attached but not printed.

[8] Tab D is attached but not printed.

Significance

1. *Presidential Control.* State's actions were in violation of written Presidential directives. The Department ignored repeated White House requests for formal recommendations. The Secretary of State's efforts to line up other Cabinet officers without your knowledge on such an issue is a direct challenge to Presidential control. Dean Acheson has written that he never met with other Cabinet officers without Presidential permission lest he limit the President's freedom of action.

2. *Bureaucratic Procedure.* The NSC system is designed to avoid situations like this, and State had no good reason to try to circumvent it. The procedure which was set up to consider this question included full State representation. Richardson was involved at every step. State chairs the first committee through which the issue would pass and is represented on the Review Group and NSC. Its efforts were designed to avoid discussion.

3. *Substance.* I do not doubt that we will wish to offer a cease-fire at some point, but I do not believe that this is the right moment:

a. We have not yet worked out the implications of a cease-fire with regard to territorial control, etc. We therefore would not know exactly what we were proposing. (This is not the first time that the bureaucracy has attempted to push you into a course of which we did not know the consequences—e.g., the Middle East.)

b. We have not yet discussed the matter properly with the GVN.

c. With another troop cut coming up a simultaneous withdrawal offer could undercut our position completely and give an impression of extreme weakness.

Your stand on the 3rd of November[9] was taken in the face of repeated counsel to offer further concessions. You ignored this advice and consequently recouped much of the ground lost through the lack of interdepartmental discipline over the late spring, summer and early fall. We are in a relatively strong position again.

The issue is not simply whether we should now weaken our position by offering another specific concession.

There is another, very important problem involved. We don't know what the exact effect of the cease-fire would be. But we do know that it would mean some sort of partition. The effect of our pushing now for a cease-fire would therefore be to put us in the position of having accepted the principle of partition—whether or not the other side accepted our actual cease-fire offer. This could easily wreck the Saigon Government. In fact, this is probably its chief attraction to some of its proponents.

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[9] Reference is to Nixon's speech to the nation on Vietnam; see Document 144.

Thus, to push for a cease-fire now would be to adopt a course with uncertain specific results while making a new concession in principle. We cannot take such a fateful step without full consideration by the President.

Recommendation:

In view of the importance of this issue, I strongly recommend that you sign the attached letter (Tab A) to the Secretary of State[10] which reiterates your policies and the need for coordination of these matters.

[10] The letter was attached at Tab A, but there was no indication that Nixon signed it; see Document 154.

153. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, December 1, 1969, 11:30 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Sir Robert Thompson
Desmond Palmer
Dr. Kissinger
Dr. Larry Lynn
John Holdridge

SUBJECT

Sir Robert Thompson's Report on Conditions in Vietnam[2]

Dr. Kissinger stated that before going on to discuss Sir Robert Thompson's report, procedures needed to be established. He asked Sir

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 92, Vietnam Subject Files, Sir Robert Thompson, 1970. Secret; Nodis. Drafted by Holdridge with Lynn's concurrence. In a December 8 covering memorandum to Kissinger, Holdridge wrote: "Following this session, I asked Sir Robert to elaborate on one point which I thought he had been trying to make but which may not have come through too clearly: was he in effect saying that the GVN civil administration had not moved in behind the security forces to a sufficient degree, and that more attention needed to be directed to this problem? He agreed that this was what he had meant to convey." Kissinger approved White House distribution only and wrote, "Excellent memcon! HK. Note editing page 1" on Holdridge's December 8 memorandum. See footnote 3 below for the editing changes.

[2] Summarized in Document 158. The report, December 3, is in the National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 92, Vietnam Subject Files, Sir Robert Thompson, 1970.

Robert not to offer anything to a wide audience until he, Dr. Kissinger, had a chance to see Sir Robert's report and the President had had a chance to consider it.[3] Dr. Kissinger mentioned that a special study group was meeting in the afternoon for the purpose of determining the situation in the provinces,[4] and to reach a factual basis for our moves in Vietnam. Sir Robert was to address this group. There never before had been a government consensus on what was actually happening, and we were trying now to reach such a consensus—perhaps five years too late. He then asked Sir Robert to give his conclusions.

Sir Robert declared that the situation had clearly improved, and was better than he had expected, both in terms of the HES statistics (which he did not necessarily accept) and in terms of extensive government control of the countryside. The VC were very much weaker, due to some extent to the strong government position which had evolved. In addition, he said, the people had made the decision that the VC were weaker than the GVN, and wouldn't win. It was for these reasons that the government had been able to spread out with the speed which had been displayed. Sir Robert mentioned situations in which villages which earlier had consisted of 3 or 400 people had expanded considerably due to the return of refugees; even former inhabitants of urban areas had flocked back.

Dr. Kissinger asked whether the improved situation was due in large part to the activities of the American forces or whether the VC were simply lying low. Sir Robert replied that the VC were not deliberately lying low but had been displaced into the forests and foothills. He had accepted, however, that the VC had not yet been seriously damaged, and were still there.

Dr. Kissinger asked if the Vietnamese were sensitive about American troop withdrawals, and if so, in what ways. Sir Robert said in response that the sensitivities were psychological. With the US forces as a shield, the government had been able to recruit without difficulty and had acquired a manpower base in the provinces which the VC currently lacked. (VC strength remained the same, but the VC have had recruiting difficulties.) His implication was that this balance might be disturbed without the US shield.

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[3] Kissinger requested a change in this sentence. It originally read: "He felt it was important to segregate what Sir Robert would give to the bureaucracy from what he would say to the President, and asked Sir Robert not to offer anything to a wide audience until he, Dr. Kissinger, had a chance to see Sir Robert's report."

[4] Brief minutes of the Vietnam Special Studies Group meeting on December 1, attended by Kissinger, Helms, Packard, and Richardson are in the National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–001, Vietnam Special Studies Group Meetings, 12/1/69.

Dr. Kissinger asked if the South Vietnamese could eventually take over from the US forces. Sir Robert expressed the opinion that at first it would be necessary to reach a position in which VC strength would become marginal throughout the South and the North Vietnamese troops were put in a position of being strictly an invasion force. When asked by Dr. Kissinger if this goal was in sight, Sir Robert said that two more years would be required, and that he looked to the elections in the fall of 1971 as being the crucial period.

Elaborating, Sir Robert said that the 1971 elections would be a dangerous time, and that the future of South Vietnam might hang on the outcome. The greatest danger was that if things had gone well prior to the elections, a peace campaign might develop. The people might want to see an end to the wartime difficulties and might respond to a peace campaign behind which the NLF would certainly throw all its strength. There might be as many as a dozen candidates, thus confusing the issues.

Dr. Kissinger inquired whether Sir Robert had raised this possibility with Thieu, to which Sir Robert mentioned that he had done so, but without any particular response. He had also mentioned these thoughts to Khiem and to Ambassador Bunker. Continuing, he speculated that if Thieu won in 1971 and continued his present policies, the North Vietnamese would indeed be put in a position where the only alternative to defeat was invasion. The North Vietnamese perhaps would contemplate invasion before accepting a negotiated settlement, in which they in any case did not believe. For this reason, he said, it was necessary for the US as it withdrew to leave residual forces.

Dr. Kissinger asked how many US troops should be left. Sir Robert suggested a number something like that in South Vietnam. When Dr. Kissinger queried whether a figure of 50,000, as in South Korea, would suffice, Sir Robert replied that he would not go as low as 50,000 and observed that the residual forces would need to be overweighted on the support side with some combat elements.

Dr. Kissinger raised the question of whether our withdrawals up until now had affected the general situation in Vietnam. Sir Robert replied in the negative, noting that even in the Delta there was as yet no cause for worry. The ARVN seemed to have the U Minh forest region well in hand, and he thought that the greatest threat in the Delta was in Chau Doc and the Seven Mountains area. He noted that the Communists were trying to reestablish the VC presence in the Delta but were having difficulties. For instance, the regiment that went into the U Minh area had been hard hit, and it was not easy for the forces operating well out of their old base areas to sustain themselves. For one thing, it was hard for them to get ammunition through, even in the area right across from Kien Hoa, which was a VC stronghold.

Dr. Kissinger asked Sir Robert for his impressions as to why the change for the better in Vietnam had taken place. Sir Robert singled out Hue as having been a critical factor. The VC attacks in Hue and the massacre of its people in the Tet offensive had given a much greater sense of mobilization to the Vietnamese people in general—a sense that they were really fighting a war. He noted in passing that the recovery of Hue and the surrounding countryside since the Tet attack had been "quite staggering".

Dr. Kissinger asked Sir Robert for his views on the effects that a cease-fire might have on Vietnam developments, to which Sir Robert replied that a cease-fire would be "fairly disastrous". He gave three reasons for this judgment:

(1) A cease-fire would take the whole momentum out of the GVN program and give the VC a chance to recover;

(2) The South Vietnamese people would regard a cease-fire as a loss of US resolve;

(3) A cease-fire could not be verified, and TV cameras would focus on GVN violations while not touching on violations of the other side. Dr. Kissinger commented on this last point that there were a lot of volunteers in the US who would get in line to beat up Thieu, led by Averill Harriman.

Dr. Kissinger asked Sir Robert for an assessment of how the ARVN was doing. Sir Robert observed that he had not seen too much of the ARVN but had been very impressed with the First Division in I Corps. He had met the commanders of two regiments and was sure that they would fight. He pointed out this was a big division with 17 battalions.

Dr. Kissinger asked Sir Robert for a judgment on what he would do if he were laying out Hanoi's policies. Sir Robert's concept of Hanoi's best course was to keep its attacks focussed on Vietnamization to the exclusion of other objectives. If Hanoi were to act in this way, it would thereby pose the greatest dangers for our side apart from the peace movement. Hanoi's objective in attacking Vietnamization would be to force a US withdrawal, to compel the Vietnamese to put all their effort into building up its military forces, including the RF and PF, and in effect to prevent the GVN from building up any presence except for armed forces in the rural areas, where it was weakest. The Communists could accomplish this purpose by keeping up the strength of their own forces and mounting small-scale attacks. It was important, he explained, to provide security to the villages, but the people in the villages want more than security. They want improvements in the social and economic fields. Mr. Palmer expressed agreement.

Sir Robert went on to speculate, however, that in the next two years there probably would be a tendency on the part of the Communists to diffuse their efforts. While they should concentrate on Vietnamization, they would probably be unable to resist taking on other targets—the

US forces, the ARVN, pacification—and spread themselves thin. If so, they would not be able to make a real dent in the general situation. Dr. Kissinger expressed keen interest in Sir Robert's analysis of the likelihood of enemy miscalculation and diffusion of effort.

Dr. Kissinger raised the subject of enemy infiltration, to which Sir Robert commented that the strength of the Communist units had diminished, and the infiltration which was presently occurring might be necessary simply to build up combat levels. He remarked that the standards of the infiltrees coming in were well down—the new arrivals were not the cream of the North Vietnamese armed forces. Sir Robert surmised from this that the North Vietnamese did not have much left in the way of manpower resources.

Dr. Kissinger referred to the favorable developments which had occurred, and asked Sir Robert whether we could have won the war if we had not decided to withdraw. Sir Robert's response was that in the end the Vietnamese must win the war, and doubted the value of more troops since most Communist forces were out of the country and could not be effectively reached. He noted, though, that new infiltration trails were being built in South Vietnam, and referred to COSVN Resolution 9 on the Communists' determination to improve their logistics. Dr. Kissinger observed that he had been shown photographs of these trails, and wondered why they were not being mined. Sir Robert stated that we were up against a very soft target between the mountains and the coast. The enemy had to rely on porters, and his battalions were strung out thinly along the trails. In particular, the enemy was dependent on outside ammunition and now had much less in-country support. It was his opinion that if infiltration continues to go up, the enemy would try something more. He might attempt to get a sustained attack going—a "mini-Tet"—probably against two or three targets, but not sustained throughout the country. Sir Robert looked to the March-May period next year for such an effort.

Dr. Lynn noted that looking at the situation in the various provinces there were great differences among them but GVN control seemed to be going up. He contrasted the situation in Thua Thien, where enemy main forces had pulled out but where strong local forces were still present, with the Delta, where there were no main forces and local forces were not strong; in each area GVN control was increasing. What were we doing right that we could reproduce elsewhere? Were there any indications as to where we should put our emphasis?

Sir Robert thought that our emphasis largely should be on economy of forces. We needed to concentrate in areas where the VC were most powerful, such as north and south of Danang, MR 5, and the Delta. He singled out Dinh Tuong and Long An as being particular trouble spots, saying that what went on in one affected the other, and

both in turn were affected by developments in Kien Hoa. Nevertheless, security was improving in these provinces and he mentioned having driven along the roads in Long An in a party of three jeeps, not one of which was armed. He reported also that roads were open to many district capitals.

Dr. Lynn asked for an assessment of whether this change in the enemy's situation had been achieved due to our initiative and the relative ability of the GVN forces to keep the roads open with US help, or to a change in enemy strategy. Sir Robert attributed the change to the enemy's inability to sustain his efforts. He could mine the roads but the roads were being repaired. Dr. Lynn asked if what he was saying meant that we had won the war militarily. Sir Robert said he would not like to divide the military aspects from the other aspects; thus we had not won the war, and the situation was still fragile. If the VC recovered, or there was a loss of popular confidence in the US, circumstances could change.

Dr. Lynn queried Sir Robert on the causes for erosion of the VC underground in the villages—was this due to lack of support from the main forces, or to what our side had accomplished in routing out the infrastructure, or both? Sir Robert did not give a firm answer but simply pointed out that the infrastructure generally lacks military support and its erosion added to the enemy's problems. Sir Robert cited the massive Chieu Hoi figures, noting that these meant the loss of lower grade manpower and basic enemy strength. He pointed out that this did not mean there were no VC committee members at the village-district-province level. Some of these leaders were able to go through the system and acquire new identities.

Dr. Lynn asked what we should do to maximize the chances of stabilizing the gains which had been made. Sir Robert replied that the answer lay in the psychological and not the military field, and that military developments were cued to psychological ones. Asked if we had been helped psychologically by our withdrawals, Sir Robert replied that to some extent we had been helped. Once the people had gotten used to the concept of withdrawals, and found they could carry on by themselves, there had been increased confidence. Nevertheless, people still wanted the US around. Sir Robert cited Bu Prang as an excellent way to play the game—to keep US forces out, and lay the burden of the fighting on the Vietnamese.

Dr. Kissinger summarized Sir Robert's comments as saying in effect that North Vietnam no longer has the capability of winning, and that while progress would be slow it could not be reversed. For example, if the enemy were to put all his effort into defeating Vietnamization, then pacification would improve. Sir Robert agreed, and reiterated the point he had made earlier that the other side would make

mistakes. It was a matter of opportunity: if they saw the possibility of taking on another target besides Vietnamization, they would do so.

Dr. Lynn remarked that some people were worried over the extent to which progress in the countryside actually represented accommodation. How could we know? Sir Robert said that there was less accommodation now than in the past, and this could be seen in the district towns. He did not elaborate. Mr. Palmer added that there was a time factor involved—when peasants returned to the rice paddies after a district was opened up, the RF/PF then moved in. There was more terrorism in the Delta than in other areas but elsewhere it was less easy to maintain a threat. He mentioned, too, that the province chiefs were good. Sir Robert endorsed Mr. Palmer's comment, saying that the province chiefs throughout the country "were the best yet."

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154. National Security Decision Memorandum 36[1]

Washington, December 3, 1969.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT

Holiday Truces, Cease-fire and Troop Withdrawals

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–213, NSDM Files, NSDM 36. Top Secret; Sensitive. Attached to this memorandum is a 42-page draft paper, January 15, 1970, entitled "An Agreed General Cease-Fire in Vietnam," prepared by the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam and transmitted to the Chairman of the NSC Review Group by Sullivan. The paper discusses the major issues involved in an agreed general cease-fire, focusing on the conditions the United States should insist be met in order for it to accept such a cease-fire. The paper also identifies various options and identifies those that represent the minimum condition acceptable to each agency on the Ad Hoc Group. The President met with Rogers and Laird and apparently Mitchell (although he is not listed as a participant) on December 1 from 4:50 to 6:30 p.m. (President's Daily Diary, December 1; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files) Prior to the meeting, Kissinger called Laird on the telephone and asked him "to take a strong line" at the meeting opposing coupling the holiday cease-fire and a permanent cease-fire. Kissinger also called Mitchell and asked him at the President's request "to come out against" the "power play by State to ram their permanent ceasefire through." (Notes of telephone conversations, December 1, 3:15 and 3:22 p.m.; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 361, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) No other record of the meeting has been found.

In response to the Secretary of State's memorandum of November 28, 1969[2] and subsequent discussions with you, the President has made the following decisions with respect to holiday truces, cease-fire and troop withdrawals:

1. He wishes to avoid speculation that the U.S. Government is considering new proposals regarding a permanent negotiated cease-fire in South Vietnam and he does not want the issue of brief holiday truces linked with initiatives for a permanent negotiated cease-fire.

2. The President has approved the announcement of a 24-hour truce for Christmas and a 24-hour truce for New Years, with the announcement to be made in Saigon in coordination with the GVN.

3. Until the receipt of specific guidance to the contrary, there is to be no departmental speculation or comment whatsoever to the press on the subject of further troop withdrawals from Vietnam.

The decision regarding a permanent negotiated cease-fire should not preclude continuation of the studies under way on this subject which are designed to formulate the U.S. position and the conditions which we should insist be met if a cease-fire were to be proposed by the other side. It is contemplated, however, that the results of these studies, to include the views of the GVN, will be forwarded through the National Security Council framework for formal consideration by the NSC before discussions of any type would be undertaken with Hanoi's representatives in Paris or elsewhere.

Henry A. Kissinger

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[2] In this memorandum to Nixon, Rogers sought the President's urgent decision on U.S. policy regarding the traditional observance of the Christmas and New Year holidays in Vietnam. Rogers' recommendation was to endorse a truce from Christmas Day through New Year's Day, although he was willing to accept two separate truces—48 hours at Christmas, and 24 hours at New Year's. Rogers also stated that the United States ought to offer to begin negotiations on a longstanding cease-fire rather than merely restate its willingness to do so, and to make this offer at the same time as the announcement of the holiday truce. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET) At Kissinger's request Laird sent these views to Kissinger on November 28. Laird wrote that "under no circumstances should [the United States] extend holiday truces beyond the proposed 24-hour period," and they should "be kept completely separate from that of a negotiated permanent cease-fire." Laird also recommended the United States announce in Paris its readiness to begin immediate negotiations toward a formal agreement on a permanent cease-fire based on the eight points listed in Nixon's May 14 speech. Lastly, Laird believed that "simultaneous proposals for holiday truces and for opening negotiations on a permanent cease-fire might short-circuit pressure to extend the truces and at the same time give us a psychological advantage—both domestically and internationally." (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 66, Vietnam Subject Files, 2–D–A General Abrams Nov. II, Cease-fire, Vol. I, 1969)

155. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 6, 1969.

SUBJECT

My Lai Atrocities

At Tab A is a memorandum from Bryce Harlow through me to you conveying information on a proposal made by Senators Stennis and Margaret Chase Smith.[2] The proposal would ask you to constitute a Presidential commission to assemble all the facts of the My Lai incident. While the suggestion was apparently made in an effort to be helpful and to deflect other Congressional activity, I am not convinced that it would accomplish its purpose. Rather, I suspect it would tend to prolong public interest in the incident which has hopefully already reached its peak. As you know, there is some evidence that public pressures are now building which could discourage further press speculation on the incident.

If you were to establish a Presidential commission at a time when court martial proceedings are already underway, it would be difficult to see how meaningful testimony could be assembled without some conflict with the juridical proceedings and perhaps[3] claims by the defense counsels that the Executive Branch had instituted duplicatory proceedings which jeopardized the rights of their clients. The establishment of a commission might also be interpreted as a lack of confidence by you in the military's ability to police its problem and thereby contribute to suspicions that we are dealing with an even more fundamental breakdown in military standards and discipline. Furthermore, once the commission report is publicized a new rash of controversy could develop over its findings no matter what they might turn out to be. Conversely,

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 334, Subject Files, Items to Discuss with the President, 8/31/69–12/30/69. Secret; Sensitive. A handwritten notation by Kissinger reads, "Let's get list of names for commission"; a handwritten notation by Nixon reads, "To K." On November 21 Kissinger and Laird discussed the Mai Lai atrocity. (Notes of a telephone conversation, November 21, 3:50 p.m.; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

[2] Dated December 3, attached but not printed. In this memorandum, Harlow informed Kissinger that he had discussed the proposition of a commission with Haig and David Packard and they both thought "poorly of the idea, principally on the grounds that the Commission's report would extend the atrocity story into the future."

[3] Nixon underlined the rest of this sentence beginning with "claims"; he also underlined the last half of the following sentence.

the legal proceedings now underway would more than likely result in severe punishment that would have a conclusive character which would tend to limit public speculation. The court martial also tends to reinforce the isolated character of the incident.

Notwithstanding, there is a trend which may build in the wake of the My Lai incident which might further influence your judgment on how to proceed.

If other incidents continue to crop-up because My Lai has resurrected real or imagined recollections of atrocities by other veterans, then you will no longer be dealing with a single phenomenon. Should this situation develop, then I believe you should convene a commission since we will be dealing with an even more fundamental problem for which a military court would not be appropriate.

Finally, it is possible that regardless of your decision, the Congress might proceed on its own and confront you with a resolution calling for a Presidential commission to investigate My Lai. In this event, it might be propitious to preempt them by promptly appointing a commission of your choice.

Recommendation:[4]

1. That you not appoint a commission to assemble facts on My Lai until we have had an opportunity to assess the phenomena a little longer.

2. That if the Congress moves on its own or if additional atrocities appear to be surfacing, you proceed with the appointment of a commission.

3. That a contingency plan be prepared now which will enable you to move promptly in the event you decide to appoint a commission.

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[4] Nixon initialed the approve option. In a December 8 memorandum to the President, Kissinger responded to Nixon's request to suggestions from Moynihan that the President empanel a group of "wise men" to judge what went wrong at My Lai and declare a national day of prayer for the victims. Kissinger responded: "For you to follow either of these suggestions would be tantamount to a Presidential declaration of the guilt of the accused, without benefit of trial. The last thing we want is defense counsel citing a Presidential statement or action when making a plea that the accused's right to a fair trial has been prejudiced." Although Kissinger thought it was a "close decision," he suggested as long as the atrocity was "confined to My Lai, there should be no commission. If another incident surfaces, then a commission was called for." Nixon wrote "I agree" at the end of that memorandum. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 287, Memoranda to the President, December 1969, I) Moynihan's memorandum to the President, November 25, is in the National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 118, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam—Lt. Calley Case (Mai Lai Atrocity).

156. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 9, 1969.

SUBJECT

Covert Operations to Undermine Enemy Morale in Vietnam

Recently you requested information about over-all U.S. programs designed to reduce morale in North Vietnam and among the Viet Cong, the adequacy of such programs and what might be done to improve them.[2]

For security reasons I have separated my response into two sections and attach hereto a summary of CIA-sponsored covert operations directed at undermining enemy morale in both North and South Vietnam and related activity targeted against the North Vietnamese in Laos.[3]

[*1 paragraph (4 lines of source text) not declassified*]

These are:

[*4 paragraphs (12 lines of source text) not declassified*]

Despite the formidable difficulty of measuring the effectiveness of covert operations in denied areas, there is tangible evidence that these efforts have had some impact on North Vietnamese and Viet Cong morale.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 960, Haig Chronological Files, December 9–16, 1969 [1 of 2]. Secret; Eyes Only. Sent for action.

[2] In a November 24 memorandum to Kissinger, Nixon wrote: "Are we doing everything we can with regard to trying to disrupt morale in North Vietnam and among the VC? On several of my visits to Vietnam people told me that there could be programs which would be effective in reducing morale in those areas. I know that CIA, of course, is a miserable flop in this field, but will you give me a report as to whether our program, if any, is adequate." (Ibid.)

[3] Reference is to an attached 4-page undated memorandum entitled "Covert Operations To Undermine Enemy Morale." In a December 15 memorandum to the President, Kissinger listed overt programs to reduce North Vietnamese and VC morale. Within South Vietnam these included: U.S. Mission-sponsored radio programs estimated to reach 70 percent of the population, a 1.3 million 2-page newspaper air dropped fortnightly over contested areas, special mass circulation of important documents such as Nixon's speech of November 3, the Chieu Hoi program, and U.S. Army psywar leaflet drops from B–52's in South Vietnam and Laos. The only psywar operation against North Vietnam was a radio service called the "Voice of Freedom," broadcast from Hue but unreliable in reaching Hanoi or the Red River Delta during the day. After discussions with his staff and people involved in these programs, Kissinger suggested that the programs in South Vietnam were adequate, but radio output to North Vietnam should be improved and leaflet drops on North Vietnam should be renewed. Nixon approved asking Defense and USIA for a formal assessment of psywar operations, especially against North Vietnam. (Ibid., Box 141, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. XIII–2, 11–31 December 1969)

On page 4 of the attached summary, CIA proposes that consideration be given to the following suggestions for strengthening the effort to undermine enemy morale:

A. Re-examination of the total allied broadcasting effort reaching the enemy in South Vietnam to determine if it is adequate. It is possible that some transmitter assets now being directed at North Vietnam should be reoriented to the enemy in South Vietnam.

B. Reintroduction of leaflets into North Vietnam using wind drift insertion from aircraft flying over international waters or third countries adjacent to North Vietnam.

C. Utilization of Viet Cong and North Vietnam Army ralliers within the South Vietnam psychological warfare organizations.

D. Intensification of efforts to improve thematic guidance and selective targeting through better utilization of intelligence.

Recommendation:

That you authorize me to explore further through the 303 Committee, and other channels as appropriate, the suggestions enumerated above for improvement of our efforts to erode enemy morale.[4]

[4] Nixon checked the approve option and wrote: "Step up this activity to the maximum extent possible." On December 11 Kissinger informed Frank Chapin that Nixon had approved this memorandum and instructed that the issue be placed on the 303 Committee agenda for consideration at an early date.

157. Memorandum for the 303 Committee[1]

Washington, December 11, 1969.

SUBJECT

The Provincial Reconnaissance Unit Program in Vietnam

1. Introduction

The Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) Program was last presented to the 303 Committee for review and expansion on 10 April 1968.[2] This paper is being submitted in response to the recent Presi-

[1] Source: Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, Subject Files, Vietnam, 1969–1970. Secret; Eyes Only.

[2] On April 10, 1968, the 303 Committee endorsed the PRU program and approved the expansion of manpower to 6,000 men; see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. VI, Document 143.

dential Directive requiring that all programs approved by the 303 Committee be reviewed annually.

A particularly significant element of this review will be to balance the results of the PRU program, and its anticipated effectiveness, against the potential for political embarrassment which it represents.

2. Summary

A. The Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) Program in South Vietnam forms an investigative and paramilitary attack upon the covert communist apparatus in South Vietnam. PRU teams, currently totalling approximately 4,200 men, operate in 44 provinces of South Vietnam. PRU are based in their home areas and operate in teams of 15–20 men. They are presently advised and supported by 101 U.S. military advisors and seven CIA personnel. CIA funds the PRU and retains overall administrative control of the project for the U.S. Government.

B. PRU teams act upon intelligence leads produced by Vietnamese and American units in the Phoenix/Phung Hoang program. They also have their own intelligence gathering capability. PRU teams conduct operations aimed specifically at capturing known members of the covert communist apparatus (Viet Cong infrastructure). PRU teams also become involved in fire fights with Viet Cong (VC) units. During FY 1969, PRU operations resulted in the capture of 12,140 cadre and guerrillas and the killing of 6,112.

C. PRU teams are a significant part of the Phoenix/Phung Hoang program, which coordinates the overall American and South Vietnamese attack upon the covert communist apparatus. During August 1969, the Phoenix/Phung Hoang program in its entirety killed or captured 1,381 communist cadre. Of these, PRU units were responsible for killing or capturing 207. During the same month the Vietnamese Regional Forces, which totalled 253,600 men, killed or captured 428 communist cadre. These figures are believed to be typical of trends still in operation and attest to the comparative efficiency of the PRU operation.

D. American officials, from Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker on down, have firmly suggested the PRU program and have cited it as the most effective method yet developed to strike directly at the covert communist apparatus which lies within many South Vietnamese villages. This program has been coordinated with Ambassador Bunker and MACV Commander, General Abrams, in Saigon. Both fully endorse the need for the program, although both also recognize the political risks involved in American support of a police paramilitary organization which strikes hard at a seemingly civilian target. The program is also closely coordinated with and supported by the Government of South Vietnam (GVN). Prime Minister Khiem and Colonel

Hai, Director General of the National Police, are in favor of the program, which is now a part of the Directorate General of National Police under the Ministry of Interior.

[Omitted here is the Discussion section which reviews the history of the PRU program since its inception in April 1965, the tactics and methods of the PRU teams, funding arrangements, and the United States and GVN agreement in principle that the PRU would eventually be fully absorbed into South Vietnam's National Police Field Forces. Also omitted is an assessment of risks that states while the "emphasis" of the program was on capture of members of the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese infrastructure, "many PRU targets are killed" and the PRU have used "methods that are extreme by American standards." The potential for adverse publicity was high. The assessment then described efforts undertaken to minimize U.S. identification with the program.]

5. Proposal

A. It is proposed that CIA continue to provide financial support and operational guidance to the PRU program through FY 1971. Continuation of this support will have a two-fold purpose: first, to keep the PRU in being as a proven weapon against the covert communist apparatus, and second, to prepare the GVN for full assumption of responsibility for the PRU program by 1 July 1971.

B. Factors favoring this proposal include the following:

1. The present momentum and effectiveness of the PRU will be maintained at a time when the village-level communist apparatus appears to be losing both its effectiveness and appeal.

2. Continued refinement and improvement can be made in targetting and directing the PRU against their target. The PRU are a critical element of the Phoenix/Phung Hoang program, and their weakening or removal would damage the overall effort.

3. Vietnamization of PRU program can continue at an orderly pace, leading to absorption of the units by the GVN in a form judged most appropriate at the time.

4. PRU production of tactical intelligence information would continue to be made available to other GVN intelligence and police units operating at the district or province levels. (In the year period ending 1 October 1969, the PRU produced almost 25,000 tactical intelligence reports on Viet Cong activities.)

5. Continuation of U.S. support to the PRU would be interpreted by the GVN as a concrete indication of U.S. determination to proceed with the Vietnamization process on a planned and programmed basis.

C. Factors weighing against this proposal include the following:

1. Continued U.S. support of the PRU program risks adverse publicity either through an untoward incident, a press campaign to publicize its efforts or complaints from accommodation-minded South Vietnamese officials or politicians.[3]

2. CIA will have to continue its support to a program which lies, at least in part, outside its usual intelligence mission.

6. Alternatives

A. The first of these would be to terminate U.S. support to the PRU with the end of FY 1970. Factors favoring this proposal include the following:

1. CIA would be relieved of the need to fund the PRU program for FY 1971.

2. CIA and MACV would be relieved of the need to commit their personnel to a program involving paramilitary units.

3. After 1 July 1970, the CIA and the U.S. could disclaim any direct responsibility for PRU operations which caused adverse public reactions.

4. The Vietnamese National Police Field Forces (NPFF) would be augmented and strengthened by absorption of the PRU.

B. Factors weighing against this proposal include the following:

1. As of 1 July 1970, the PRU would cease to exist as an independent force committed to an attack on the covert communist apparatus. This would result in lowering both the intensity and effectiveness of the Phoenix/Phung Hoang program's attack.

2. PRU tactical intelligence output would be curtailed.

3. Cutting off support to PRU could be taken by the Vietnamese as an indication that Vietnamization of the war effort would be carried out in a precipitate manner by the U.S.

4. Individual PRU members or teams might well resent the quick termination of U.S. support, and resist piecemeal integration into the NPFF. Adverse press play and political repercussions could result.

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[3] On December 15 Laird met with George A. Carver, Jr., the DCI's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs. In a December 15 memorandum to Helms, Carver stated that Laird was anxious to remove all U.S. military personnel from the PRU program, as were Abrams and the JCS. Laird admitted that his concerns were "political," and he wanted to avoid a flap over the PRU in which U.S. military personnel would be associated. Carver explained that recent steps had been taken to tighten controls over the program, curtail the operational involvement of U.S. military personnel, and shift the emphasis to intelligence collection from ambush or "elimination." Carver argued that the sudden removal of U.S. military personnel, who were already in the process of being gradually reduced, would be a mistake and would jeopardize the program. Laird agreed to reconsider his view. (Central Intelligence Agency, Job 80–R01920R, Carver Files (SAVA–NIO), GAC Chrono, Sept–Dec 1969, #4)

C. A third course of action which can be considered is a complete turnover of the PRU program to General Abrams and MACV. This alternative has not been coordinated in Saigon, but might merit consideration if CIA support to the PRU is ruled out.

7. Costs

The PRU program is budgeted at [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] in FY 1970. The program has been reviewed by the BOB and budgeted at a level of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] for FY 1971.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that the 303 Committee approve CIA's continued support to the PRU program through FY 1971.

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158. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 12, 1969.

SUBJECT

Sir Robert Thompson's Report

I attach Sir Robert's written report on his trip to Vietnam (Tab A).[2] Although you are familiar with many of the points made in it,[3] I have summarized the major points below.

—There has been great improvement in the military and political picture, and we have a winning position. We need continued applica-

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 92, Vietnam Subject Files, Sir Robert Thompson, 1970. Secret. Sent for action.

[2] Attached but not printed.

[3] In a December 2 briefing memorandum for the President in anticipation of his meeting with Thompson, Kissinger summarized Thompson's findings and suggested that Thompson produce a written report of his trip. Kissinger also suggested that Nixon ask for Thompson's views on Vietnamization, whether he believed the improvement in the GVN's position in the countryside was due mainly to improvements in security or whether there was growing political support as well, and to convey his appreciation for Thompson's time and effort. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 92, Vietnam Subject Files, Sir Robert Thompson 1970) Nixon and Thompson met at the White House on December 3, 5:38–6:52 p.m.; no other record of this meeting has been found. (President's Daily Diary, December 3; ibid., White House Central Files)

tion of the "do it yourself" concept for the GVN and confidence in correctness of our policy.

—North Vietnamese army capability in SVN has been substantially reduced, but this could be remedied by a high level of infiltration.

—The VC military structure has been sadly hurt and should continue to weaken; the party political structure is still largely intact, however, and the VC still have the capability to recover if the pressure eases.

—Enemy activity will continue along present lines over the next few months, but the Communists may try a spectacular short offensive after March 1970.

—A long-range danger is a peace campaign backed by the Communists in the 1971 elections using someone like Dzu as the front man.

—It is also possible that the VC will recover in the countryside after 1971 and a large scale draw-down of U.S. forces and aid.

—Present U.S. strategy in SVN is correct. There should be more concentration on the key provinces, better organization of our resources, and more continuity in our policy, however.

—He does not presume to judge the rate at which we can withdraw our forces. This will depend on our periodic, over-all assessments of the situation.

Recommendation:

I recommend that we send copies of the report to the Secretaries of State and Defense and to the Director, CIA, asking for their comments and suggestions on dealing with the problem areas raised by Sir Robert.

This action would help assure that we get maximum value from his insight and suggestions.

If you approve, I will undertake to request comments from the concerned Departments.[4]

[4] Nixon initialed the approve option on December 20.

159. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 13, 1969.

SUBJECT

North Vietnam's Reply to Our Overture for Private Meeting

Attached is the full text of the exchange General Walters had with My Van Bo in Paris Friday morning.

Upon reading the actual text of the exchange, it is apparent that the North Vietnamese reply had some interesting features:

—The tone, while tough, is much milder than anything we have heard since spring.

—Their suggestion that we should have something new to say is really equivalent to our request for something new from them. Thus, it could be considered in the context of face.

—The proposal they make mentions only withdrawal and does not link, as they have in the past, withdrawal with a coalition or a provisional government. For example, in the plenary session a week ago, they stated peace depends on dropping the Thieu-Ky regime and U.S. withdrawal. This may constitute a willingness to concentrate only on troop withdrawals in a "two-track approach" in which the South Vietnamese settle political issues among themselves. While the omission of the political track may be a come-on, this too is not without significance.

—The two concluding paragraphs (6 and 7) are especially conciliatory.

Recommendation:[2]

In view of the foregoing, I recommend:

1. We wait until after the next move in the Chicom Plan and until after we have talked to the Romanian emissary although his visit may not be linked specifically to the Vietnam problem.

2. In about two weeks, that we then send General Walters back to the North Vietnamese in Paris with the message that we consider a meeting would be useful under the assumption that both sides have

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 46, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Vietnam Peace Talks, 28 July 1969–27 February 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Sent for action.

[2] Nixon initialed the approve option.

something new to say, and that under this assumption, we propose a meeting for a specific date in early January.

Attachment

Telegram From the Senior Defense Attaché in France (Walters) to the Senior Military Assistant (Haig)[3]

Paris, December 12, 1969, 1330Z.

1. On 11 December at about 1900 local time I received call that MVB[4] wished to see me at Noon on 12 December. I went to house in Choisy today at that time and saw him alone. He asked after usual amenities whether I had remained in France since I last saw him and I said that I had. He then said he would read to me the reply of Government of DRVN but could not give me copy. He then gave me pen and paper and read at dictation speed in French emphasizing punctuation following message which I translated as I wrote into English checking with him any ambiguous points to clear up exact meaning. This English translation is therefore exact translation of what he read to me in French.

2. "We have on many occasions declared that in order to settle problems relating to South Vietnam the United States must engage in direct conversations with the provisional Revolutionary Government of Republic of Vietnam.

3. In the meantime however, and inasmuch as the U.S. had proposed private meetings with the Government of DRVN we were disposed their Delegate; this is what we did. Recently in his replies to press,[5] Minister Xuan Thuy made clear that if the U.S. had something new to propose and that Delegate (HAK) would desire another meeting, then we would be ready to meet him. This clearly denotes our serious attitude and shows our good will as well as our hope that these meetings would lead to a correct solution of the Vietnamese problem. However, the statements of Mr. Nixon at his press conference on 8 December 1969, and those made these last few days by Mr. Rogers and

[3] Secret; Personally Eyes Only for General Haig. The copy printed here was retyped for the President.

[4] Mai Van Bo.

[5] Nixon underlined the phrase "recently in his replies to the press" and wrote the following comments on the left margin: "K—This may mean his press statement was directed to you."

Mr. Laird,[6] prove that the U.S. still hold to their position defined in the warlike speech of three November 1969 by Mr. Nixon.[7] Mr. Nixon has further in practice reduced the level of the Paris conference on Vietnam and demanded a reward[8] for the designation of a replacement for Mr. Cabot Lodge. At the same time he rejected outright the following proposal which was both logical and reasonable made by the PRG. 'If the United States declares that they will totally and unconditionally withdraw their troops and those of foreign countries who belong to the American camp from South Vietnam[9] in a period of six months, the parties will enter into the discussions concerning the calendar for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and those of foreign countries who are part of the U.S. camp, and on the problem of security guarantees relating to this withdrawal.'

4. Thus it is clear that on one hand the U.S. demands a reward for the designation of a replacement for Mr. Cabot Lodge and on the other hand they refuse to examine seriously the proposals of the opposing side, limiting themselves to demanding that we accept their conditions. The attitude of President Nixon and other members of U.S. Government proves that U.S. still seeking a military victory and that they do not yet want to achieve a correct solution for the Vietnamese problem by means of negotiations.

5. We therefore feel that any private meeting between Minister Xuan Thuy and Conselor HAK, as proposed by the latter could not be of any use. However when circumstances become favorable, when American side will really have something new to propose the two parties may then meet.

6. Insofar as we are concerned we will continue to maintain our serious attitude and good will. For their part the U.S. must also adopt a serious attitude and show good will. It is thus that we can achieve a settlement of the problem."

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[6] Nixon's comments at his December 8 news conference are in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 1003–1013. The reference to Rogers' comments are apparently to remarks made during an interview by National Educational Television for broadcast on November 26. (Department of State *Bulletin,* December 22, 1969, pp. 577–583) Laird's remarks have not been identified.

[7] Nixon underlined "warlike speech" and put an exclamation point in the margin; see Document 144.

[8] Nixon underlined the phrase "demanded a reward" and put a question mark in the margin.

[9] Nixon wrote the following note at the bottom of the page: "shows they watch every statement we make—carefully" and drew an arrow to the phrase "from South Vietnam."

7. Upon conclusion he looked expectantly at me but I told him without expression that I would convey this message. On this occasion for first time he offered me tea which I accepted.[10]

[10] At the bottom of this page, Nixon wrote the comments: "K—It still seems to me he expects *us* to offer something new & does not expect to offer anything on his part."

160. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 16, 1969.

SUBJECT

Future of the Paris Talks

You have asked Secretary of State Rogers for an opinion on whether the Paris talks are in the best interests of the United States. His reply (Tab A)[2] deals with the question in terms of alternatives:

—If the only alternative is the total suspension of the meetings on the grounds that they have degenerated into a propaganda forum, we would lose more than we gain by appearing to contradict our statement that we will persist through any means to seek a negotiated settlement.

—However, elimination or reduction of the present plenaries in favor of restricted sessions would be a "positive step" and would probably be received well at home and abroad.

Picking up the second alternative, the Secretary points out that the other side is very sensitive to the prospect that we might downgrade or even eliminate the negotiations, and suggests that we exploit this sensitivity in order to work toward restricted sessions. He suggests that

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 64, Memoranda to the President, 1969 December. Top Secret; Nodis; Paris Meetings. Drafted by Holdridge on December 16. Sent for information/action. There is no date on the memorandum; the date used is the drafting date.

[2] Tab A, a memorandum from Rogers to Nixon, December 15; attached but not printed. The Department of State copy of this memorandum indicated it was drafted by Sullivan and Eliot. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET)

In response to the Secretary of State's memorandum of November 28, 1969[2] and subsequent discussions with you, the President has made the following decisions with respect to holiday truces, cease-fire and troop withdrawals:

1. He wishes to avoid speculation that the U.S. Government is considering new proposals regarding a permanent negotiated cease-fire in South Vietnam and he does not want the issue of brief holiday truces linked with initiatives for a permanent negotiated cease-fire.

2. The President has approved the announcement of a 24-hour truce for Christmas and a 24-hour truce for New Years, with the announcement to be made in Saigon in coordination with the GVN.

3. Until the receipt of specific guidance to the contrary, there is to be no departmental speculation or comment whatsoever to the press on the subject of further troop withdrawals from Vietnam.

The decision regarding a permanent negotiated cease-fire should not preclude continuation of the studies under way on this subject which are designed to formulate the U.S. position and the conditions which we should insist be met if a cease-fire were to be proposed by the other side. It is contemplated, however, that the results of these studies, to include the views of the GVN, will be forwarded through the National Security Council framework for formal consideration by the NSC before discussions of any type would be undertaken with Hanoi's representatives in Paris or elsewhere.

Henry A. Kissinger

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[2] In this memorandum to Nixon, Rogers sought the President's urgent decision on U.S. policy regarding the traditional observance of the Christmas and New Year holidays in Vietnam. Rogers' recommendation was to endorse a truce from Christmas Day through New Year's Day, although he was willing to accept two separate truces—48 hours at Christmas, and 24 hours at New Year's. Rogers also stated that the United States ought to offer to begin negotiations on a longstanding cease-fire rather than merely restate its willingness to do so, and to make this offer at the same time as the announcement of the holiday truce. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET) At Kissinger's request Laird sent these views to Kissinger on November 28. Laird wrote that "under no circumstances should [the United States] extend holiday truces beyond the proposed 24-hour period," and they should "be kept completely separate from that of a negotiated permanent cease-fire." Laird also recommended the United States announce in Paris its readiness to begin immediate negotiations toward a formal agreement on a permanent cease-fire based on the eight points listed in Nixon's May 14 speech. Lastly, Laird believed that "simultaneous proposals for holiday truces and for opening negotiations on a permanent cease-fire might short-circuit pressure to extend the truces and at the same time give us a psychological advantage—both domestically and internationally." (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 66, Vietnam Subject Files, 2–D–A General Abrams Nov. II, Cease-fire, Vol. I, 1969)

155. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 6, 1969.

SUBJECT

My Lai Atrocities

At Tab A is a memorandum from Bryce Harlow through me to you conveying information on a proposal made by Senators Stennis and Margaret Chase Smith.[2] The proposal would ask you to constitute a Presidential commission to assemble all the facts of the My Lai incident. While the suggestion was apparently made in an effort to be helpful and to deflect other Congressional activity, I am not convinced that it would accomplish its purpose. Rather, I suspect it would tend to prolong public interest in the incident which has hopefully already reached its peak. As you know, there is some evidence that public pressures are now building which could discourage further press speculation on the incident.

If you were to establish a Presidential commission at a time when court martial proceedings are already underway, it would be difficult to see how meaningful testimony could be assembled without some conflict with the juridical proceedings and perhaps[3] claims by the defense counsels that the Executive Branch had instituted duplicatory proceedings which jeopardized the rights of their clients. The establishment of a commission might also be interpreted as a lack of confidence by you in the military's ability to police its problem and thereby contribute to suspicions that we are dealing with an even more fundamental breakdown in military standards and discipline. Furthermore, once the commission report is publicized a new rash of controversy could develop over its findings no matter what they might turn out to be. Conversely,

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 334, Subject Files, Items to Discuss with the President, 8/31/69–12/30/69. Secret; Sensitive. A handwritten notation by Kissinger reads, "Let's get list of names for commission"; a handwritten notation by Nixon reads, "To K." On November 21 Kissinger and Laird discussed the Mai Lai atrocity. (Notes of a telephone conversation, November 21, 3:50 p.m.; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

[2] Dated December 3, attached but not printed. In this memorandum, Harlow informed Kissinger that he had discussed the proposition of a commission with Haig and David Packard and they both thought "poorly of the idea, principally on the grounds that the Commission's report would extend the atrocity story into the future."

[3] Nixon underlined the rest of this sentence beginning with "claims"; he also underlined the last half of the following sentence.

the legal proceedings now underway would more than likely result in severe punishment that would have a conclusive character which would tend to limit public speculation. The court martial also tends to reinforce the isolated character of the incident.

Notwithstanding, there is a trend which may build in the wake of the My Lai incident which might further influence your judgment on how to proceed.

If other incidents continue to crop-up because My Lai has resurrected real or imagined recollections of atrocities by other veterans, then you will no longer be dealing with a single phenomenon. Should this situation develop, then I believe you should convene a commission since we will be dealing with an even more fundamental problem for which a military court would not be appropriate.

Finally, it is possible that regardless of your decision, the Congress might proceed on its own and confront you with a resolution calling for a Presidential commission to investigate My Lai. In this event, it might be propitious to preempt them by promptly appointing a commission of your choice.

Recommendation:[4]

1. That you not appoint a commission to assemble facts on My Lai until we have had an opportunity to assess the phenomena a little longer.

2. That if the Congress moves on its own or if additional atrocities appear to be surfacing, you proceed with the appointment of a commission.

3. That a contingency plan be prepared now which will enable you to move promptly in the event you decide to appoint a commission.

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[4] Nixon initialed the approve option. In a December 8 memorandum to the President, Kissinger responded to Nixon's request to suggestions from Moynihan that the President empanel a group of "wise men" to judge what went wrong at My Lai and declare a national day of prayer for the victims. Kissinger responded: "For you to follow either of these suggestions would be tantamount to a Presidential declaration of the guilt of the accused, without benefit of trial. The last thing we want is defense counsel citing a Presidential statement or action when making a plea that the accused's right to a fair trial has been prejudiced." Although Kissinger thought it was a "close decision," he suggested as long as the atrocity was "confined to My Lai, there should be no commission. If another incident surfaces, then a commission was called for." Nixon wrote "I agree" at the end of that memorandum. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 287, Memoranda to the President, December 1969, I) Moynihan's memorandum to the President, November 25, is in the National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 118, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam—Lt. Calley Case (Mai Lai Atrocity).

156. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 9, 1969.

SUBJECT

Covert Operations to Undermine Enemy Morale in Vietnam

Recently you requested information about over-all U.S. programs designed to reduce morale in North Vietnam and among the Viet Cong, the adequacy of such programs and what might be done to improve them.[2]

For security reasons I have separated my response into two sections and attach hereto a summary of CIA-sponsored covert operations directed at undermining enemy morale in both North and South Vietnam and related activity targeted against the North Vietnamese in Laos.[3]

[*1 paragraph (4 lines of source text) not declassified*]

These are:

[*4 paragraphs (12 lines of source text) not declassified*]

Despite the formidable difficulty of measuring the effectiveness of covert operations in denied areas, there is tangible evidence that these efforts have had some impact on North Vietnamese and Viet Cong morale.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 960, Haig Chronological Files, December 9–16, 1969 [1 of 2]. Secret; Eyes Only. Sent for action.

[2] In a November 24 memorandum to Kissinger, Nixon wrote: "Are we doing everything we can with regard to trying to disrupt morale in North Vietnam and among the VC? On several of my visits to Vietnam people told me that there could be programs which would be effective in reducing morale in those areas. I know that CIA, of course, is a miserable flop in this field, but will you give me a report as to whether our program, if any, is adequate." (Ibid.)

[3] Reference is to an attached 4-page undated memorandum entitled "Covert Operations To Undermine Enemy Morale." In a December 15 memorandum to the President, Kissinger listed overt programs to reduce North Vietnamese and VC morale. Within South Vietnam these included: U.S. Mission-sponsored radio programs estimated to reach 70 percent of the population, a 1.3 million 2-page newspaper air dropped fortnightly over contested areas, special mass circulation of important documents such as Nixon's speech of November 3, the Chieu Hoi program, and U.S. Army psywar leaflet drops from B–52's in South Vietnam and Laos. The only psywar operation against North Vietnam was a radio service called the "Voice of Freedom," broadcast from Hue but unreliable in reaching Hanoi or the Red River Delta during the day. After discussions with his staff and people involved in these programs, Kissinger suggested that the programs in South Vietnam were adequate, but radio output to North Vietnam should be improved and leaflet drops on North Vietnam should be renewed. Nixon approved asking Defense and USIA for a formal assessment of psywar operations, especially against North Vietnam. (Ibid., Box 141, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. XIII–2, 11–31 December 1969)

On page 4 of the attached summary, CIA proposes that consideration be given to the following suggestions for strengthening the effort to undermine enemy morale:

A. Re-examination of the total allied broadcasting effort reaching the enemy in South Vietnam to determine if it is adequate. It is possible that some transmitter assets now being directed at North Vietnam should be reoriented to the enemy in South Vietnam.

B. Reintroduction of leaflets into North Vietnam using wind drift insertion from aircraft flying over international waters or third countries adjacent to North Vietnam.

C. Utilization of Viet Cong and North Vietnam Army ralliers within the South Vietnam psychological warfare organizations.

D. Intensification of efforts to improve thematic guidance and selective targeting through better utilization of intelligence.

Recommendation:

That you authorize me to explore further through the 303 Committee, and other channels as appropriate, the suggestions enumerated above for improvement of our efforts to erode enemy morale.[4]

[4] Nixon checked the approve option and wrote: "Step up this activity to the maximum extent possible." On December 11 Kissinger informed Frank Chapin that Nixon had approved this memorandum and instructed that the issue be placed on the 303 Committee agenda for consideration at an early date.

157. Memorandum for the 303 Committee[1]

Washington, December 11, 1969.

SUBJECT

The Provincial Reconnaissance Unit Program in Vietnam

1. Introduction

The Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) Program was last presented to the 303 Committee for review and expansion on 10 April 1968.[2] This paper is being submitted in response to the recent Presi-

[1] Source: Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, Subject Files, Vietnam, 1969–1970. Secret; Eyes Only.

[2] On April 10, 1968, the 303 Committee endorsed the PRU program and approved the expansion of manpower to 6,000 men; see *Foreign Relations*, 1964–1968, vol. VI, Document 143.

dential Directive requiring that all programs approved by the 303 Committee be reviewed annually.

A particularly significant element of this review will be to balance the results of the PRU program, and its anticipated effectiveness, against the potential for political embarrassment which it represents.

2. Summary

A. The Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) Program in South Vietnam forms an investigative and paramilitary attack upon the covert communist apparatus in South Vietnam. PRU teams, currently totalling approximately 4,200 men, operate in 44 provinces of South Vietnam. PRU are based in their home areas and operate in teams of 15–20 men. They are presently advised and supported by 101 U.S. military advisors and seven CIA personnel. CIA funds the PRU and retains overall administrative control of the project for the U.S. Government.

B. PRU teams act upon intelligence leads produced by Vietnamese and American units in the Phoenix/Phung Hoang program. They also have their own intelligence gathering capability. PRU teams conduct operations aimed specifically at capturing known members of the covert communist apparatus (Viet Cong infrastructure). PRU teams also become involved in fire fights with Viet Cong (VC) units. During FY 1969, PRU operations resulted in the capture of 12,140 cadre and guerrillas and the killing of 6,112.

C. PRU teams are a significant part of the Phoenix/Phung Hoang program, which coordinates the overall American and South Vietnamese attack upon the covert communist apparatus. During August 1969, the Phoenix/Phung Hoang program in its entirety killed or captured 1,381 communist cadre. Of these, PRU units were responsible for killing or capturing 207. During the same month the Vietnamese Regional Forces, which totalled 253,600 men, killed or captured 428 communist cadre. These figures are believed to be typical of trends still in operation and attest to the comparative efficiency of the PRU operation.

D. American officials, from Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker on down, have firmly suggested the PRU program and have cited it as the most effective method yet developed to strike directly at the covert communist apparatus which lies within many South Vietnamese villages. This program has been coordinated with Ambassador Bunker and MACV Commander, General Abrams, in Saigon. Both fully endorse the need for the program, although both also recognize the political risks involved in American support of a police paramilitary organization which strikes hard at a seemingly civilian target. The program is also closely coordinated with and supported by the Government of South Vietnam (GVN). Prime Minister Khiem and Colonel

Hai, Director General of the National Police, are in favor of the program, which is now a part of the Directorate General of National Police under the Ministry of Interior.

[Omitted here is the Discussion section which reviews the history of the PRU program since its inception in April 1965, the tactics and methods of the PRU teams, funding arrangements, and the United States and GVN agreement in principle that the PRU would eventually be fully absorbed into South Vietnam's National Police Field Forces. Also omitted is an assessment of risks that states while the "emphasis" of the program was on capture of members of the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese infrastructure, "many PRU targets are killed" and the PRU have used "methods that are extreme by American standards." The potential for adverse publicity was high. The assessment then described efforts undertaken to minimize U.S. identification with the program.]

5. Proposal

A. It is proposed that CIA continue to provide financial support and operational guidance to the PRU program through FY 1971. Continuation of this support will have a two-fold purpose: first, to keep the PRU in being as a proven weapon against the covert communist apparatus, and second, to prepare the GVN for full assumption of responsibility for the PRU program by 1 July 1971.

B. Factors favoring this proposal include the following:

1. The present momentum and effectiveness of the PRU will be maintained at a time when the village-level communist apparatus appears to be losing both its effectiveness and appeal.

2. Continued refinement and improvement can be made in targetting and directing the PRU against their target. The PRU are a critical element of the Phoenix/Phung Hoang program, and their weakening or removal would damage the overall effort.

3. Vietnamization of PRU program can continue at an orderly pace, leading to absorption of the units by the GVN in a form judged most appropriate at the time.

4. PRU production of tactical intelligence information would continue to be made available to other GVN intelligence and police units operating at the district or province levels. (In the year period ending 1 October 1969, the PRU produced almost 25,000 tactical intelligence reports on Viet Cong activities.)

5. Continuation of U.S. support to the PRU would be interpreted by the GVN as a concrete indication of U.S. determination to proceed with the Vietnamization process on a planned and programmed basis.

C. Factors weighing against this proposal include the following:

1. Continued U.S. support of the PRU program risks adverse publicity either through an untoward incident, a press campaign to publicize its efforts or complaints from accommodation-minded South Vietnamese officials or politicians.[3]

2. CIA will have to continue its support to a program which lies, at least in part, outside its usual intelligence mission.

6. Alternatives

A. The first of these would be to terminate U.S. support to the PRU with the end of FY 1970. Factors favoring this proposal include the following:

1. CIA would be relieved of the need to fund the PRU program for FY 1971.

2. CIA and MACV would be relieved of the need to commit their personnel to a program involving paramilitary units.

3. After 1 July 1970, the CIA and the U.S. could disclaim any direct responsibility for PRU operations which caused adverse public reactions.

4. The Vietnamese National Police Field Forces (NPFF) would be augmented and strengthened by absorption of the PRU.

B. Factors weighing against this proposal include the following:

1. As of 1 July 1970, the PRU would cease to exist as an independent force committed to an attack on the covert communist apparatus. This would result in lowering both the intensity and effectiveness of the Phoenix/Phung Hoang program's attack.

2. PRU tactical intelligence output would be curtailed.

3. Cutting off support to PRU could be taken by the Vietnamese as an indication that Vietnamization of the war effort would be carried out in a precipitate manner by the U.S.

4. Individual PRU members or teams might well resent the quick termination of U.S. support, and resist piecemeal integration into the NPFF. Adverse press play and political repercussions could result.

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[3] On December 15 Laird met with George A. Carver, Jr., the DCI's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs. In a December 15 memorandum to Helms, Carver stated that Laird was anxious to remove all U.S. military personnel from the PRU program, as were Abrams and the JCS. Laird admitted that his concerns were "political," and he wanted to avoid a flap over the PRU in which U.S. military personnel would be associated. Carver explained that recent steps had been taken to tighten controls over the program, curtail the operational involvement of U.S. military personnel, and shift the emphasis to intelligence collection from ambush or "elimination." Carver argued that the sudden removal of U.S. military personnel, who were already in the process of being gradually reduced, would be a mistake and would jeopardize the program. Laird agreed to reconsider his view. (Central Intelligence Agency, Job 80–R01920R, Carver Files (SAVA–NIO), GAC Chrono, Sept–Dec 1969, #4)

C. A third course of action which can be considered is a complete turnover of the PRU program to General Abrams and MACV. This alternative has not been coordinated in Saigon, but might merit consideration if CIA support to the PRU is ruled out.

7. Costs

The PRU program is budgeted at [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] in FY 1970. The program has been reviewed by the BOB and budgeted at a level of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] for FY 1971.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that the 303 Committee approve CIA's continued support to the PRU program through FY 1971.

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158. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 12, 1969.

SUBJECT

Sir Robert Thompson's Report

I attach Sir Robert's written report on his trip to Vietnam (Tab A).[2] Although you are familiar with many of the points made in it,[3] I have summarized the major points below.

—There has been great improvement in the military and political picture, and we have a winning position. We need continued applica-

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 92, Vietnam Subject Files, Sir Robert Thompson, 1970. Secret. Sent for action.

[2] Attached but not printed.

[3] In a December 2 briefing memorandum for the President in anticipation of his meeting with Thompson, Kissinger summarized Thompson's findings and suggested that Thompson produce a written report of his trip. Kissinger also suggested that Nixon ask for Thompson's views on Vietnamization, whether he believed the improvement in the GVN's position in the countryside was due mainly to improvements in security or whether there was growing political support as well, and to convey his appreciation for Thompson's time and effort. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 92, Vietnam Subject Files, Sir Robert Thompson 1970) Nixon and Thompson met at the White House on December 3, 5:38–6:52 p.m.; no other record of this meeting has been found. (President's Daily Diary, December 3; ibid., White House Central Files)

tion of the "do it yourself" concept for the GVN and confidence in correctness of our policy.

—North Vietnamese army capability in SVN has been substantially reduced, but this could be remedied by a high level of infiltration.

—The VC military structure has been sadly hurt and should continue to weaken; the party political structure is still largely intact, however, and the VC still have the capability to recover if the pressure eases.

—Enemy activity will continue along present lines over the next few months, but the Communists may try a spectacular short offensive after March 1970.

—A long-range danger is a peace campaign backed by the Communists in the 1971 elections using someone like Dzu as the front man.

—It is also possible that the VC will recover in the countryside after 1971 and a large scale draw-down of U.S. forces and aid.

—Present U.S. strategy in SVN is correct. There should be more concentration on the key provinces, better organization of our resources, and more continuity in our policy, however.

—He does not presume to judge the rate at which we can withdraw our forces. This will depend on our periodic, over-all assessments of the situation.

Recommendation:

I recommend that we send copies of the report to the Secretaries of State and Defense and to the Director, CIA, asking for their comments and suggestions on dealing with the problem areas raised by Sir Robert.

This action would help assure that we get maximum value from his insight and suggestions.

If you approve, I will undertake to request comments from the concerned Departments.[4]

[4] Nixon initialed the approve option on December 20.

159. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 13, 1969.

SUBJECT

North Vietnam's Reply to Our Overture for Private Meeting

Attached is the full text of the exchange General Walters had with My Van Bo in Paris Friday morning.

Upon reading the actual text of the exchange, it is apparent that the North Vietnamese reply had some interesting features:

—The tone, while tough, is much milder than anything we have heard since spring.

—Their suggestion that we should have something new to say is really equivalent to our request for something new from them. Thus, it could be considered in the context of face.

—The proposal they make mentions only withdrawal and does not link, as they have in the past, withdrawal with a coalition or a provisional government. For example, in the plenary session a week ago, they stated peace depends on dropping the Thieu-Ky regime and U.S. withdrawal. This may constitute a willingness to concentrate only on troop withdrawals in a "two-track approach" in which the South Vietnamese settle political issues among themselves. While the omission of the political track may be a come-on, this too is not without significance.

—The two concluding paragraphs (6 and 7) are especially conciliatory.

Recommendation:[2]

In view of the foregoing, I recommend:

1. We wait until after the next move in the Chicom Plan and until after we have talked to the Romanian emissary although his visit may not be linked specifically to the Vietnam problem.

2. In about two weeks, that we then send General Walters back to the North Vietnamese in Paris with the message that we consider a meeting would be useful under the assumption that both sides have

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 46, Geopolitical File, Vietnam, Vietnam Peace Talks, 28 July 1969–27 February 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Sent for action.

[2] Nixon initialed the approve option.

something new to say, and that under this assumption, we propose a meeting for a specific date in early January.

Attachment

Telegram From the Senior Defense Attaché in France (Walters) to the Senior Military Assistant (Haig)[3]

Paris, December 12, 1969, 1330Z.

1. On 11 December at about 1900 local time I received call that MVB[4] wished to see me at Noon on 12 December. I went to house in Choisy today at that time and saw him alone. He asked after usual amenities whether I had remained in France since I last saw him and I said that I had. He then said he would read to me the reply of Government of DRVN but could not give me copy. He then gave me pen and paper and read at dictation speed in French emphasizing punctuation following message which I translated as I wrote into English checking with him any ambiguous points to clear up exact meaning. This English translation is therefore exact translation of what he read to me in French.

2. "We have on many occasions declared that in order to settle problems relating to South Vietnam the United States must engage in direct conversations with the provisional Revolutionary Government of Republic of Vietnam.

3. In the meantime however, and inasmuch as the U.S. had proposed private meetings with the Government of DRVN we were disposed their Delegate; this is what we did. Recently in his replies to press,[5] Minister Xuan Thuy made clear that if the U.S. had something new to propose and that Delegate (HAK) would desire another meeting, then we would be ready to meet him. This clearly denotes our serious attitude and shows our good will as well as our hope that these meetings would lead to a correct solution of the Vietnamese problem. However, the statements of Mr. Nixon at his press conference on 8 December 1969, and those made these last few days by Mr. Rogers and

[3] Secret; Personally Eyes Only for General Haig. The copy printed here was retyped for the President.

[4] Mai Van Bo.

[5] Nixon underlined the phrase "recently in his replies to the press" and wrote the following comments on the left margin: "K—This may mean his press statement was directed to you."

Mr. Laird,[6] prove that the U.S. still hold to their position defined in the warlike speech of three November 1969 by Mr. Nixon.[7] Mr. Nixon has further in practice reduced the level of the Paris conference on Vietnam and demanded a reward[8] for the designation of a replacement for Mr. Cabot Lodge. At the same time he rejected outright the following proposal which was both logical and reasonable made by the PRG. 'If the United States declares that they will totally and unconditionally withdraw their troops and those of foreign countries who belong to the American camp from South Vietnam[9] in a period of six months, the parties will enter into the discussions concerning the calendar for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and those of foreign countries who are part of the U.S. camp, and on the problem of security guarantees relating to this withdrawal.'

4. Thus it is clear that on one hand the U.S. demands a reward for the designation of a replacement for Mr. Cabot Lodge and on the other hand they refuse to examine seriously the proposals of the opposing side, limiting themselves to demanding that we accept their conditions. The attitude of President Nixon and other members of U.S. Government proves that U.S. still seeking a military victory and that they do not yet want to achieve a correct solution for the Vietnamese problem by means of negotiations.

5. We therefore feel that any private meeting between Minister Xuan Thuy and Conselor HAK, as proposed by the latter could not be of any use. However when circumstances become favorable, when American side will really have something new to propose the two parties may then meet.

6. Insofar as we are concerned we will continue to maintain our serious attitude and good will. For their part the U.S. must also adopt a serious attitude and show good will. It is thus that we can achieve a settlement of the problem."

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[6] Nixon's comments at his December 8 news conference are in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 1003–1013. The reference to Rogers' comments are apparently to remarks made during an interview by National Educational Television for broadcast on November 26. (Department of State *Bulletin,* December 22, 1969, pp. 577–583) Laird's remarks have not been identified.

[7] Nixon underlined "warlike speech" and put an exclamation point in the margin; see Document 144.

[8] Nixon underlined the phrase "demanded a reward" and put a question mark in the margin.

[9] Nixon wrote the following note at the bottom of the page: "shows they watch every statement we make—carefully" and drew an arrow to the phrase "from South Vietnam."

7. Upon conclusion he looked expectantly at me but I told him without expression that I would convey this message. On this occasion for first time he offered me tea which I accepted.[10]

[10] At the bottom of this page, Nixon wrote the comments: "K—It still seems to me he expects *us* to offer something new & does not expect to offer anything on his part."

160. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 16, 1969.

SUBJECT

Future of the Paris Talks

You have asked Secretary of State Rogers for an opinion on whether the Paris talks are in the best interests of the United States. His reply (Tab A)[2] deals with the question in terms of alternatives:

—If the only alternative is the total suspension of the meetings on the grounds that they have degenerated into a propaganda forum, we would lose more than we gain by appearing to contradict our statement that we will persist through any means to seek a negotiated settlement.

—However, elimination or reduction of the present plenaries in favor of restricted sessions would be a "positive step" and would probably be received well at home and abroad.

Picking up the second alternative, the Secretary points out that the other side is very sensitive to the prospect that we might downgrade or even eliminate the negotiations, and suggests that we exploit this sensitivity in order to work toward restricted sessions. He suggests that

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box TS 64, Memoranda to the President, 1969 December. Top Secret; Nodis; Paris Meetings. Drafted by Holdridge on December 16. Sent for information/action. There is no date on the memorandum; the date used is the drafting date.

[2] Tab A, a memorandum from Rogers to Nixon, December 15; attached but not printed. The Department of State copy of this memorandum indicated it was drafted by Sullivan and Eliot. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 27–14 VIET)

we use the upcoming holiday season to test the possibilities by reducing the frequency of the talks as follows:

—Substituting one plenary meeting on December 30 for the two plenaries which normally would be held on December 25 and January 1, and proposing in the regularly-scheduled January 8 meeting that future meetings be plenary and restricted on alternate Thursdays.

The Secretary doubts that the other side would accept, and foresees three courses of action which we could then take:

—Insisting on our proposal and refusing to attend any meetings unless it is accepted. Total cessation of the talks would then be at our initiative.

—Agreeing to plenary sessions every other Thursday, with a hiatus in between unless the other side accepts alternate restricted and plenary sessions. If, as probable, they insist on weekly sessions or none at all, the onus for the resulting total cessation of the talks would be more on their side.

—Maintaining and continuing to put forward our proposal for alternating sessions, but attending regular weekly sessions in the meantime.

The Secretary recommends in sum that we hold only one plenary session during the holiday season, on December 30; that on January 8 we propose alternating plenary and restricted sessions; and that we continue to attend weekly plenaries if the other side rejects our proposal.

Comment: I agree with the Secretary on the liabilities which complete cessation of the talks would entail. I also agree on the utility of pushing toward restricted sessions. Secretary Rogers' gambit impresses me, therefore, as being worth trying. I doubt, however, that you would want to leave us tied into an indefinite series of plenary sessions of the type we have encountered so far, and suggest that you might wish again to review the course of the talks and possible alternatives with Secretary Rogers in about six weeks' time.

Recommendation:[3]

That you authorize me to inform Secretary Rogers of your agreement to his recommended course of action.[4]

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[3] Both recommendations were approved for Nixon by Kissinger on December 18.

[4] Kissinger informed Rogers of Nixon's approval of his recommended course of action in a December 30 memorandum, and directed specifically that "Ambassador Habib should offer at the January 8 session alternating restricted and plenary sessions." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Box TS 64, Memoranda to the President, 1969 December)

That you authorize me to inform him that you will want another look at the Paris talks situation in about six weeks' time with a view toward assessing both the progress, if any, and the desirability of considering possible alternatives.

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161. Memorandum From John Holdridge of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, December 18, 1969.

SUBJECT

NSC Paper on DeFacto Withdrawals from Vietnam

Per your request,[2] we have prepared a summary of the paper on de facto enemy withdrawals from South Vietnam prepared by the Vietnam Ad Hoc Group in accord with an NSC request of July 10.[3] This paper was prepared at a time when a long hiatus was occurring in the departure of new infiltrators for SVN. There was therefore good reason to assess whether the enemy was passing a signal of his intent to de-escalate the war. (Tab A)[4]

Main points of the paper are as follows:

—It could not as yet be concluded what the lull in infiltration signified. It could have meant an intent to de-escalate, it could have been a seasonal pause, or indicative of a change in combat tactics.

—There are a number of criteria important in judging the enemy's intent and the significance of the infiltration slowdown for his force structure. Among these are the net attrition of enemy forces, whether further infiltrators are being trained, and whether some enemy forces are actually being withdrawn.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–213, NSSM Files, NSSM 37. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis.

[2] Kissinger made the request in a note on a memorandum from Holdridge, November 28. (Ibid.)

[3] See Document 96.

[4] Tab A was the final draft of NSSM 37, October 30, with the addendum on de facto reduction in and/or withdrawal of forces, which Sullivan sent to Kissinger on October 31; attached but not printed.

—When and if we believe the criteria indicate the enemy is undertaking defacto withdrawals, we should attempt to encourage this by signalling the other side of our intent to respond with further withdrawals of our own.

—We will then face the problem of equating defacto enemy withdrawals with our own drawdown of troops. The paper poses a hypothetical arithmetical relationship. For a 20 percent reduction in enemy strength, for example, we would withdraw up to 60,000 men. For a pullout of some 230,000 of our (500,000 plus) men, Hanoi would have to take out about 80 percent of the North Vietnamese. A balanced, two divisional force of U.S. troops would be left along with necessary combat support and would be withdrawn as the security situation permits.[5]

Comment: This paper is largely an exploration of the issues connected with a defacto enemy withdrawal. Although it makes some serious policy recommendations, it is heavily weighted in favor of the military viewpoint. In an actual development of this type, we might feel the need for considerably more flexibility and hence the need for more options on the relationship of our withdrawals to the enemy's.

Since the defacto withdrawal issue seems to be a dead one at present, I do not believe the paper warrants further work at this point. It has been dispatched to Paris and Saigon for their background use.

Recommendation:

There should be no further Review Group action on this paper. Copies now in the Secretariat should be distributed for information to the Review Group members, excluding the OEP and USIA.[6]

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[5] Kissinger wrote the following note in the margin next to this paragraph: "it depends on what level U.S. remains."

[6] Approved by Kissinger on December 29.

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162. Editorial Note

On the evening of December 22, 1969, Presidential Assistant Henry Kissinger met with Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin to discuss a number of issues in a private meeting. The discussion on Vietnam follows:

"Dobrynin then turned to the war in Vietnam. He said, 'You have to understand that we tried to do something last April and May, but Hanoi told us that there was no sense having a private channel unless

the United States agreed in advance to negotiate about a coalition government. We cannot tell them how to fight in their own country. This is a real problem to us, and we thought it was best not to return a negative reply.' I said it would have been better to return some sort of a reply, but there was no sense talking about the past.

"Dobrynin then asked me how I saw the future. I said that I really had not come to discuss Vietnam, but to sum it up in a few words, we were very confident. For the first time in my experience with Vietnam, I now was certain that time was working on our side. It seemed to me that Hanoi had only two choices—to negotiate or to see its structure in South Vietnam erode. He said, 'Isn't there even a slight chance that the South Vietnam Government might collapse?' I said that we were confident that we were on the right course. Maybe Hanoi would start an offensive but then, as the President had repeatedly pointed out publicly, it would have to draw the consequences. Dobrynin said, 'Of course, if you start bombing the North again, or if you hit Haiphong, you realize what would happen.' I expected him to say the Soviet Union would come in. But instead, he said, 'What would happen is the Chinese would send in engineer battalions, and you don't want to increase Chinese influence in Hanoi.' I said, 'If you can live with it, we can,' and in any event, our problem was to end the war in South Vietnam.

"Dobrynin said that he did not think that Hanoi had anything new to say for the next few months. I told him that they knew what channels were available and that we would be glad to listen to them if they did. We would be flexible and conciliatory in negotiations. We had no intention to humiliate Hanoi, but we would not pay an additional price to enter the negotiations. Dobrynin asked me whether we were ever going to send a senior Ambassador to the negotiations. I said it depended in part on the negotiations, but I had no doubt that ultimately it would be done. He said he had to admit that nothing was going on at the negotiations now, but that he thought they were an important symbol.

"I said in conclusion that if Hanoi had something to say to us it should do so explicitly, and not get us involved in detective stories in which various self-appointed or second-level emissaries were dropping oblique hints. Dobrynin laughed and said he would be sure to get this point across. He thought Hanoi had nothing to say at the moment.

"The major point about the Vietnam part was the complete absence of contentiousness on Dobrynin's part. There was no challenge to my assertion that our policy was working out, and there was a conspicuous effort by Dobrynin to disassociate himself from the Vietnamese war." (Memorandum of conversation, December 22; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1969, [Part 1]) The full record of this

meeting is in *Foreign Relations*, 1969–1976, volume XII, Soviet Union, 1969–October 1970.

Kissinger sent a December 24 covering memorandum to the President summarizing this conversation with Dobrynin and characterizing the discussion on Vietnam as in a "low key tone. His [Dobrynin's] threat about what would happen if we started bombing the North again or hit Haiphong—that the Chinese would send in engineer battalions which would increase Chinese influence in Hanoi—seems almost to be an invitation for us to attack North Vietnam." Kissinger also told the President that "Dobrynin said that he did not think Hanoi would have anything new to say for the next few months." A note on the covering memorandum indicates that the President saw it and Nixon wrote "K—very fascinating" on the first page of the memorandum of conversation, although all the portions of the conversation underlined by the President related to issues other than Vietnam.

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163. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 27, 1969.

SUBJECT

Vietnamese Communist Position on a Cease-fire

MACV has in hand a captured enemy document which provides one of the clearest expressions of enemy view on the timing of a cease-fire in Vietnam that we have seen (Tab A).[2] The document consists of notes taken by a medium-level party cadre in South Vietnam during the course of lectures on the content and strategy of COSVN Resolution 9. The notes date from around the end of September.

According to the notes, the Communists will only accept a cease-fire if the U.S. has agreed to total withdrawal, if a coalition government

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 141, Vietnam Country Files, Vol. XIII–2, 11–31 December 1969. Confidential. Sent for information. A notation on the memorandum indicates the President saw it. Kissinger wrote at the top of the page: "Al [Haig]—you should discuss this in Saigon." Holdridge originally sent a summary of this document to Kissinger in a memorandum of December 18, and Kissinger asked him to prepare it as a memorandum for the President. (Ibid.)

[2] Attached but not printed.

"is" formed, and if the Communists are stronger than the allies and are "sure" they can win in "political competition with the enemy."

Comment: This document (which taken by itself cannot be considered conclusive) is about as strong a piece of evidence as we have seen to the effect that Hanoi is not now considering a cease-fire and would, in fact, reject one.[3]

[3] Nixon underlined the last five words of this memorandum and wrote the following marginal note: "K—Perhaps we should examine again—(not right now) a cease fire offer—for *propaganda* only—(However I believe it should come from *Thieu* not from us & only if he feels he could do so without *weakening* his internal situation)."

164. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, December 27, 1969.

SUBJECT

Cambodian Border

At Tab A is an interesting letter from Marshall Green expressing concern about the political implications of shelling across the Cambodian border and suggesting that a concerted effort be made to minimize such incidents.[2]

Green suggests moving Civilian Irregular Defense Group bases out of enemy artillery range, and indicates, inter alia, that:

—In less than a month there have been ten major incidents involving these bases.

—Cambodia may feel forced to break relations if the incidents continue at the present level, and may ask for a Security Council meeting, which Yost believes would prove particularly embarrassing.

Green anticipates that some military leaders may object to his proposal. Field commanders probably will not want to sacrifice the advantages of forward position for these bases and may point out that

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970. Secret. Sent for information.

[2] Tab A, a letter from Green to Kissinger, December 15, is attached but not printed.

moving these camps out of mortar range will not protect them from long-range artillery and rocket attacks launched from Cambodia.

I do not want to prejudge the issue. However, in the wake of our more forceful actions inside the Cambodian border, relations with Sihanouk actually seem to have improved. Sihanouk also appears to be much more concerned with what is known publicly than what the U.S. actually does. Therefore, a public sign of weakness on our part might hinder our relations. Nevertheless, I believe Green's suggestion deserves careful consideration by all concerned agencies.[3] I am asking for comments from others concerned.

[3] Nixon underlined portions of the two previous sentences and wrote: "1. Don't tell him what we are *really* doing—! 2. It might be well to do more—in the non public area if possible."

165. Memorandum From the Assistant Deputy Director for Coordination in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (McAfee) to the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Green)[1]

Washington, December 30, 1969.

SUBJECT

Minutes of the Meeting of the 303 Committee, 23 December 1969

The minutes of the meeting of the 303 Committee, dated 30 December 1969, contained the following items:

2. *South Vietnam—The Provincial Reconnaissance UNIT (PRU) Program*

a. Mr. Nelson amplified on the CIA paper dated 11 December 1969[2] and answered a number of questions.

b. The members were unanimous that the program is effective and should be continued through FY 1971 in order to consummate its orderly Vietnamization.

[1] Source: Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, Country Files, Vietnam, 1969–1970. Secret; Eyes Only.

[2] Document 157.

c. The principal problem involved General Creighton Abrams' desire for a phased withdrawal of the 101 military advisors from the program as soon as possible and in no event later than October 1970. Mr. Packard, who was out of the city and unable to be present, had previously expressed his support for the program as well as his wish to see all military advisors withdrawn as soon as possible, but had indicated that the precise timing of withdrawal might be negotiable.

d. It was the unanimous view of those present that it would be a serious mistake to withdraw all military advisors prior to final turnover of the program to the South Vietnamese in June 1971. In order to maintain adequate supervision and complete the orderly Vietnamization of the program, the following phased withdrawal of personnel was agreed upon, subject to Mr. Packard's later concurrence.

e. The number of military advisors will be phased down from the present 101 to 60 by the end of March 1970. This strength of 60 will be maintained until the end of October 1970 and then reduced to 30 advisors who will remain through the end of the program in June 1971. In the meantime, CIA will increase its advisors by 10 in order to partially offset the loss of military advisors.

3. South Vietnam—Progress Report on Covert Media Activities

Following Mr. Nelson's briefing and a discussion of the covert media activities described in the CIA paper dated 11 December 1969,[3] the Committee approved the continuation of these activities including the proposed funding level for FY 1970.

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[3] This progress report to the 303 Committee described covert media activity in Vietnam to encourage popular support of U.S. and GVN policy objectives in South Vietnam. The program concentrated on placement of news stories and editorials in South Vietnamese publications, subsidizing one South Vietnamese publication, and efforts to improve journalism, press standards, and South Vietnam's chaotic newspaper distribution system. The cost was $46,400 for FY 1970. (Department of State, INR/IL Historical Files, 303/40 Committee Records, Subject Files, Vietnam, 1965–1969)

166. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Senior Defense Attaché in France (Walters)[1]

Washington, January 1, 1970.

Following is a message for you to convey to Xuan Thuy or Mai Van Bo on January 12.[2] It should be conveyed orally—no written message should be left with them.

Begin Message. My government has studied with the greatest care the communication you delivered to me on December 12.[3] As Mr. Kissinger said on August 4,[4] my government believes that the matters discussed between him and the North Vietnamese Minister Xuan Thuy should go beyond the framework of the plenary meetings at the Majestic Hotel and the private meetings held with members of our delegation, both as to substance and procedure. The purpose of such meetings is to produce the framework for a rapid solution of the conflict on a basis fair to all.

It is in this spirit that my government continues to stand ready for a meeting between Mr. Kissinger and Minister Xuan Thuy. If your side wishes also to talk in this spirit of going beyond the existing framework, we suggest you propose a time and place for such a meeting. *End Message.*

After reading this message, you should indicate that it would be preferable to find a date over a weekend, in order to limit speculation about my absence from Washington. If they propose a date, you should say that I cannot come to Paris before February 8.

With regard to the place for a meeting, you should offer to provide a secure location. The meeting could not be held at the North Vietnamese compound, which for this purpose is an object of too much public interest. We are confident a secret, secure location acceptable to both sides can be found. If they suggest other locations at this meeting, you can indicate again our desire for a place which would provide

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's Files—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. II. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Drafted by Kissinger and William Watts on December 31, 1969; Nixon approved an earlier almost identical draft of this memorandum when Kissinger sent it to him under a covering memorandum of December 30, 1969. Kissinger informed the President that the message would, "place the ball in the North Vietnamese court" and leave it to them "to propose a time and a place." (Ibid.)

[2] Conveyed by Walters to Xuan Thuy in Paris on January 14; see Document 169.

[3] See the attachment to Document 159.

[4] See the attachment to Document 106.

secrecy and security for both sides, and state you will report their suggestions to Washington and provide them with our answer soon.

If they suggest I meet with lesser-ranking representatives, you should emphasize our expectation that Xuan Thuy himself will participate in such a meeting. We would have no objection to Xuan Thuy's bringing along any other North Vietnamese representatives he wishes.

Henry A. Kissinger[5]

[5] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

167. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, January 7, 1970.

SUBJECT

North Vietnamese Military Strategy

Defense Minister Giap's recent article on Hanoi military strategy[2] has drawn considerable attention, both in the press and in U.S. intelligence reports. The following is a review and analysis of its key features.

Basically, the Giap piece is a general strategic primer for use in briefing party cadres, which carefully gives a nod to every military tactic the Communists have ever found useful in the long course of the war. As such, it does not contain a clear blueprint of future enemy military plans, although from the emphasis given to certain strategic and

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 142, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. XIV–1, January 1–15, 1970. Confidential. Sent for information. Received January 10. This memorandum was based on a "Holdridge/Moor analysis" that the NSC Secretariat sent as telegram WHO00108, January 6, to Nixon in San Clemente. (Ibid.) This memorandum is cited in Kissinger, *White House Years* (p. 435). The CIA prepared an intelligence memorandum analyzing Giap's article and Hanoi's intentions, No. 064/70, on January 14. On February 27 Kissinger sent a copy of the intelligence memorandum to Nixon under a memorandum containing a summary similar to the one in this memorandum. Nixon wrote the following note on the February 27 memorandum: "K. It is important for us to inflict maximum casualties on them now—to engage them not avoid."

[2] Giap published a series of articles in Hanoi between December 14–21, 1969.

tactical principles, it is possible to discern the probable general course Hanoi hopes to follow.

Waiting Out U.S. Withdrawal

Giap's article is probably the clearest evidence yet that the Communists no longer seriously believe they can win the war by direct military means against the present allied military lineup in South Vietnam, with its heavy complement of U.S. combat forces. This comes through in Giap's call for the development of an enemy force thoroughly capable of protracting the conflict, of playing for time, of holding ground, and, hopefully, of consolidating it until the day enough Americans are gone to allow a more even challenge of the GVN's armed forces. Giap thus urges economy in the use of manpower and the building of strong special and guerrilla units which can maintain the VC position without constituting an unbearable burden on the Communists' manpower and material resources.

At the same time, Giap calls for vigorous efforts to cling to the enemy footholds in the countryside, where he notes that the manpower and physical resources necessary to determine the eventual winner in the war are located. This would seem to be an implicit admission of the danger Hanoi sees in continued GVN expansion of its foothold in the rural area via the pacification and Vietnamization programs. Thus, Giap appears to be acknowledging the effectiveness of these programs so far.

Giap also places emphasis on maintaining a strong pace of offensive operations with the initiative remaining on the Communist side. This seems to provide the strategic justification for a strong spring offensive if the enemy believes he can carry it off.

North Vietnam's Role

The role of North Vietnam in this effort, according to Giap, continues to be that of the "great rear area" supplying needed physical support and serving as the channel for bloc assistance. Curiously, there is little to suggest even obliquely that any major new infusion of manpower is planned from North Vietnam. Giap hints, in fact, that Hanoi may be having increasing trouble in adequately maintaining its compulsory draft system.

Some analysts of the Giap piece have professed to see in it evidence of a split in the Hanoi leadership. One is also struck, however, by the very careful balance and mix of tactics developed by Giap, suggesting that no single or extreme military dictum has gained the upper hand in Hanoi, apart from the emphasis on the gradual, step-by-step approach to the war which has been promoted by the North Vietnamese and applied in military tactics in South Vietnam since shortly after the costly Tet 1968 campaign.

In sum, the article gives good reason to believe that there will be no major, unanticipated shift in Communist military tactics during the coming months and that we can anticipate a continuation, along current lines, of the Communist effort to test the success of Vietnamization.

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168. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, January 13, 1970.

SUBJECT

Prisoners of War

Secretary of Defense Laird has sent you a memorandum (Tab A)[2] suggesting specific actions in response to your desire to assign the highest priority to the prisoner of war question. These actions are:

—Your designating a special Presidential emissary (perhaps Arthur Goldberg or Ralph Bunche) who could visit the capitals of countries which previously have expressed a concern for our prisoners of war for the purpose of confirming with appropriate government officials the high priority you have assigned to this matter.

—Alternatively, your designating a joint White House/NSC/Defense team to visit the same areas for the same purpose.

—Instructing our delegation in Paris to develop a series of hard-hitting statements on the prisoner question.

—Your reconsidering the proposal of designating the Vice President as your personal representative on prisoner matters.

—Your continuing, in your speeches and statements, to include prisoner of war references where appropriate.

On December 30 Acting Secretary Richardson forwarded State's comments on Secretary Laird's memorandum (Tab B).[3] He expressed general agreement with the strategy outlined by Secretary Laird, but had the following specific remarks concerning each of Secretary Laird's proposed actions:

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 94, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, U.S. POWs in North Vietnam to April 1970. Secret. Sent for action.

[2] Dated December 20, 1969; attached but not printed.

[3] Attached but not printed.

—The idea of a special Presidential emissary could have merit if the individual were carefully chosen and care taken to assure that his mission did not become enmeshed in other aspects of Vietnam diplomacy.

—The alternative suggestion of a briefing team could also have value. However, the Acting Secretary believed that the State Department should be represented.

—Our delegation in Paris has already raised the prisoner issue repeatedly in the talks. This approach should, of course, be continued.

—The Acting Secretary referred to his previous comments on the possibility of putting the Vice President in charge of prisoner matters, and while welcoming the Vice President's interest in this matter, expressed the view that your own demonstrated personal interest would be the best way of showing that this is a subject of highest importance.

—Accordingly, the Acting Secretary joined in the hope in the last point of Secretary Laird's memorandum that you will continue to speak out on prisoners of war, and offered to provide material for this purpose as appropriate.

Although State's reaction to Secretary Laird's proposed actions suggests some minor reservations, I believe the Acting Secretary's response is fairly close to the line suggested by Secretary Laird. I consider the designation of a special Presidential emissary as useful, but agree with State that the selection must be a careful and judicious one. For example, Arthur Goldberg does not impress me as being an appropriate choice in view of his opposition to your Vietnam policy. The suggestion of a special briefing team to perform the same function as a special Presidential envoy if a suitable candidate cannot be found also appears desirable. As noted in Acting Secretary Richardson's comments, I believe that State should be represented. The delegation in Paris of course should continue to press the North Vietnamese on the prisoner issue. Concerning the Vice President's role, I feel that this might better be finessed for the time being in favor of stressing the part that you yourself might play in spotlighting your own and the Administration's concern over the treatment of our prisoners. I am sure that you will wish to keep up your personal efforts on behalf of the prisoners, and that materials from State and Defense will be useful in this regard.

Recommendations:[4]

That you authorize State and Defense to nominate a suitable individual to be designated by you as a special Presidential emissary on prisoners of war.

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[4] Nixon approved all the options on January 16. On January 22 Kissinger sent Laird and Rogers a memorandum asking them to take joint action to initiate the first two and last two recommendations. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 94, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, U.S. POWs in North Vietnam to April 1970)

That you authorize the organization of a Defense/White House/NSC/State team to perform the functions of a special Presidential emissary if a suitable candidate cannot be found.

That you authorize the issuance of instructions to our delegation in Paris to continue to press the North Vietnamese on the prisoner issue, and to prepare a series of hard-hitting statements for this purpose.

That you hold in abeyance any change in the Vice President's role with respect to the prisoners.

That you authorize State and Defense to provide materials for your use in dealing with the prisoner issue in speeches and public statements.

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169. Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, January 14, 1970, 5:40 p.m.

K: I just wanted to run thru some information items to you. Walters saw Xuan Thuy today in Paris and gave him a message.[2] They were the friendliest they have ever been. Walters said I wouldn't be available before Feb 8 and they said why so late, why not faster. The reason we said Feb 8 was so we could do it while Bill [Rogers] was out of the country.

Pres: I still think it is a good idea.

K: I just made Walters read something to them. It was to be a framework beyond what was said at the Majestic—if you are willing to talk in the same spirit we suggest you propose a time and place. We suggested Feb 8 and we did not leave a piece of paper with them.

P: But I think the upshot of it is that they want a meeting.

K: That was Walters' impression. They said they would let us know. Whatever they do we will be in good shape. We offered them twice a meeting and whatever they do we are in good shape. If we do go to a meeting they will have to admit they are willing to talk beyond the framework of the Majestic.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 106, Kissinger Office Files, Country Files, Far East, Vietnam, "S" Mister, Vol. 2. No classification marking.

[2] See Document 166.

P: I suppose they will want to take the line they will say what have you got to say. I was reading a couple of nights ago the whole record of Churchill's account on Teheran, Malta and his negotiations with Harriman and what happened in terms of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc. And really it is a shameful record. It is an outrage. I thought Eisenhower was taking the orders from the top but the whole emphasis was on getting along with the Russians whereas Churchill was concerned with re-drawing the map of Europe.

K: He was thinking of what would happen after the war.

P: Right. And the whole thing was the absolute hardness of Stalin during the whole thing. The Russians did not give anything on anything.

K: The Russians got us so focused on victory they never talked about peace.

P: You know that in the days of McCarthy and Jenner they really overstated it but basically they happened to be right. We did screw up the peace.

K: For example, the invasion of Southern France. If those units had been put into the Balkans the whole thing would have been different.

P: I think you should scan through it and see just what happened. He would send a message over and obviously the American President was responding and was responding in an almost unbelievably naive way.

K: And these Kremlinologists were saying just what Thompson told you. You have to be in good faith.

P: Right and Truman turned down a meeting with Churchill first and then came back with the proposition that Truman ought to meet with Stalin first. Well that would have been the most terrible thing. It is well to read this stuff in order to know what we are dealing with now.

K: Hopkins wanted Truman and Roosevelt to be the intermediary between England and Russia, grossly overestimating the British strength and grossly underestimating the Russian intentions.

P: What I am getting it is that I don't know what these clowns want to talk about but the line we take is either they talk or we are going to sit it out. I don't feel this is any time for concession. And mainly because I feel that's the only way we are going to get anywhere is by talking this way.

K: Mr. President I presented these proposals to the meeting of the Special Studies Group today[3] and Elliot Richardson has changed his

[3] Reference is to the January 14 meeting of the Vietnam Special Studies Group; see footnote 4, Document 171.

mind. He says it would be a grave mistake. So we have some support in State. He said if they are willing I think you should take a shot at it on the 8th. I will give to you what I am going to say—it will be a hard time.

P: First, say we have got to talk about a coalition government. Just close the book and walk out. They will say we have got to talk on basically more points than those.

K: If this analysis we have made is correct they are in trouble. That doesn't mean they are not going to hit us this year. They may hit us this year in the Delta and in I Corps. But that will be their last shot.

P: I agree, they may hit us but they haven't got a lot to hit us with, but it isn't like the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge. They don't have the forces to mount any kind of sustained thing.

K: If we had forces in the Delta I won't worry about it all. They may overrun the VN units, but I don't believe it.

P: Well I have been hearing some good reports about the South Vietnamese forces. Don't you agree?

K: I am going to suspend judgment until Haig comes back. But the smart thing for them to do would be to wait until we draw down more forces and wait until next year. If they hit us this year it will mean our analysis is correct and they are losing. One thing I can do is warn them and tell them if there is an offensive there will be no telling what we will do.

P: Yes, they will have to take note of what the President has said and you cannot be [omission in the source text] as to any commitment on that point. And if that is the way they want it that is the way it will be.

[Omitted here is discussion of the Middle East, Nigeria, and the State of the Union Address.]

170. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, January 19, 1970.

SUBJECT

Reporting on Vietnamization

I thought I should send you this memorandum in order to let you know of my hesitations about the optimistic reporting which we are receiving on Vietnamization. This is simply a word of caution; I will be providing you later with a more lengthy memorandum[2] after we have proceeded further in the studies we are making of this question.

My doubts about these optimistic reports are based on three observations:

(1) The North Vietnamese cannot have fought for 25 years only to call it quits without another major effort. This effort could come in many ways—through attacks on American forces, ARVN forces or local forces.[3] But if they had decided not to make the effort, they would presumably have been more forthcoming with regard to negotiations.[4]

(2) We have not seen proof that ARVN has really improved. It may be that the enemy forces have been hurt rather than that ARVN is significantly better than it was in the past. It could be that when the enemy drew back its main forces and cut down its activity in August and September, perhaps because of our threat in Paris at the beginning of August, they under-estimated the effect this would have on their guerrilla forces.

(3) There could be too much pressure from the top for optimistic reporting. This would suggest that you should move soon to name a new Chairman of the JCS. Uncertainty about Wheeler's successor leads to maneuvering by the potential candidates.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 91, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnamization, Vol. II, January 1970–June 1970. Secret; Eyes Only. Initialed by Kissinger. This memorandum is cited in Kissinger, *White House Years,* p. 435.

[2] See Document 171.

[3] In a telephone conversation on January 19 at 6:12 p.m. Kissinger informed the President: "I have just spent an hour with CIA's Chief Analyst [George Carver]. Many things are beginning to bother me. We are only getting infiltration in Laos but not Vietnam. Where are the people? There are lots of trucks." Nixon then expressed the hope that "we are bombing the hell out of those trucks." Kissinger said yes, but wondered if there "was to be a new thrust." The President suggested that "There's nothing left for a thrust." (Transcript of telephone conversation, January 19; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 361, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

[4] Nixon wrote the following comment in the margin next to this paragraph: "makes sense."

171. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, January 22, 1970.

SUBJECT

The Situation in the Countryside of South Vietnam

The Vietnam Special Studies Group analysis[2] of the situation in the countryside is producing promising results. Last week, the Group met and accepted without dissent a comprehensive assessment of this subject. The principal findings of this effort are condensed below. Because of the importance of this subject, you may want to also read the fuller treatment of this analysis enclosed at Tab A.[3]

I believe that the concentrated analytical effort that has gone into this study and the fact that its results were very favorably accepted by the community suggest that the situation in the countryside is accurately described by the paper. We are now broadening the effort to include more provinces and sending five analysts to Vietnam to check their findings on the ground.

The Control Situation

About 11 million people, some 62 percent of South Vietnam total population live in the countryside. A primary objective of the VC/NVA strategy has been to gain control of the countryside, thereby surrounding the cities so that they "fall like ripe fruit." The GVN has also sought to control this rural population. The principal conflict between the VC and GVN is over the control of the countryside that could enable either side to have access to and deny the other side the benefits of using the countryside for its own purposes.

The essence of control in South Vietnam is that the GVN and Viet Cong exercise it through both political and military organizations.

Therefore, the best indication of control is to be gained from the strength of the GVN and VC political and military organizations that

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 118, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group. Secret. Sent for information. Nixon wrote at the top of the memorandum: "Excellent *analysis—Keep on top of it.*" A draft of this study with Kissinger's queries and comments is ibid.

[2] Laurence Lynn and Robert Sanson of the NSC staff led a working group of the VSSG that studied 12 of 44 provinces to determine the accuracy of assessment of Government of Viet-Nam control over the rural population. For Kissinger's account of the drafting of the study, see *White House Years*, pp. 434–435.

[3] Attached but not printed.

affect the population. In this sense, control should be defined as that level of combined political and military strength within the population that *when possessed by one side excludes effective strength by the other side.*

Based on this approach to understanding control, today's situation in the countryside is found to have developed in three broad phases:

—*The Control Stalemate.* From 1964 through the Tet offensive of early 1968, the control situation was relatively stable with the GVN controlling 20% of the rural population compared to VC's 35%. The remaining 45% was under control of both sides.

—*The Viet Cong General Offensive.* During the Tet offensive, GVN control fell by 5% and VC control rose by about 7%, but well over half of the GVN losses were recovered by October 1968 despite the VC May and August offensives.

—*The GVN Control Upswing.* With low levels of enemy activity and a renewed effort on pacification, the GVN's control began to increase rapidly in October 1968. This control upswing has continued through September 1969 when the GVN controlled about 55% of the rural population, the VC controlled only 7%, and the remaining 38% was under the influence of both sides.

This represents a dramatic change in the status of the control war since September 1968: GVN control has increased from 20% to 55%, while VC control has fallen from 35% to 7%. This means that the *GVN now controls some six million rural inhabitants; but there are still five million rural inhabitants whom it does not control and who are thus subject to some degree of enemy influence.*

Factors Causing Control Changes

These conclusions regarding the situation in the countryside raise the critical issue of whether the GVN can continue to achieve control gains or whether its recently achieved control gains are likely to be reversed.

To examine this issue, we analyzed the effect on the control war of main forces, local security forces, enemy strategy and tactics, and other important factors influencing change in the countryside. Our conclusions were based on in-depth studies of five provinces selected because of their key role in the war or because they were representative of general conditions in major areas of the country.

Friendly Main Force Pressure

In four out of the five provinces studied, it was *the vigorous offensive activity of U.S. forces more than ARVN forces which gave the Allies the upper hand in the main force war during 1968.* After the enemy's main forces were gravely weakened by the Tet and May offensives in most areas, it was principally U.S. units which applied relentless pressure on the enemy throughout the following year. Large enemy formations

were either dispersed or they were forced to retreat to remote jungle bases far from populated areas. Under these conditions, the enemy's local security/control apparatus became highly vulnerable and GVN control gains became possible.

Friendly Local Security Forces

The principal proximate cause of the improved control situation in the past year was *the great shift in the relative strength and effectiveness of GVN and VC local security forces.* Countrywide, RF strength increased 55% and PF 39%. On the other hand, VC guerrilla strength fell by 40% and the infrastructure was also weakened. In most cases, however, GVN local security forces were able to extend GVN control only in the context of a much more favorable Allied posture in the main force war than had existed before 1969.

Enemy Strategy and Tactics

The enemy was able to cause moderate overall deterioration in control by his general offensive strategy in early 1968, but *he evidently lacked the strength to consolidate his gains.* When he was forced to shift to a more or less defensive posture in late 1968, *he lost the initiative in the control war to the GVN.* He is now attempting to reverse the trend through a new protracted war strategy, but thus far without significant effect.

Other Factors

In four of the five provinces studied, there were favorable shifts in political support and the quality of GVN officials, and a sense of GVN momentum developed in the control war. These factors contributed to GVN gains, but we are not yet able to determine the extent of this contribution.

Thus, the two decisive factors in changing the control situation after years of stagnation appear to be the aggressive activity of U.S. main force units and the large increase in strength and effectiveness of GVN local security forces in the face of a largely passive enemy.

Future Prospects for the Countryside

After late 1968, U.S. forces contributed considerably more than ARVN forces to the greatly improved Allied posture in the main force war. At least in the provinces studied, therefore, ARVN prospects for success in taking over the burden of the main force war appear questionable if the enemy is able to rebuild his large units. If there is a further decline in enemy main force strength, however, or a continuation of the status quo, ARVN prospects in this regard are considerably better, especially in view of the 36% increase in ARVN manpower since 1967.

GVN local security forces, on the other hand, have shown both qualitative and quantitative improvement, while Viet Cong guerrillas and infrastructure have declined in numbers and effectiveness. If this trend continues, it will be increasingly difficult for enemy main forces to re-assert their influence in populated areas, and GVN control gains will probably continue. This can occur, however, only in the context of progress—or at least no deterioration—in the main force war.

For the near future, the enemy is likely to continue his strategy of attempting to rebuild both his local control apparatus and his main forces, and to maintain pressure on U.S. and ARVN units to the extent he deems necessary to achieve his goals, probably with economy of force tactics. We are as yet unable to specify the level of effort the enemy must undertake to blunt the GVN pacification initiative, which he is attempting to do at the present time. We suspect this will be a piecemeal effort rather than a massive countryside offensive; and the most likely first target is the Delta. These tentative conclusions are consistent with the themes of COSVN Resolution Nine; that is, they suggest a protracted war strategy. However, the signs we have detected are not inconsistent with a more aggressive effort involving a frontal assault on ARVN and pacification or a concentrated effort to hit selected cities for political reasons.[4]

[4] On January 21 Kissinger sent a memorandum to the Vietnam Special Studies Group, reiterating the importance that the President attached to the study and suggesting a next phase for the study on a priority basis. At a January 14 meeting the Group agreed, according to Kissinger's memorandum, to have the analysts who did the province analysis "verify and extend their results in Vietnam," have the U.S. Mission in Saigon comment on it, study seven additional provinces, develop detailed maps on the control situation in the five provinces and, if possible, in the additional seven, and develop a concise description of the local conditions existing under VC and GVN control. Kissinger requested additional information on VC infrastructure, the role and effectiveness of local forces, contribution of GVN economic assistance and other civil programs towards control, types of activities by each side that affect the other's control, and whether a distinction could be made between the ability of the GVN to maintain control and to expand control. Kissinger suggested the paper should be prepared by early March. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 118, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group)

172. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, January 26, 1970, 11:06–11:56 a.m.

SUBJECT

Laos

PARTICIPANTS

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
Marshall Green
Jonathan Moore

Defense
Richard Ware

CIA
Thomas H. Karamessines
[*name not declassified*]

JCS
Admiral Nels C. Johnson
Colonel Bennie L. Davis

NSC Staff
John Holdridge
Colonel Robert Behr
Keith Guthrie

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

1. *B–52 Strikes in the Plaine des Jarres.* Mr. Holdridge is to collaborate with Mr. Moore in preparing a memorandum to the President setting forth the three options presented in the Laos Ad Hoc Group study and the agency views and arguments, as discussed at the WSAG meeting. The memorandum should set forth the military argument for action and the two different political arguments—one favorable to a strike and the other opposed. Mr. Kissinger will recommend that the President consult in advance with Secretary Laird and that if the President believes a strike desirable, he also talk with Secretary Rogers before making a decision.[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–002, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Nodis. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room. Robert Behr of the NSC staff sent these minutes to Kissinger under cover of a memorandum of February 23; that memorandum indicates Kissinger saw the minutes on March 27. (Ibid.) Copies of the minutes were also sent to U. Alexis Johnson, Nutter, Karamessines, and Vice Admiral Johnson.

[2] The memorandum was apparently not prepared because of opposition from Rogers and the President's unavailability; see Document 183 and Kissinger, *White House Years,* pp. 451–452.

2. *Chinese Roadbuilding*. Mr. Kissinger will try to get a decision from the President within the next few days.[3]

Mr. Kissinger opened the meeting with a request for a review of the circumstances that led to the holding of a WSAG meeting at this time.

Mr. Green explained that Ambassador Godley had asked for decisions on both the matters on the agenda.

Mr. Kissinger suggested that B–52 strikes—as the more urgent matter—be discussed first.

B–52 Strikes in the Plaine des Jarres

At Mr. Kissinger's request, Mr. Green and Mr. Moore explained the reasons why an immediate decision was needed on a B–52 strike. The concentrated target provided by a recently identified North Vietnamese headquarters in the Plaine des Jarres was likely to disperse within a few days. MACV was prepared to launch a strike in about 24 hours, and Ambassador Godley would require advance notice in order to coordinate with Souvanna.

Mr. [*name not declassified*] briefed the group on the nature of the target. Intelligence showed a major North Vietnamese headquarters had been established in the Plaine des Jarres. There was no solid information about the number of troops who might be in the target area or the timing of any attack which the North Vietnamese might be planning. However, the available indicators were similar to those which had preceded previous major communist offensives. On the question of troops in the target area, Mr. Moore pointed out that intelligence did not conclusively show a concentration was present, while Admiral Johnson said that Ambassador Godley had referred to 4,000 to 5,000 troops.

Mr. [*name not declassified*] explained that it was possible that there were this many troops in the area, although this could not be conclusively proved from the available data.

Colonel Davis explained that MACV was proposing six B–52 strikes, for which area reconnaissance had already been undertaken the preceding day (January 25). The enemy threat to the B–52's was no greater than that involved in previous strikes in southern Laos. If the strike were to be made the following day (January 27), MACV would have to be notified by midnight January 26–27, and Ambassador Godley two hours earlier. Ideally, the military would like to have a decision by 6:00 p.m., January 26. If not launched at the earliest time proposed, the strike would have to be put off at intervals of 24 hours, since

[3] See Document 174.

it was necessary to fly under cover of darkness for security against MIG attacks.

Mr. Kissinger asked if the reconnaissance flights had been observed by the North Vietnamese. Colonel Davis and Admiral Johnson indicated that there was some evidence that the North Vietnamese may have detected the reconnaissance flights and that they would know that B–52's were involved.

Mr. Kissinger then stated the options as put forth by the Ad Hoc Group: (1) B–52 strikes; (2) B–52 strikes accompanied by political signals of a deescalatory nature; (3) no B–52 strikes at the present time. He observed that to take no action would be tantamount to not using the B–52's, since no suitable target would be available for them once the North Vietnamese offensive begins.

Mr. Kissinger then asked individual members for their views.

Admiral Johnson said the JCS favored the strike.

Mr. Green said that the State Department was opposed. By launching a strike in advance of a North Vietnamese offensive, we would be taking the responsibility for escalating the conflict in Laos, and we would have problems with Congressional and press critics in this country. It was important to use all our influence to get the Laotian problem back on a political track. Ambassador Godley's January 25 conversation with Souvanna indicated we might be able to get the RLG to take the initiative in talking to the communists about reducing hostilities. There was danger that the North Vietnamese would interpret a B–52 strike as indicating the U.S. no longer wished to maintain the 1962 accords, especially since the Plaine des Jarres area was territory which had long been under their control.

Mr. Kissinger asked whether anyone had requested us to make the strike and what action the North Vietnamese might take in response to a strike. Mr. Green thought that Souvanna would probably favor a strike but observed that the Laos often failed to put two and two together and did not see the interrelation between military and political actions. The strike would only create a crisis atmosphere. Its military usefulness should not be overrated. We have always realized that the North Vietnamese could occupy northern Laos at anytime. Even if the strike were successful, the communists could bring in more troops, and they might indeed be stimulated by a strike to take stronger action against the friendly Lao forces.

Mr. Ware said that his staff had recommended against the strike because of the political drawbacks. However, on the basis of a conversation that morning with Secretary Laird, he thought it would be advisable for Mr. Kissinger to talk to Laird before a decision was made. Mr. Kissinger said he had talked with Laird that morning and understood his position.

Mr. Karamessines said that CIA favored the strike but with accompanying diplomatic initiatives to minimize its escalatory effect. Mr. Kissinger pointed out that there was no time to take any diplomatic action. Mr. Karamessines went on to say that a strike was desirable to preserve the capabilities of friendly forces in Laos, particularly Vang Pao's Meo troops, and to bolster the morale of Souvanna's Government.

Mr. Kissinger summed up the problem as one of determining the military effectiveness and the political implications of a strike. From a political standpoint, we had to consider that a strike might give the enemy a pretext for stepping up its military campaign. On the other hand, if we failed to strike, the enemy could misinterpret our inaction as a sign of weakness.

Mr. Kissinger then asked about the effect which a B–52 strike might have on North Vietnamese objectives. Would it cause them to delay their attack? Did their build-up indicate that they had already decided to launch an offensive? Would they publicize the attack?

Mr. Moore said it was possible but not certain that a strike would delay an enemy attack. Mr. Green pointed out that the Plaine des Jarres is not the key area, since we know the communists have the capability to occupy it. What is of critical importance is that they not attack the area around Sam Thong and Long Tieng. While they might in any event attack beyond the Plaines des Jarres, a B–52 strike could stir up a hornet's nest and cause the communists to step up their offensive. It is important that we try to continue the delicate balance between communist and friendly forces which has been maintained over the years in Laos. Coming on top of the recent Vang Pao offensive in the Plaine des Jarres, a B–52 strike will convince the communists that we do not want to maintain the 1962 settlement. Mr. Green again emphasized that the area in question was enemy controlled territory, and that we could consider stronger measures such as B–52 strikes if the enemy forces got closer to regions controlled by our friends.

Mr. Moore added that it was also important to consider the signal we will give to Souvanna. It was in our interest to influence his government in the direction of political action rather than military measures.

Mr. Karamessines reiterated the importance of supporting Souvanna and the Meos, who constituted the only friendly fighting force in Laos. We could not expect the North Vietnamese to negotiate. They wanted to destroy Vang Pao by taking the Plaines des Jarres and going on to Long Tieng. This would mean a defeat for us and leave us with a refugee problem.

Mr. Holdridge and Colonel Davis pointed out that the Plaines des Jarres target area was more lucrative than ones that had been hit with previous B–52 strikes in southern Laos.

Mr. Kissinger directed that Mr. Holdridge collaborate with Mr. Moore in preparing a memorandum to the President setting forth the three options and listing agency views and arguments, as discussed at the meeting. Mr. Kissinger would recommend to the President that he talk with Secretary Laird before making a decision and that if the President was inclined to support a strike, he also consult in advance with Secretary Rogers. The memorandum should set forth the military argument for action and the two different political arguments—one favorable to a strike and the other opposed.

The Group then discussed the SNIE being prepared on the objectives of the North Vietnamese in Laos and their possible reactions to developments there.[4] Mr. Karamessines noted that it was now proposed to delay completion of the study for an additional week. All agreed that the study was pertinent to the question at hand but that there was no way of completing it in time for it to be considered in connection with the President's decision on B–52 strikes.

Mr. Kissinger said that in considering the North Vietnamese reaction it was important to separate what they said in public from what they actually believed. Knowing about our Congressional problems, they would undoubtedly publicize any B–52 strike, and we might have to face the problem of how to deal with criticism from the Hill. However, the crucial question was how the communists would view a strike in terms of setting their future objectives in Laos. The key issue was whether a B–52 strike would increase or decrease the likelihood of a communist advance beyond the Plaine des Jarres. Mr. Green said this question would be argued either way.

Chinese Roadbuilding

Mr. Kissinger said the issue was primarily whether a blocking force should be placed below Muong Houn to prevent Chinese roadbuilding activities.

Mr. Moore added that there was also a question of the extent of U.S. involvement in any action that might be taken.

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[4] Reference is to SNIE 58–70, "The Communist View of the Situation in Laos," February 5, which concluded: "Hanoi almost certainly wants to establish hegemony over Laos, but subordinates this goal to its higher priority interest in establishing its control over South Vietnam"; Moscow and Beijing realized that their influence on Hanoi's policy in Laos was limited; stepped up PL/NVN military activity during 1968–1969 was to counter US-supported RLG military initiatives and to prepare for any settlement in Laos; Hanoi wished "to preserve the symbolic authority of the 1962 settlement"; and finally, during the next few months Hanoi would try to recapture the Plain of Jar and eliminate Vang Pao and his forces, thereby forcing Laos to accept a settlement which would halt U.S. bombing in Laos. (Central Intelligence Agency, NIC Files, Job 79–R1012A, NIEs and SNIEs.)

In response to Mr. Kissinger's question Mr. Moore said that a decision was needed as soon as possible. Ambassador Godley had asked for a decision last week, and we have intelligence that Chinese survey teams are already moving south of Muong Houn.

The Group then discussed the forces which might be involved. Mr. Moore said that the Vietnam Ad Hoc group had concluded that a large 1,500 man force of CIA irregulars would create many problems and contribute little toward easing the situation. This proposal had been included primarily because it was suggested by Ambassador Godley. Admiral Johnson agreed that forces of this sort were not required and Mr. Green pointed out that it would take troops away from the defense of other areas.

At Mr. Kissinger's request Mr. Green outlined the rationale for taking some action in response to the Chinese roadbuilding campaign. The roadbuilding was in an area not traditionally controlled by either side. It affected a region close to Thailand. It also provided the Chinese an opportunity to increase their influence with the Pathet Lao.

Mr. Moore explained the option preferred by the Laos Ad Hoc Group. This called for hit-and-run commando attacks which would demonstrate opposition to the roadbuilding but avoid the risk of getting into a real battle involving the Chinese. In response to Mr. Kissinger's question Mr. Moore and Admiral Johnson said that the objective was not to make a stand in the area but merely to discourage the roadbuilding activity.

Mr. Karamessines said that the CIA favored the commando operation.

Mr. Green noted that a small initiative would help to keep the situation under control and reduce the risk that Souvanna might provoke a clash with the Chinese. He had already condoned a Lao Air Force strike in the area. Mr. Moore noted that Ambassador Godley wanted to utilize U.S. Air Force strikes to back up the commando activity.

Mr. Ware raised the question of Thai concern about the roadbuilding, and Admiral Johnson noted that Ambassador Unger had advocated making some response. Mr. Green said that the Thai ought to help out; however, Mr. Karamessines pointed out that the Laos were not anxious to have the Thai in this region.

Mr. Kissinger concluded by saying that he would try to get a decision from the President in the next few days on what to do about the Chinese roadbuilding.

173. Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, January 26, 1970, 3:30 p.m.

K: We have the following problem. The NVN are building up a large concentration in Northern Laos. We could clobber them in the Plain des Jars. Mel has identified a target and he would like to hit it. In one of those hook ups, it got into State. State is opposed and Bill wants it brought to your attention.[2] There are 14,000 troops in a tight concentration and we expect them to fan out in the next 24 to 48 hours. We should hit them tonight. We may be still able to do it tomorrow. Mel has his man on the Interdepartmental Working Group side with State and he is really in favor of hitting them. The thing that worries Bill is that we have not used B–52's in Northern Laos before. There were no targets there. If it gets to Fulbright, all hell breaks loose. If we don't do it, they will push the force across the Mekong. You don't want to consider this this afternoon. If you don't want to consider it, I will stop the letters.[3] If you do, I could collect the letters and talk to you tonight.

P: I don't want to spend much time on it. But is there a strong argument? What are Mel's arguments for it.

K: A large concentration.

P: Is he really for it or not?

K: He says he is.

P: Are they essential or indispensable? What does he think of the State Department arguments?

K: They are not essential or indispensable. But if we don't they may loose the fear they have and start the offensive all over. It's a close one.

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 361, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File. No classification marking.

[2] Kissinger discussed the issue earlier on January 26 with Laird at 9:25 a.m., with Rogers at 10:25 a.m., and again with Rogers at 1 p.m. Laird told Kissinger that he was in favor of the strike, but had informed Defense representatives at the WSAG meeting (Document 172) to oppose it. Kissinger asked, "Are you for it?" Laird responded, "Yes, but not in that channel." Rogers worried that the "escalation" would "play right into Fulbright's hand." In the latter conversation, Rogers suggested that "The military always says they are going to be effective" and suggested, "we could do it later" with "other planes." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 361, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

[3] Reference is to memoranda from Rogers (see footnote 3, Document 183) and Laird to the President. Laird's memorandum has not been found, but he reiterated his reasons for the strike in a backchannel message of February 14; see footnote 8, Document 183.

P: I don't know. I really cannot sense what the real problem is and what there is in it for us.

K: They could be just [omission in the source text] Plain des Jars. If they can push over the '62 agreements with impunity then agreements in VN will not have any meaning.

P: What if it comes out? Will they raise the point (?)

K: Excessive American involvement in Laos.

P: Can we say they are heading for us?

K: No.

P: It's fighting the war in Laos and that's the problem.

K: It's our general position. We cannot make a case that it helps it directly.

P: You get Mel and Bill to chat a bit about it and we will see what their recommendation is. I would lean for it generally but it has to be pretty persuasive if they are not coming at us directly.

K: You have until midnight tonight.

P: Everyone knows we are bombing in Laos. Does the Laos Government request it?

K: Yes and the Thais want it.

P: Get it together and I will see if I have time. But not before 9:30.[4]

[4] The next day, January 27, Kissinger told Laird that "On that northern target, he [Nixon] would like to do, but not on such short notice." Kissinger continued, "We have to let this target go and have a meeting on giving you authority to hit with B–52s in that area when they develop." Laird responded that the President "was after me to hit target there", so he would order tactical air strikes. Laird continued: "it's the best target we've had since I became Secretary of Defense—they should start hitting it now. Four thousand troops won't stay together that long." Laird complained that "Bill Rogers is raising hell with me as if I were irresponsible." Kissinger told Laird: "The President is on your side." Laird countered: "He's usually on my side, but I usually don't get anywhere. I appreciate the sympathy, though." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 361, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

174. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, January 31, 1970.

SUBJECT

Lao Request for US Support for Operation Against Chinese Road Building in Laos

Prime Minister Souvanna and the King have been pressing us to use CIA-sponsored guerrilla forces to take action against Chinese road building activity in Laos which appears intended to extend a motorable road from Muong Houn in north-central Laos to Pak Beng on the Mekong (see map at Tab A).[2] This road already extends from the Chinese border to Muong Houn. The Lao, and also the Thai, are greatly concerned over the possibility that the Communists could use the road to move strong forces to the line of the Mekong. If the Communists should do so, not only would they improve greatly their strategic position in Laos, their penetration of strategic areas of Northern Thailand where Communist subversion is already a serious problem would be facilitated. The Thai, of course, are greatly concerned. Ambassador Godley in Vientiane has supported in principle Souvanna's request that something be done. The RLG itself does not have units which could effectively carry out this sort of operation.

The problem is complicated due to the fact that in 1962 the Lao Government asked for Chinese assistance in building roads, and Souvanna himself indicated in 1968 that he could see no basic objection to Chinese construction of a road that went from the Chinese border no further than Muong Houn. Aerial photography has now picked up survey activity south of Muong Houn, and Souvanna wants to move now. He has already sanctioned a Lao air strike against the road north of Muong Houn, and has repeatedly urged us to support him in establishing a blocking position on the ground between Muong Houn and Pak Beng. (We have urged him to make no more air strikes for the time being.)

The Options

The WSAG on January 26 considered Souvanna's request.[3] Three basic options were discussed:

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Files, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–071, WSAG Meeting, Laos, January 26, 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action.

[2] Attached but not printed.

[3] See Document 172.

1. Inserting a 1,500 man force, drawn primarily from irregulars but also including Lao army units, to control the area between Muong Houn and Pak Beng; tactical air support would be with Lao air force T–28s, but USAF tactical aircraft might be required if the force were challenged. Air America would provide aircraft, but there would be no American advisors on the ground.

2a. Mounting small scale hit-and-run guerrilla operations to strike at facilities or personnel or mine the construction area south of Muong Houn; air support again would be with Lao air force T–28s.

2b. Option 2a, with the addition of USAF tactical air support on enemy targets south of Muong Houn.

3. No military action but inducing the Lao to undertake a political initiative against the road.

The Issues

Option 1 is what Souvanna wants. Its advantage would be that it would show firmness of purpose and might at least temporarily stop the Chinese due to the increased military effort they would need to deal with it. It would also improve our relations with the Lao and Thai. However, it risks a confrontation with China, would create a second front of some magnitude, might be interpreted by the enemy as US opposition to a political settlement since the territory is considered by the Communists to be on "their side" of the 1962 line, and most importantly, would draw manpower and resources away from the critical Plain of Jars front which the Lao cannot spare. The force would not be large enough to block a really determined effort by the other side to push on.

Option 2a is a compromise proposal. Its advantages are that it would signal opposition to road construction beyond Muong Houn, would require only a moderate investment of resources, and would minimize US involvement. Lao forces needed elsewhere would be less affected. It would have most of the advantages of Option 1, including satisfying the Lao and Thai. Its disadvantages are that its size would definitely be inadequate to stop a really determined effort and the Lao air force support might be both insufficient and uncontrollable in terms of where they bombed (e.g. north of Muong Houn, which we want to avoid).

Option 2b would have the advantage of providing adequate and controllable air support. On the other hand, it would increase US involvement in a new area in Laos and would have the potential for bringing a direct US-Chinese confrontation.

Option 3 would underline the US and Lao desire for a political rather than a military solution and might advance the opening of political talks. Its disadvantages are that it would neither satisfy the Lao

and Thai nor deter the Communists, who might read it as a sign of weakness. Moreover, Souvanna might then take action on his own which could have adverse political and military repercussions.

(At Tab B is a paper submitted to the WSAG by the Interagency Ad Hoc Group on Laos which outlines the options and issues in greater detail.)[4]

The WSAG on balance decided to support Option 2a. A deciding factor was Souvanna's urgent desire for help and determination to go ahead without us in its absence; in fact he has said that unless he hears from us in 48 hours he will take action on his own. In view of his lack of ground forces, this would probably mean stepped-up attacks by Lao T–28s against the Chinese north of Muong Houn. I believe that Option 2a is the best of the courses open to us in view of the desirability of deterring the Communists on another front, or at least forcing them to reveal more of their intentions, and of reassuring the Lao and the Thai that we will stand by them against a threat which to them is very real. Moreover, the Lao resources would not be strained and our own role would be minimal. The risk of a US-Chinese confrontation would not be very great. Our contribution would be to provide a helicopter lift for the guerrillas and to airlift supplies. We of course have no assurance that Option 2a would be sufficient to cope with the situation, but we stand to delay a further extension of the road and learn more of Chinese, North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao objectives.

Recommendation:[5]

That you authorize the adoption of Option 2a, as outlined above.

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[4] The paper was attached to a January 24 covering memorandum from Moore to Kissinger. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–071, WSAG Meeting, Laos, January 26, 1970)

[5] The President wrote "2b" on the approval line. Kissinger informed Laird, Rogers, and Helms of Nixon's decision in a February 5 memorandum, and on behalf of the President directed that the operation should be undertaken provided the Royal Lao Government was willing "to put on record, in a form that the United States Government may cite as necessary," that there was no outstanding request by the Royal Lao Government for road construction by the Chinese. (Ibid.)

175. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, January 31, 1970, 1140Z.

1515. Subject: Discussion with President Thieu January 30—Corruption. Ref: Saigon 1514.[2]

1. Having set the stage for my remarks on corruption, I had a very frank talk with Thieu saying that I felt that of the three problems I had mentioned (reftel) corruption "is now the number one problem". I then said that this was his problem, but it was also ours. The inability of the GVN to do anything about high level corruption is sharply affecting my ability—the American ability—to help you. The problem is thus a problem of Vietnamese-American relations.

2. I said that during the last few months the McClellan Committee had been holding hearings on black market currency transactions in Viet-Nam. Many Americans had been named, as well as Indians, Chinese and Vietnamese operators. These names were well known to the GVN authorities. The losses to the RVN were spectacular, running to many tens of millions of dollars a year. Congressional and press criticism had been so sharp that the President had ordered establishment of a high-level inter-agency committee in Washington to deal with this problem.

3. I said that unless there is some real progress in the attack on corruption I see serious trouble ahead—politically, economically, and in his relations with the US.

4. I said the GVN had asked US for more assistance for their forces in food and housing as they take on more responsibilities. In the present mood of the Congress it would be very difficult for the President

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 15–1 VIET S. Secret; Nodis. On January 12 Nixon asked White House Staff Assistant John Brown to send Kissinger a memorandum asking that Bunker do "some quiet work" on corruption in South Vietnam. (Memorandum from Lake to Brown, January 21; ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 142, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. XIV–2, 16–30 January 1970) Kissinger dispatched a backchannel message to Bunker asking him what could be done about corruption in South Vietnam. (Telegram WH003 to Bunker, January 21; ibid., Box 410, Backchannel Messages, Southeast Asia, 1970) Bunker responded in backchannel message 622 from Saigon, January 23, to the White House for Kissinger's eyes only, on the ways to combat it much as he explained the problem and solutions to Thieu as reported in telegram 1515 from Saigon. (Ibid.) In a January 26 memorandum to Nixon, Kissinger summarized Bunker's initial response to the request for "quiet work" on corruption and indicated Bunker planned to raise the issue with Thieu in the next few days. (Ibid., Box 142, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, Vol. XIV–2, 16–30 January 1970)

[2] Telegram 1514, January 31, transmitted a summary of the Thieu–Bunker conversation of January 30 on issues other than corruption. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 15–1 VIET S)

to get more assistance unless the GVN demonstrated its willingness to tap available sources of revenue which are now outside of its control. As an example I cited that the revenue loss from black market cigarettes alone may be as high as 2.5 billion piasters a year. One Vietnamese factory had to shut down because of the flood of foreign cigarettes into the black market. Far greater amounts were lost to the government through illegal currency dealings, some of which seemed to take place with the tolerance of the authorities.

5. We on our part were trying to do some things to limit American involvement in corruption. Our mission had long had an illegal practices committee to examine reports of black marketing, illegal currency operations, pilfering of government supplies, etc. I understood that within the last few days he had formed a committee on corruption to be chaired by the Minister of Finance and including the Ministers of Economy and Interior, the Governor of the National Bank, and the Director General of the National Police. I termed this a constructive move and suggested that the two committees work together.

6. We had also taken drastic steps here to control the use of military payment certificates, US currency, travelers' checks and bank drafts by American and allied foreign payments to third country nationals were now made in piasters; any dollar payments went to the government and were converted into their currencies. We no longer allowed allied forces to use any American PX, they now had their own PX's and each was rationed in terms of supplies. Strong controls had been established over all allied clubs and messes in relation to cigarettes, liquor and food purchases. Gift items now had to be mailed at the time of purchase and could not be taken away. The effect of all this had been to greatly reduce American supplies which could go into the black market.

7. American soldiers or government or contract employees who were caught illegally engaging in currency transactions were tried and punished, and civilians are sent home. However, I said, there were still hundreds of Americans legally or illegally in the country who were deeply engaging in the black market. We had asked the Prime Minister a month ago to see that these men were deported and not allowed to return, and we had offered to cooperate with him. I regretted to say nothing had been done.

8. I went on to say that obviously there were many aspects to corruption. It could not be entirely eliminated, but it could be greatly reduced by a variety of measures. Obviously Thieu had to decide where he could move with vigor and where he could not do all that he would like to do. Among the most glaring kinds of trafficking that had come to our attention I listed the following:

9. First, there were the notorious organized rings that operate at Tan Son Nhut and in the ports to bring in goods and smuggle currency.

These rings were obviously protected by high government officials. Customs and fraud supervision squads could do little and were not to be blamed. Obviously it was a tolerated racket. The result, I said, was that the GVN was losing billions in revenue and the illegal demand for dollars was weakening the piaster.

10. Another large demand for black market currency was coming from the practice of under-invoicing which deprived the GVN of much needed customs revenue. So-called travelers to and from Hong Kong, Vientiane, Bangkok, and Singapore are engaged in a large traffic of goods for which little or no customs are paid as well as in illegal currency and gold movements. Some of this may provide revenue for the government in an indirect way, but most of it clearly just goes into the private pockets of individuals with protectors in high places.

11. We had been talking about the need for an accommodation rate and the benefits that would accrue to the government if foreigners would start changing their money legally. But what was the use of establishing a more realistic rate if the piaster was constantly being further weakened so that the black market dollar rate continued to rise? It could be brought down, I said, only by a vigorous campaign on many fronts including closing down the smuggling of goods at Tan Son Nhut and the ports, deporting foreigners who were here on the black market, etc. There is real danger that the piaster rate may rise even higher; if that happens it can create dangerous economic and political problems for the government.

12. In short, I said, some radical measures were required against the large-scale corruption which was running the economy and sapping the political strength of the country. Too many people were bleeding the economy for their private benefit. All this was gravely impairing the GVN's image abroad and especially in the US. Finally, I said, corruption was a moral problem for it involved the whole question of morale—of the military, of the government servants, of the people generally. A corrupt society, I said, is a weak society. It is a society in which everyone is for himself, no one is for the common good. "It is in such a situation that everything you and we have worked so hard to create can be undermined unless you move with energy."

13. Thieu had followed attentively without interrupting, and had taken notes as I spoke. When I finished he said he was glad I had brought the matter up because it was also one of great concern to him. He had already appointed the committee to which I had referred, although he was not certain how effective it could be and he thought it important that we should work together on the problem of corruption for we had sources of information that could be useful, and of course some of our people were also involved as well as many Vietnamese and other foreigners. It was important to try to get at the sources of corruption, to identify them and move in on them.

14. Thieu then suggested that instead of the two committees just cooperating together we should establish a joint committee or a mechanism for close liaison so that efforts at control could be coordinated. He was aware that much smuggling was going on at the airport and the harbors, and he agreed that the time had come to move in on it vigorously. He mentioned that he had come under some pressure from Vietnamese businessmen recently who had complained that illegal imports and black marketing were undercutting prices and ruining their business. Thieu said he would like to meet again on this subject just after Tet. He intended to get suggestions from his people immediately on how we could best work together, and he would welcome also more detailed suggestions from us.

15. *Comment:* I think it is possible that Thieu may in fact welcome American pressure to move more vigorously on this front. While we must not expect miracles, I think he recognizes better now that corruption is not just an internal problem but also a problem in his foreign relations; that it is not merely one of his economic problems but perhaps the most important one; and indeed quite possibly one of the most important among all his problems. The most important thing now is to get some momentum going, and to let Thieu get the word out to the right people that he means to show results soon.

Bunker

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176. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, January 31, 1970.

SUBJECT

CIA Assessment of Vietnamization

The CIA has produced the attached narrative review of Vietnamization progress and prospects (Tab A).[2] It is based on a study of

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 91, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnamization, Vol. II, January 1970–June 1970. Secret. Sent for information. In his memoirs Kissinger cites the attached CIA study and Nixon's comments. (*White House Years,* p. 436)

[2] Tab A is CIA Intelligence Memorandum No. 9469/70, "Vietnamization: Progress and Prospects," January 23; attached but not printed.

the views of ARVN commanders, and on an analysis of ARVN performance and the current activities of enemy forces.

The memorandum concludes that the real test of Vietnamization will probably not come until at least the end of 1970, by which time the Communists anticipate a substantial further reduction of US ground forces. Meanwhile, there have been both bright and disappointing spots in the performance of SVN forces. It is clear that the ARVN, especially, still has a considerable way to go in developing both the technical skills and the will to fight necessary to cope with a threat of the magnitude currently posed by enemy forces.

Some of the specific points made in the CIA assessment are as follows:

—There is sound evidence that the territorial forces (regional and popular units) have greatly improved over the past year in all the standard indicators of efficiency, most notably their KIA rate. It must be recognized, however, that the improvement is based on a very poor performance base originally, and that further gains will come harder.

—By contrast, the performance of the ARVN regular units has declined in the past year when measured in statistical terms such as the KIA rate, combat contacts, etc. This is not so much a reflection of deterioration in ARVN capabilities as an indication of a shift in enemy tactics toward initiatives primarily aimed at the territorial forces.

—Late last year, surveys of the views of top ARVN leaders on Vietnamization found most of them optimistic about the future. Recently, however, a similar survey revealed a growing pessimism with concern[3] centered around the fear of an overly hasty American withdrawal which would leave the ARVN badly vulnerable to renewed Communist main force pressures. It is worth noting that the pessimism has increased as the ARVN combat load has risen.

Progress by Corps

I Corps. ARVN units, among the GVN's best, have continued to hold the populated coastal sectors effectively. Communist main force units were largely driven out of these areas by US and GVN forces by early 1969. The Communists have not tried to mount a major new push since then, but do have large forces located in nearby border sanctuaries from which they could quickly intensify pressures along the coast.

II Corps. The first real test of Vietnamization occurred here in the summer when the Communists laid siege to two Vietnamese border strong-points. The results were inconclusive. Some ARVN units performed well, and the Communists suffered heavy losses, largely as a

[3] Nixon underlined the phrase, "a similar survey revealed a growing pessimism with concern" and handwrote the following comment: "K—The psychology is enormously important. They *must* take responsibility if they are *ever* to gain confidence. We have to take risks on that score."

result of allied air power. However, they never really tried to take the camps, and one ARVN regiment was badly demoralized as a result of its combat experience. Along the coast, the ARVN has been holding its own, but its leaders fear the withdrawal of any American ground units from this sector in the foreseeable future.

III Corps. ARVN units here have traditionally been among the weakest in the country, and the US program has concentrated on raising their effectiveness. As a result some gains have been noted in two of the divisions, but the division closest to the enemy along the Cambodian border is still performing very poorly and could not hold its own against the Communist units arrayed in the area, if left without substantial US ground support.

IV Corps. The ARVN division which filled in for US ground units withdrawn in the upper Delta has so far not performed very effectively, and the enemy has begun to rebuild his position. The recent replacement of the division commander could help remedy this situation, however. The picture is brighter in the lower Delta where one of the ARVN divisions is considered as good as any GVN unit in the country. However, the Communists clearly intend to mount a strong test of Vietnamization in the Delta and have moved in several regiments in the western provinces to strengthen their position. ARVN performance against them so far has been mixed.

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177. Memorandum for the President's File[1]

Washington, February 1, 1970.

RE

Early-Afternoon Meeting in the President's Office with Ross Perot (12:45–1:35 p.m.)

Ross Perot entered the President's office by way of Dwight Chapin's office. The President got up from his desk, came forward and shook Ross's hand, then suggested that all of us take seats near the fire.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, Memoranda for the President, Box 2, 2/1/70. No classification marking. Drafted and initialed by Butterfield.

The President opened the discussion right away and for some 10–12 minutes told Ross how valuable he thought his recent (Christmas season) round-the-world trip had been. He said that even though food and other goods had not been delivered to U.S. prisoners of war in Hanoi, in his opinion the publicity which had been given to the trip was well worth the $600,000 spent. He said, too, that Ross could be proud of his post-trip press conference and talk-show performances. Then, before Ross could speak, the President went on to comment about the views he knew Ross held on the Federal government's current activities to relieve the plight of U.S. prisoners. He said that he agreed with Ross that we could probably do much more than we are doing.[2] He said, too, that he could well understand Ross's surprise at the calibre of some of the members of the International Red Cross teams. Reiterating his continued interest in resolving the POW dilemma, the President said he felt that a separate team, or organization, was needed—something independent of, or at least detached from, the State Department.[3]

Then Ross reviewed the highlights of his trip to Southeast Asia and Copenhagen . . . and just started to outline the kind of plan he thinks will promote some action when the telephone next to the President rang. It was John Ehrlichman calling on another matter (Secretary Hardin's memo on farm policy). The President talked to John for 3 or 4 minutes—then excused himself and went back to his small office sitting room for another 8–10 minutes. When he returned he asked Ross to go on with his action plan concept.

Ross spoke of the value of actions teams and described such a team thusly: a group made up of very few people, all of whom have past

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[2] On a January 31 briefing memorandum from Butterfield to the President, prepared for this meeting, Nixon wrote to Kissinger: "K note my notes. I am *not* satisfied with our *governmental* activities here. Have a quick study made & give me a new game plan for 1. Government & 2. private action. Let's see some unconventional plans." In his briefing memorandum Butterfield wrote that Perot had expressed surprise that since his return from his trip on which he had spent $600,000, "no one seems to be particularly concerned, grateful . . . or even curious." (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 94, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, U.S. POWs in North Vietnam to April 1970)

[3] In a February 3 memorandum to Kissinger, Butterfield stated: "the President has in mind the creation of a small White House group which will concern itself solely with matters pertinent to relieving the plight of American prisoners in Southeast Asia." Butterfield added that Nixon envisaged "an action-oriented team—1, 3, 4, or 5-man unit to concentrate on all possible ways—conventional and unconventional—to bring to bear on the Hanoi government pressure sufficient to revert its view of American captives as an asset to one in which they are considered a liability." According to Butterfield, Nixon wanted the unit to cut through red tape, move quickly into the field, and have as its objectives inspections of POW facilities, free exchange of mail, release of POWs' names, release of sick and wounded POWs, and eventual release of all POWs. (Ibid.)

records indicating one outstanding success after another . . .[4] given a task . . . a deadline for completion . . . and no other duties. "This," said Ross, "creates a 'succeed or fail' environment. It was this technique—this kind of environment—which was responsible for NASA's putting a man on the moon. Frank Borman will vouch for that."

Ross went on to tell how much good he thought action teams would be within the State Department—and within HEW. In fact, he said that he had talked to Bob Finch about the concept—about small teams, each concentrating on a major problem area—reviewing the issue, travelling out to the field and observing first-hand the conditions responsible for the problem, returning to hash out possible solutions, and finally reporting a recommended course of action (with valid alternatives) to the department Secretary. The President said that the principle was a good one.

Ross then returned to the POW topic and stated the opinion that the action team system would *certainly* do more than is being done to relieve the plight of U.S. prisoners. When he finished, the President thought for a moment—then said that a White House team, or at least a White House team director, should serve to make the priority on this matter more clear . . . not only to the Hanoi Government and the U.S. public, but our Departments of State and Defense as well. He told me to get from Henry Kissinger, without delay, two reports: one on all US–POW relief operations going on now in Laos (i.e. all covert and overt activities designed to "pick-up" or otherwise secure the freedom of captive persons) with some figures to show effort expended and successes achieved; and one bearing the same kind of information relative to South Vietnam. He said, too, that by February 15th he wants a game plan on how best to organize a White House team, the sole duty of which will be to work for:

—Impartial inspection of POW facilities
—Free exchange of mail and packages
—Release of a list of names of all known prisoners
—The earliest possible release of all prisoners.

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[4] On February 12 Kissinger responded to a request from the President for a report on previous operations in Laos and South Vietnam to free POWs. Kissinger summarized two attached reports, one by CIA on efforts in Laos and one by the Embassy in Vietnam on recovery operations in South Vietnam. In Laos, Kissinger described CIA intelligence efforts to locate and rescue U.S. POWs, but stated that the "results of all these efforts have been zero." In South Vietnam, Kissinger reported that one POW was recovered, but he died from wounds inflicted by his guards. In both Laos and Vietnam, Kissinger reported that hundreds of Lao and Vietnamese POWs had been rescued. Nixon wrote the following comments: "K. 1. A tragic, frustrating operation. 2. Would a shake up—a new approach help? Possibly the present team is worn out & unimaginative?" (Ibid.)

Although Frank Borman's name was mentioned briefly as a candidate for the directorship of this team, no firm decisions were made.

The informal meeting adjourned, and Ross thanked the President for taking so much time with him on a Sunday afternoon. The President said it was good to see Ross again, and that he felt as though some very worthwhile things had been accomplished.

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178. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 6, 1970.

SUBJECT

Enemy Manpower Situation in Vietnam

This memo summarizes the enemy's manpower situation and its strategic implications over the first six months of 1970.

The Enemy's Current Strength

The Washington intelligence community is in rough agreement that the enemy's current manpower situation is as follows:

—The enemy's *military* forces number about 280,000–310,000 men including *at the most* 150,000 main force regulars, 80,000 support troops, and 80,000 guerrillas.

—Despite heavy infiltration and recruiting, the enemy military forces have *declined* by about 28% (100,000 men) over the last two years with about half (40,000 to 50,000 men) of the decline occurring during 1969.

Enemy Losses

The enemy's manpower losses are caused by combat deaths, deaths caused by wounds or illness, desertions, and Allied captures. However, over the last two years, the enemy's overall losses, particu-

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Country Files, Vietnam, March 1970. Secret; [*codeword not declassified*]. Sent for information. In a February 5 covering memorandum Lynn informed Kissinger that this summary was done by John C. Court of the NSC's Program Analysis Staff based on the Vietnam Special Study Group Enemy Capabilities Panel's report. Lynn recommended that the summary be sent to the President. A note on the memorandum indicates it was "ret-d, Feb. 20, 1970." The VSSG's report, "A Review of Enemy Manpower Indicators in the War in Southeast Asia" SC 14685/69, December 1969, is ibid., Haig Special Files, Vietnam File, Vol. 4 (Jan–Feb, 1970) [2 of 2].

larly combat deaths, appear to have been largely determined by the enemy's activity rates.

—When enemy activity is *high,* as during January–June 1968, the enemy's overall losses have run about 32,000 men monthly—20,000 combat deaths and 12,000 losses from other causes. By sustaining these losses, the enemy was able to initiate an average of about 470 attacks monthly.

—When enemy activity is *moderate,* as during January–June 1969, the enemy's overall losses have averaged about 27,000 men monthly—16,000 in combat deaths and 11,000 from other causes. At this manpower cost, the enemy was able to launch about 370 attacks monthly.

—When enemy activity is *low,* as during June–December 1969, the enemy has been able to hold his overall losses to about 20,000 men monthly equally divided between combat and non-combat losses. During this period, enemy-initiated attacks averaged 233 monthly.

Thus, the enemy has, to a large extent, been able to control his losses by increasing or decreasing the aggressiveness of his forces. While there is no real limit on these fluctuations in enemy losses, the enemy probably considers that a certain level of activity is necessary to maintain the momentum of his war effort and his control of a portion of SVN's population. Moreover, allied-initiated operations undoubtedly impose certain losses on the enemy as the price for retaining his forces in South Vietnam even if they are inactive.

For these reasons, it is likely that there is some minimum level of losses that the enemy will either choose or be forced to sustain. Looking at enemy losses during past periods of low activity, this minimum loss rate may be about 20,000 men monthly, including 10,000 combat deaths.

Enemy Manpower Gains

The enemy meets its manpower requirements from two principal sources—infiltration and recruitment. Judging from recent experience, the enemy can count on these sources of manpower to provide replacements at the following rates:

—*Infiltration* will provide most of the enemy's manpower gains. While only about 15,000 infiltrators will arrive in South Vietnam during January–March 1970, the enemy increased its manpower in the pipeline to South Vietnam by about 15,000 men in January alone. If additions to the pipeline continue at this rate, the enemy could infiltrate 60,000 men into SVN during the first six months of 1970.[2]

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[2] Attached but not printed was an undated explanation of infiltration estimates which indicated that they were "based largely on intercepts of *uncoded* enemy rear area communications" which "frequently provided detailed information on the number, strength, and destination of enemy infiltration groups." Collateral evidence such as prisoner interrogations and captured documents verified this intelligence. Since the primary evidence was uncoded, it could be misleading if the North Vietnamese were aware of the fact that they were being intercepted. Furthermore, rear services communications did not cover all infiltrators, and if North Vietnam chose, they could infiltrate large units using radio silence.

—*Recruitment.* While the enemy is capable of increasing his recruiting in SVN for a short period of time, his recruiting rates have been low (4,000 to 6,000 men monthly) in recent months and he may not be able to increase them greatly without a strong and successful effort to increase the population he controls and the recruiting base it affords. Without such an increase, the enemy cannot count on more than about 36,000 new recruits during the first six months of 1970.

If recruitment and infiltration follow this pattern, the enemy will add about 100,000 men to his military forces during this period. However, these additions will enable the enemy to offset his likely losses only if he maintains a low rate of activity. If the enemy maintains a moderate or high rate of activity, his losses will more than outnumber his manpower gains and the overall strength of his forces will continue to decline.

Thus, even with the recent increase in infiltration, the enemy probably cannot build-up his forces unless he decreases his activity below the lowest levels of the recent past or greatly increases recruiting.

Future Enemy Options

The current enemy manpower situation is not bright. If recent trends in infiltration, recruiting, and losses continue, the enemy will continue to suffer a slow attrition in the strength of his military forces. However, this decline is not inevitable and the enemy could build-up his forces if he chose to. In particular, he could:

—Reduce his activity to a virtual standstill (10,000 losses monthly) while maintaining an infiltration rate of about 15,000 men monthly. By June 1970, the enemy might be able to increase his force level by about 30,000 men by June 1970.

—Step up infiltration to 25,000 men monthly, as during early 1968, while maintaining his present low activity rates. By June 1970, the enemy's forces could be increased by 30,000 men.

However, these strategies would not allow the enemy to carry out a *countrywide* offensive for longer than a month without suffering some reduction in his force strength. For instance, the enemy losses *in combat deaths alone* were almost 40,000 men monthly at the height of the 1968 Tet offensive. An offensive confined to a particular region such as the Delta would, however, require far smaller inputs of manpower and be more reasonable given the enemy's manpower resources.

Summary

To maintain his force levels, the enemy will have to continue infiltration at its January rate of 15,000 men monthly while holding his activity to the low rates of late 1969. By further increasing infiltration or greatly reducing activity, the enemy could build-up his force levels for an offensive by June. However, the most likely prospect is that the enemy's force strength will continue to slowly decline.

179. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 12, 1970.

SUBJECT

Status Reports on Cambodia—Secretary Rogers and Prince Sihanouk

Secretary Rogers has sent you a report on progress in our relations with Cambodia (Tab A),[2] in which he summarizes developments, trouble points, and actions in progress.

Favorable Developments: Our Chargé has been cordially treated. The Cambodian armed forces have begun to accept information from our Attachés as to details of the VC/NVA presence in Cambodia, have used this information in their operations, and have forewarned us of their aerial reconnaissance plans, to avoid encounters. (The report also cites several other favorable trends which are less clear and not demonstrably related to our reestablishment of diplomatic relations.)

Trouble Points: Secretary Rogers lists continued arms supply *via* Cambodia to the Communists, a rise in incidents involving US forces in Cambodia, and the Cambodian defoliation claims. Sihanouk has handled these last two points of irritation very circumspectly.

Action in Progress: The Secretary lists these actions planned or underway:

—Visible US participation in cross-border reconnaissance patrols into Cambodia is being reduced.

—DOD is studying a pull-back of Special Forces camps near the border, to reduce the likelihood of incidents on Cambodian soil.[3]

—We are developing better procedures to alert the Cambodians to VC/NVA activities in Cambodia.

—Secretary Rogers expressed regret for the November 16 incident, and we are making solatium payments when Cambodians are killed or wounded.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. Holdridge sent this memorandum to Kissinger recommending that he ask the President to instruct the Department of State to evaluate the pros and cons of resuming a limited aid program to Cambodia. (Ibid.)

[2] Tab A is attached but not printed.

[3] Nixon wrote next to this paragraph: "K, *no* if it in any way reduces our capabilities to combat V.C. in Cambodia."

—Arrangements are being made to compensate for defoliation damage in such a way as to avoid an acrimonious debate in Congress.[4] (This is responsive to a suggestion by Senator Mansfield.)

—Espionage activities against Cambodia are being cut back, and no CIA personnel are assigned to our Embassy in Phnom Penh. (Also a suggestion by Senator Mansfield.)

Perhaps the most telling evidence of the improvement of our relations with Cambodia is contained, not in the status report, but in an article which Prince Sihanouk himself wrote for the December issue of the official journal *Sangkum* (Tab B).[5]

Prince Sihanouk, in that article:

—briefly disposes of the suggestion that he should be grateful for the US presence in Asia, *but*

—argues that "in all honesty and objectivity" the US presence "permits us to be *respected,* if not courted, by the European and even Asian Socialist camps." Mocking his own role, he observes that "The prospect of an early retreat of the Americans from South Vietnam plunges all the friends of the US into fear—except Cambodia, of course, which will know how to fall before Communism with its customary poise and dignity."[6]

—sets forth a somewhat overdrawn rationale to prove that America cannot afford to withdraw from Asia, and that in a sense the "hawks" in the US are more correct than the "doves." (In the process, he makes the telling point that America's Asian allies cannot compensate for a withdrawal of American power by turning toward the Communists, because—like a bird before a serpent—"the bird, gentle or not, always ends by being swallowed up.")

Sihanouk concludes, in effect, with a ringing endorsement of the Nixon Doctrine. His language is worth quoting at length: "It is possible and even probable that the new Nixon Doctrine which foresees not having American troops intervene . . .[7] may enter into effect. . . But, they (the Americans) will be obliged in their own interest to support the popular nationalists in their resistance against the new imperialism, that of Asiatic Communism. . . If the US brings *aid without conditions and without physical intervention,* . . . they will certainly have more

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[4] Nixon wrote next to this paragraph: "*OK.* Do anything like this—which may give us more running room there."

[5] Tab B is an attached copy of airgram A–10 from Phnom Penh, January 20, which contained a translation of Sihanouk's editorial, "Cambodia After the War in Vietnam," published in the December 1969 edition of *Sangkum.*

[6] Nixon wrote on the summary of the Sihanouk editorial: "K—I wonder whether Mansfield has seen this? If not see that he does." On February 23 Kissinger sent Mansfield a translation of Sihanouk's article. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970)

[7] Nixon underlined this phrase and wrote: "K—I favor this strongly on an urgent basis. We need some leverage on him [Sihanouk]—even Mansfield would support it."

hope of seeing the flood of Communism contained than if they assume this task with their own soldiers. In effect, they would thus contribute to cutting the wings from the subversive propaganda of Communism, which calls the nation to rebellion, and to the 'liberation of the nation' when the region is 'occupied' by foreign forces. . . . Independence is the dearest thing to the hearts of Asians. . . . The physical assistance of the US to the non-Communist nations only hastens their Communization. On the contrary, an *unconditional* material aid without the physical presence of the USA *would multiply* the efficacy of the resistance of those peoples. . . One does not conquer Communism with bayonets, but one can conquer it with those weapons which are the well-being of the people and with social justice."

This is not only an endorsement of your policy, it is an unabashed pitch for aid.

We may or may not find it in our interest to find means to aid Cambodia at this juncture—and the prospect of a Congressional debate on such aid is not attractive. However, the mere fact that Sihanouk had sought a resumption of American aid, and that we had accommodated him, would have considerable impact in Southeast Asia.

I have asked State to provide an evaluation of the pros and cons of discreetly sounding out the Cambodians as to their interest in limited US economic or military assistance.

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180. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Under Secretary of State (Richardson)[1]

Washington, February 12, 1970.

SUBJECT

Aid to Cambodia

Prince Sihanouk's article on the US in the December *Sangkum* has every appearance of being a very thinly-disguised request for US

[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, DEF 19 US–CAMB. Top Secret; Sensitive. A copy was sent to Packard.

assistance,[2] made more palatable by his gratuitous defense of a US presence in Southeast Asia and of the Nixon Doctrine, and by his references to "Asiatic Communism".

I should appreciate it if the Department of State would prepare for the President's consideration an evaluation of the pros and cons of a U.S. initiative to explore whether Cambodia is seriously interested in seeking a resumption of the aid relationship, and what if any Cambodia's specific requirements are.

There are of course serious factors militating against a US initiative in that direction, including budgetary stringency and the very difficulties which would be generated by a Congressional debate on Cambodia, plus the question whether an increased US role might increase Communist pressures. On the plus side, there would be the impact in Asia of this change in Sihanouk's attitude and of our willingness to help him; aid might also be justified if it would avert a threat to Cambodia's present stability.

I assume that any program would be a very modest one.

I would appreciate it if your evaluation would incorporate an examination of the types of economic or military aid which would be appropriate and the channels through which it might be offered.

This evaluation should be prepared by February 23.[3]

Henry A. Kissinger

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[2] See Document 181.

[3] On February 23 Richardson sent the President a memorandum as requested. The summary reads: "On balance, an offer of U.S. economic or military aid to Cambodia would be premature at the present time and could possibly create additional difficulties in U.S.-Cambodian relations. Sihanouk and his government may be gradually shifting their position to make resumption of American aid possible in a post-Viet-Nam context, but we do not believe that the Cambodians expect such an offer now. When such aid becomes appropriate, it should be channeled through multilateral or regional agencies. The Special Funds of the Asian Development Bank could be a particularly suitable means." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969 to 9 April 1970) This memorandum was not sent to the President and the following note appears on the top of the first page: "OBE'd per Grant [Lindsey Grant of the NSC staff] 4/22."

181. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 12, 1970.

SUBJECT

Current Hanoi Intentions In Laos

My staff has developed the following estimate of current North Vietnamese intentions in Laos:

Military: The Communists will certainly try to retake the Plain of Jars, whose recent capture by General Vang Pao's Meo Forces they considered an incursion into "their" territory. They may also try to move against Van Vieng, the headquarters of Premier Souvanna Phouma's neutralist forces, so as to install their own "neutralists" there. They may even try to move close to the royal capital Luang Prabang and perhaps Vientiane to increase their pressure on the King and the Lao Government. We doubt that they would make a massive push to the Mekong River, which would involve too high a political risk and probably also too high a military price.

An important Communist objective, beyond territorial gains, is to crush the Meo Forces or at least to inflict such staggering losses that the Meo can be disregarded as a military factor for a long time. Hanoi also wants to punish the Meo enough so that they will not again presume to venture into Communist-held areas. With the Meo out of the military picture, and the pro-Souvanna neutralists also nullified, Souvanna's military strength would be greatly eroded.

The timing of the Communist offensive is still unclear. Their main attack yesterday was against the Xieng Khouang airfield, and may have been intended to prevent the King from landing there as planned. (He instead went to Vang Pao's headquarters.) The Communists also took advantage of low cloud cover which hampered tactical air. Thus we still cannot be sure whether yesterday's action heralded a massive sharp push or whether the Communists will develop their attack over a period of time, in accordance with meteorological and political considerations.

Political: Hanoi's principal political purpose is probably to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Souvanna Phouma. If the Meo and the

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970. Secret. According to an attached undated note from Haig to Kissinger, Smyser prepared this estimate of North Vietnam's current intention with regard to Laos.

neutralist forces can be badly defeated or even decimated, Souvanna and his government may want very much to reach an accommodation which would save what is left. At that point, Souvanna might be ready to ask for a U.S. bombing halt in the panhandle in exchange for Communist promises to relent. The bombing in southern Laos benefits us more than Souvanna, and the Communists would try to take advantage of that divergence of interests.

Political considerations might help force the Communists to exercise some restraint. If they move too far they might risk a massive U.S. air reaction in Laos and perhaps U.S. military moves in Thailand. This would tend to make Souvanna more dependent on us and might encourage him to hold on.

Negotiations Front: We do not believe the Communists now want to negotiate a new agreement on Laos. They will probably not want a separate Lao accord before Vietnam has been settled. But the Communists may hope that military pressure can persuade Souvanna to accept some "understanding" under which the Communist hold on the Lao Government structure would be increased without revising the 1962 Geneva Accords.

With regard to the United States, Communist actions would be intended to warn us that we cannot get peace in Southeast Asia without dealing with Hanoi. Even though Vietnamization may ease our problems in Vietnam, it cannot help us in Laos.

Problems for Hanoi: All this is not so simple as it sounds. There is evidence that even the North Vietnamese forces in Laos, which used to sweep up the battlefield against Government forces whenever they entered into action, are not quite what they used to be. (This is also true in South Vietnam.) They are younger, less well trained, and less well led. Recent reports indicate that some units were very demoralized by tactical air raids against their positions. General Vang Pao's Meo Forces are tried but tough. This does not mean that Hanoi cannot achieve many and perhaps all its military objectives. But the action may well not be as easy as they would wish, particularly if the weather permits a sustained tactical air effort in support of Vang Pao.[2]

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[2] In a February 12 memorandum to the President, Kissinger responded to Nixon's request for a report on air drops of food and material in Laos. Kissinger summarized two attached papers by CIA on "Food Drops in Laos" and "Air America Operations in Laos." Nixon wrote the following comment on the summary of Air America Operations: "K. Sounds like a good operation—unless the amount of good is less than the obviously very heavy cost of the program." (Ibid.)

182. Memorandum for the 40 Committee[1]

Washington, February 12, 1970.

SUBJECT

Periodic Report on the National Social Democratic Front

1. Summary

This is the fourth report in response to the Committee's request for periodic progress reports on the development of the National Social Democratic Front (NSDF), a South Vietnamese political front under the leadership of President Nguyen Van Thieu. It covers the period 1 October–31 December 1969.

The NSDF made little progress during the reporting period, and one of the six original member parties withdrew.[2] The remaining five parties continue to demonstrate little interest in common programs. On Thieu's recommendation, the Front has abandoned the goal of establishing NSDF organizations in the provinces in favor of building up the separate parties. A special NSDF electoral commission has been set up to develop plans for the 1970/71 provincial and national elections. President Thieu has commenced paying a monthly subsidy directly to each member party and this and certain other overtures by Thieu have helped to ease the earlier strained relations between the President and the party leaders. For the future, Thieu will probably continue to give the Front occasional attention but devote most of his efforts to his domestic programs and to developing his governmental apparatus as a political vehicle. All funds previously authorized for President Thieu's

[1] Source: National Security Council, Nixon Intelligence Files, Subject Files, Vietnam, 1970. Secret; Eyes Only.

[2] In backchannel message 681 from Saigon, January 28, Bunker informed Kissinger that he had recommended on January 26 continued U.S. covert assistance to Thieu's National Social Democratic Front (NSDF) for the next 6 months at the level of [*text not declassified*] per month. Bunker appreciated "that there is some discouragement in Washington with the NSDF" and that he and Thieu shared that disappointment. Since Thieu considered himself the leader of the NSDF, Bunker maintained that Thieu's image would be damaged if the front disintegrated for lack of money. Bunker observed that the front was only 8 months old, and there was little tradition in South Vietnam of "free popular political parties." The NSDF was playing a "catalytic role" in developing democratic political institutions in Vietnam. Bunker asked Kissinger to focus on this issue in 303 Committee consideration, suggesting that the NSDF was a "delicate plant which needs tender care if it is to have a chance to mature and bloom in the historically non-fertile soil of Vietnamese politics." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 410, Backchannel Messages, Southeast Asia, 1970)

political mobilization efforts have been passed to him. This report was concurred in by Ambassador Bunker on 26 January 1970.[3]

[Omitted here is the remainder of the report.]

[3] On February 25 the 40 Committee discussed extending the program of support of the NSDF. Johnson suggested that Thieu's campaign against dissident Assemblyman Tran Ngoc Chau changed the situation and raised the danger that Thieu would use the support to "buy votes in the legislature in support of his case against Chau." After a long discussion, Attorney General Mitchell convinced the Committee to approve the extension provided that Bunker and the Department of State agreed on pressure and leverage to be brought on Thieu to modify his actions against Chau. The final decision on whether to grant or withhold the assistance would be Bunker's. (National Security Council, 303/40 Committee Records, Minutes, 1970) On March 16 Bunker reported in backchannel message 1134 from Saigon that "I am convinced that the funds we have given Thieu in the past have not wound up in Nguyen Cao Thang's pocket for bribes," but went to the Lien Minh. Bunker requested that he be authorized to start passing the [*text not declassified*] to Thieu. (Ibid., Subject Files, Vietnam, 1970) The passage of funds was authorized according to later records of the 303/40 Committee.

183. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

B–52's in Laos

You will recall Ambassador Godley's request in late January to use B–52's against North Vietnamese troops massing east of the Plain of Jars, preparatory to attacking the Plain.[2] The decision at that time was not to use B–52's, largely at the urging of State which argued:

(a) that North Vietnamese intentions were still unclear;
(b) that it would represent escalation, and
(c) that it should be reserved for after the offensive has started.[3]

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 102, Vietnam Subject Files, B–52 Strikes in Laos. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action. This memorandum was discussed at a meeting on February 16; see Document 184.

[2] Godley made the request in telegram 557 from Vientiane, January 23. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS)

[3] In a January 26 memorandum to the President, Rogers argued against the strikes for these and the following additional reasons: such deliberate escalation would detract from efforts to find a peaceful solution in both Vietnam and Laos, it would suggest more

Since then the offensive has started with the North Vietnamese troops' advance across the Plain of Jars.

Ambassador Godley has relayed a formal request from Souvanna, the first of it kind, for B–52 strikes.[4] This request was triggered by the deteriorating situation in the Plain. Since your earlier decision, the North Vietnamese have cleared the supply route to the eastern edge of the Plain, and government guerrillas have been ordered to withdraw from that area. This retreat had been planned, and no major friendly losses have occurred to date, but forward elements are in a dangerous situation. One assault on the guerrillas' main forward base in the Plain was repulsed, but others are expected shortly. Weather in the Plain is unseasonably cloudy and has hampered the use of tactical air. The purpose of B–52 strikes would be to harass Vietnamese supply lines, particularly Route 7.

Ambassador Godley supported Souvanna's request by back channel,[5] but did not comment on his formal request.

Secretary Laird believes that B–52 strikes should go forward at the time that suitable targets can be developed. He raises some question as to whether such targets are presently identified.[6]

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aggressive U.S. posture and undermine the "political track" in Laos, it would imply an open ended commitment in north Laos, it would send the wrong signal to Hanoi forcing the North Vietnamese to escalate, and it would only give a temporary military advantage and not change the fact that North Vietnam could take Laos when they decide it was in their interest. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 102, Vietnam Subject Files, B–52 Strikes in Laos) Nixon wrote the following responses next to the Department of State's arguments above: (a), "no", (b), "yes," and (c), "no."

[4] In telegram 1063 from Vientiane, February 13, Godley reported that he had received the following letter from Souvanna on February 12: "I have the honor to inform you that the situation on the PDJ has become more serious as of today. The arrival of fresh NVA troops testify to this. As the action of ordinary attack aircraft has been insufficient, I ask you to consider the utilization of B–52 bombers during enemy offensive. I would be grateful if you would intervene with Washington in this sense." (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS)

[5] In backchannel message 1211044Z, February 12, Godley described the course of the battle and stated that there were two lucrative targets for B–52s. If the targets were attacked by B–52s, Godley suggested that it "might well contribute appreciably delaying further enemy advance into the PDJ." He added that while "Tacair [tactical aircraft] is doing a superb job, now may be time for the Sunday punch." (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970)

[6] In backchannel message 140241Z to Rogers, February 14, Laird informed Rogers (who was in Nairobi) that: "It is possible that targets which are susceptible to B–52 strikes may develop in the next few days. If such targets, i.e., mass or area targets, do develop, I intend to authorize appropriate strikes." (Ibid.)

Admiral Moorer, Acting Chairman of the JCS, proposes that we go ahead with blanket authorization for B–52 strikes for a two-week period, and that suitable targets be hit as they are developed.[7]

Secretary Rogers has taken a very strong stand against the use of B–52's at the present time. He points to the continuing availability of tactical air to support the guerrillas and urges that you consult with Messrs. Richardson and Packard before making a decision.[8]

Arguments favoring the immediate use of B–52's are these:

(a) B–52's can do more against lines of communications than tactical air, particularly if the cloudy weather continues;
(b) the greater damage we can do now to NVA logistics, the less momentum they will have to go beyond the Plain this dry season, or to whittle down guerrilla forces which are the only really effective troops on our side;
(c) the psychological boost to the guerrillas and the RLG, and
(d) most importantly, the psychological effect on Hanoi. At this point, the Vietnam outcome may depend on Hanoi's estimate of your resolution.

Arguments against are these:

(a) Congress and the press are watching closely (and have been inquiring regularly at Defense and State), and a major domestic Donnybrook is to be expected if decision is made to use B–52's;
(b) The RLG knows it cannot expect to hold the Plain; we have forewarned them to have retreat lines prepared, and believe they have done so; the real psychological crisis will come if the NVA goes beyond the Plain;
(c) the use of B–52's will tend to undercut efforts we have been making to signal to the North Vietnamese our willingness to stick to 1962 lines of territorial control, and
(d) the use of B–52's now will deprive us of a useful signal which we could use later if the NVA goes beyond the 1962 informal lines and it could encourage the RLG to fight disastrously to hold the Plain, which was in Communist hands from 1961 until last summer.

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[7] Moore's advice has not been found.

[8] In backchannel message 141040Z from Nairobi to Laird, February 14, Rogers stated that the "military utility of the strikes is questionable and the political liabilities are clear." Rogers recalled that the President had assured him that no decision would be taken until the President met with Rogers and Laird. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS) In backchannel message 142500Z, February 14, Laird stated that, "Consideration should be given to the immediate objectives of keeping enough stability in the north Laos situation to preclude the North Vietnamese from using the situation there (north Laos) from becoming available bargaining point against our interdiction in southern Laos." Laird concluded that "while the distinction between B–52's and massive tactical air strikes is not always clear," there are occasional targets which are more adaptable to B–52s. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 102, Vietnam Subject Files, B–52 Strikes in Laos)

Recommendation:[9]

A. To temporize with Souvanna, explaining that targets and timing are not yet appropriate to play the B–52 card, but that we are seriously considering their use if the NVA appears intent on going beyond the 1962 lines of territorial control;

B. That, at the meeting on Monday you authorize B–52 strikes as suitable targets are developed *if* the enemy goes beyond Muong Soui, west of the Plain, or a major effort is made to destroy the principal Meo stronghold at Long Tieng.

[9] The President did not check either option, but for the decision, see Document 184.

184. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 16, 1970.

SUBJECT

Talking Points for Your Meeting on Laos

There is a meeting on Laos scheduled for 3:30 p.m. Monday. Attendees will be Secretary Laird, Acting Secretary of State Richardson, Director of CIA Helms, Admiral Moorer and me.[2]

The Situation

Vang Pao's Meo forces on the Plain of Jars are under heavy North Vietnamese pressure and have given up most of the high ground to the east which dominates the approaches to the Plain. A number of Meo outposts have been overrun. The airfield at Xieng Khouang has been under sporadic harassing fire, but is still usable for helicopters and light aircraft. Enemy forces are well concentrated east and northeast of the Plain, but are well enough dispersed and dug in to make tacair strikes difficult. I have asked Secretary Laird to have the Chairman prepared to offer a short briefing on the strategic situation as of

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive.

[2] The meeting was held from 3:37 to 4:51 p.m. with the above mentioned persons attending. (Ibid., White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) No memorandum of conversation of this meeting has been found.

today. The Director of CIA is also prepared to present a brief review of the current tactical situation.

Departmental and Agency Positions on B–52 Strikes

—*Defense:* Secretary Laird last week declined requests from Ambassador Godley for B–52 strikes, but now believes that serious consideration should be given to follow-on requests for both B–52 and tacair strikes in order to prevent Hanoi from using a victory in North Laos as a bargaining point against our interdicting infiltration routes in South Laos. He believes that this could put Vietnamization in jeopardy. The Chairman, JCS supports immediate granting of authority to employ B–52s as targets develop.

—*State:* Secretary Rogers and Acting Secretary Richardson remain opposed to B–52 strikes.

—*CIA:* No formal position has been expressed by CIA regarding the present request for B–52 strikes, but Helms' representative at the WSAG meeting on the last request favored the strikes in order to help preserve Vang Pao's forces. Presumably this position is unchanged.

I suggest the following talking points for your use in the meeting:

Talking Points

1. You would like a briefing from Director Helms as to the situation in the Plain of Jars and from Admiral Moorer on the strategic implications of the situation.

2. Should we or should we not undertake the use of B–52s at this stage?

A. You assume that the Communists can take the Plain and go beyond it, no matter what we do, if they are willing to pay the price.

B. You see the following advantages in using B–52s now:

Arguments favoring the immediate use of B–52s are these: (A) B–52s can do more against lines of communication than tactical air, particularly if the cloudy weather continues; (B) the greater damage we can do now to NVA logistics, the less momentum they will have to go beyond the plain this dry season, or to whittle down guerrilla forces which are the only really effective troops on our side; (C) the psychological boost to guerrillas and the RLG; would respond to a specific formal request by Souvanna; (D) the possibility that Hanoi will see the use of B–52s as a threat to introduce new weapons systems if they press too hard, and hence hold back to some extent.

C. You see the following disadvantages:

Arguments against are these: (A) Congress and the press are watching closely (and have been inquiring regularly at Defense and State), and a major domestic donnybrook is to be expected if decision is made to use B–52s; (B) the RLG knows it cannot expect to hold the plain; we have forewarned them to have retreat lines prepared, and be-

lieve they have done so; the real psychological crisis will come if the NVA goes beyond the plain; (C) the use of B–52s will tend to undercut efforts we have been making to signal to the North Vietnamese our willingness to stick to 1962 lines of territorial control; (D) the use of B–52s now will deprive us of a useful signal which we could use later if the NVA goes beyond the 1962 informal lines, and it could encourage the RLG to fight disastrously to hold the plain, which was in Communist hands from 1961 until last summer.

D. The weights we assign to these arguments depend upon some other questions:

—Can the guerrillas fall back without major loss without the use of B–52s? How much difference will B–52s make?
—What is the weather prognosis?
—Can we presently identify lucrative targets which we cannot hit properly with tactical air?

E. Are there any considerations you have left out?

2.a. (If the decision is made to bomb now) Who will be responsible for putting this decision into effect? What specific ground rules should we establish?

2.b. (If decision is made to defer their use) What criteria should we establish for reconsideration of the decision?

You suggest that we should anticipate the use of B–52s

—*if* the Communists begin to move across the informal "lines of control" of 1962 (such as proceeding beyond Muong Soui),[3]
—*or if* they undertake an attrition campaign to wipe out the Meo guerrillas in their home area (Long Tieng, Sam Thong),
—*and if* suitable targets appear.

3. How should we insure that we stay up-to-date on the target situation?

You suggest that reconnaissance be conducted as necessary, commencing forthwith, including further B–52 reconnaissance, and you want *daily* reports on this situation starting immediately.

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[3] Kissinger recalls in *White House Years* that Nixon agreed that if the North Vietnamese moved beyond Moung Soui, the attacks should be undertaken. (pp. 452–453) On February 17 Admiral Moorer informed McCain that authorization for a one-time B–52 strike on the Plain of Jars had been authorized and he ordered execution. (JCS telegram 02490 to McCain, Abrams, and Godley, February 17; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 102, Vietnam Subject Files, B–52 Strikes in Laos) In backchannel message 574 from Vientiane, February 17, Godley reported that he informed Souvanna of the decision and reiterated that it was a "one shot operation." Souvanna suggested that the strikes should be denied no matter what the North Vietnamese charged, noting that Hanoi always denied its personnel and military operations in Laos. Godley hoped there would be no leaks and recommended that the U.S. Government continue its policy of not commenting on air operations in Laos. (Ibid.)

4. Who will see that the matter comes up to you for decision when the criteria have been met?

You suggest that Secretary Laird send you a memorandum, through Henry Kissinger, when he believes that the criteria have been met. Kissinger will then inform the Secretary of State that the recommendation has been made and will obtain State views prior to your decision.

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185. Memorandum for Record[1]

Paris, February 17, 1970.

On February 12, 1970, I received telephonic instructions from Brig Gen Haig to contact Mai Van Bo and to tell him that I would be leaving Paris around February 20th and that Dr. Kissinger would be willing to meet with his visitor (Le Duc Tho) if latter were still here.[2] I called the General Delegation of North Vietnam and asked to speak to Mai Van Bo. The Vietnamese girl who answered asked who was calling and I told her. In a moment she said she would take the message. I told her that I would be leaving Paris around the end of the forthcoming week. That was all I told her. That evening at my home she called back and said that the Delegate General would receive me on Monday February 16, 1970, at 1730.

On that date and at that time I went to the DRVN house at 78 rue Jules Lagaisse in Choisy-le-Roi. I was cordially received by Mai Van Bo who took out of his pocket a piece of paper and read it to me. I copied it down in French and at the end read it back to him. He agreed that it was an exact copy of what he had read to me.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 106, Kissinger Office Files, Country Files, East Asia, Vietnam, "S" Mister, Vol. 2. No classification marking. Drafted by Walters.

[2] According to an unattributed memorandum for the record, February 16, Walters called the White House at 1:05 p.m. that day to say that he had met with Mai Van Bo who told him that Xuan Thuy and "their visitor" [Le Duc Tho], if he was still in Paris, would like to meet privately with Kissinger in Paris on February 20 or 21. According to this memorandum, Walters reported that "he was given tea, treated amiably and that the other side hoped that the U.S. would make some conciliatory moves which could get the negotiations off dead center." Mai Van Bo added he was working on his English because the "world is changing and he may be, in the future, working on our side." (Ibid., Box 852, For the President's File, Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. II)

The text is as follows:

"Following the American proposal of 14 January 1970 Minister Xuan Thuy and Delegate General Mai Van Bo would be willing to meet with Mr. Henry Kissinger on the 20th or 21st of February at 11 rue Darthé in Choisy-le-Roi.

"We continue to feel that the United States should adopt an attitude of understanding and realism and should offer new and reasonable proposals, if they are really desirous of achieving a peaceful solution to the Vietnamese problem and advancing the negotiations." End text.[3]

Mai Van Bo then said that this offer had been made as they believed that Dr. Kissinger would prefer to come on a weekend. I then said that if their visitor was still here, Dr. Kissinger would be willing to meet with him. Mai Van Bo hesitated for a minute and then said that he did not know whether Le Duc Tho would still be here but if he were, he would take part in the meeting.

Tea was then served and I said something about a Vietnamese poster on the wall. Mai Van Bo asked me if I was studying Vietnamese and I said I was. He said that he was also trying to study English.[4] Our countries would not always be at war and he might some day go to the United States. He said his people were fighting for what they thought was right and had taken a greater tonnage of bombs than any other people. I said that no one could challenge the courage of the Vietnamese people. As a soldier I took off my hat to them but we too were fighting for what we thought was right. My country four times this century had poured forth its blood for what it thought was right. He shook hands and poured me another cup of tea. I asked him what the proposed location was. He said it was a house they used. It was discreet and it was here that they had received Governor Harriman for his private meetings with them.

We had a brief non-political discussion on the Vietnamese, Chinese and Japanese languages and I promised to telephone Mai Van Bo an answer as soon as I got one.

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[3] Walters sent the text of the Mai Van Bo démarche to Haig in a telegram on February 16. (Ibid.) Walters recounts that he had a special code to communicate with the White House about meeting with North Vietnamese representatives and that he had to do the encoding and decoding himself. He also recalls that Kissinger enjoined him to tell no one in the Embassy or the Department of Defense about these arrangements. (Vernon Walters, *Silent Missions,* p. 510)

[4] On February 16 at 9:05 p.m., Kissinger and the President discussed this meeting between Walters and Mai Van Bo. Kissinger stated that he "had the feeling they were in a much different mood than any time we had seen them previously. One of the North Vietnamese said he is learning English because the world is changing and he may one day be working for the Americans. They have never talked this way before. I [still?] don't think much will come out of it." Nixon responded: "Well, you have always said nothing will come of the first meeting, but if you just stake it out you may get a nibble." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 362, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

186. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 17, 1970.

SUBJECT

Covert Operations in North Vietnam

Attached is a report from Dick Helms of the results of preliminary research on potential targets for covert operations in North Vietnam.[2] You had previously authorized CIA to conduct covert operations against two targets within 30 miles of the Laotian border. Helms reports, inter alia, that:

—the most vital targets are located in the urban areas of Hanoi and Haiphong but significant action against these targets is not within current covert capability.

—because the North Vietnamese have been slow to repair damaged facilities it is difficult to locate significant targets below the 20th parallel.

—thus far only two additional appropriate targets have been identified, both petroleum storage facilities, which are near enough for overland infiltration from Laos or South Vietnam.

—CIA has the capability for operations from Laos into North Vietnam up to a depth of 30 kilometers. Because DOD controls the principal assets for operations from South Vietnam into North Vietnam, Defense should be charged with responsibility for targetting and development of operations for the rest of North Vietnam.

—CIA has identified four potential targets which would be accessible from the coast.

You may recall that in your meeting with Secretary Laird and General Wheeler prior to their departure for Vietnam,[3] you asked them to look into the possibility of covert raids against targets along the east coast of North Vietnam. I will include a talking point for your Tuesday meeting with them in case you want to:

—ask for an analysis, based on their trip, of the feasibility of initiating covert operations along the east coast of North Vietnam.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 143, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, February 1–18, 1970. Secret; Sensitive.

[2] Attached but not printed is a memorandum from Helms to Kissinger, February 6.

[3] See footnote 2, Document 187.

—ask them if they agree with CIA's recommended division of labor for covert operations in North Vietnam.

—inform them that CIA has identified four potential coastal targets.

Recommendation[4]

If Secretary Laird raises no objection, that you authorize the following division of labor for covert operations:

—CIA charged with targetting and development of operations from Laos into North Vietnam up to a depth of 30 kilometers from the border.

—the Department of Defense charged with responsibility for targetting and development of operations for the rest of North Vietnam.

[4] Nixon initialed the approve option.

187. Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 17, 1970.

SUBJECT

Trip to Vietnam and CINCPAC, February 10–14, 1970[2]

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 224, Agency Files, DOD, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–20 April 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Nixon wrote the following note at the top of the page: "K[issinger]—an excellent report. Note RN's notes."

[2] Prior to this trip, Laird and Wheeler met with the President and Kissinger from 5:05 p.m. to approximately 6:30 p.m. on February 8 to discuss the trip and related issues. (Ibid., White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) No memorandum of conversation of this meeting has been found, but Kissinger prepared a briefing memorandum for the President prior to the meeting. (Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, February 7; ibid., NSC Files, Box 105, Vietnam Subject Files, [Operating Authorities and Air Operations]) After the trip Nixon met with Laird from 10:51 a.m. to 12:03 p.m. on February 17. (Ibid., White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) No memorandum of conversation of this meeting has been found, but Kissinger prepared a briefing memorandum for the President prior to the meeting with Laird. (Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, February 16; ibid., NSC Files, Box 143, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, February 1–18, 1970)

Last March, I made the first trip by any member of the new Administration to South Vietnam.[3] Since that time, I have devoted a major part of my time to the situation we face there. Not only have I adjusted the Defense organization to concentrate more directly and forcefully on the Vietnam problem, but I have also asked numerous senior Defense officials such as the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Service Secretaries, the Chiefs of Staff, and Assistant Secretaries to visit South Vietnam and study our problems there directly.

Consistent with the concerted attention to Southeast Asia, General Wheeler and I have, at your direction, just completed a four day trip to Vietnam. Three days were spent in consultation with Ambassador Bunker and his colleagues; General Abrams and his staff; and South Vietnam leaders, including President Thieu, Vice President Ky, Prime Minister Khiem, and Defense Minister Vy.[4] In the field, I briefly saw Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) units, and evidence of the progress being made on pacification. Finally, I spent a day at CINCPAC Headquarters in Hawaii, discussing with Admiral McCain the current status of affairs throughout the Pacific region.

In this report, I shall make, first, some general observations. Thereafter, I shall review in somewhat more detail:

a. The current military assessment.
b. The status of the military aspects of Vietnamization.
c. The status of the non-military aspects of Vietnamization, especially the economic issues, as they affect both the United States and the Republic of Vietnam.
d. Progress in joint planning among the Free World Forces in South Vietnam, to include military contingencies and planning for the Paris negotiations, and,
e. The prospects for continuing US troop redeployments.

Finally, I shall draw some conclusions and make some recommendations.

General Observations

When I reported to you last March, I suggested that that trip constituted a beginning. Both symbolically and practically, it was the beginning of new efforts, to come to grips with the complexities and practicalities of the Southeast Asia conflict. The essential purpose of the first trip was to determine, consistent with our manifold national interests, how we could achieve our objectives in Southeast Asia. A key purpose of the recent trip was to see if our objectives in South Vietnam still ap-

[3] For the report of that trip, see Document 38.

[4] Memoranda of Laird's conversations with these Vietnamese officials on February 12 are in the National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 VIET S.

pear valid and if our strategy, programs, and schedules are tailored correctly to meet those objectives. I wanted to see, too, what specific tasks remain before us. While the progress made in the military aspects of Vietnamization is impressive, the work remaining is of monumental proportions. Furthermore, there are other aspects of the general situation and of our involvement which have not been well defined. I have in mind, especially, the economic issues and the planning for new initiatives in Paris. Despite the impressive gains made in Vietnamization this past year, we have, in some respects, barely started down the new course towards our objectives.

That we have so much work remaining should detract in no way from the outstanding jobs Ambassador Bunker, General Abrams and the South Vietnamese have done so far. The enormity of the remaining job is rather a reflection of the scope and depth not only of the communist threat but also of the US involvement over the past few years.

This trip confirmed for me again that we are pursuing a proper and valuable objective in pressing for self-determination in South Vietnam. The uniform view of the US civilian and military leaders in Vietnam and of the GVN leadership is that we are on a proper course towards that objective.

The best characterization of the atmosphere among top US and GVN officials in South Vietnam is one of cautious optimism. I was told on this visit, just as last March, that we now have and can retain sufficient strength to keep the enemy from achieving any kind of military verdict in South Vietnam. I was also told the South Vietnamese were making satisfactory progress in Vietnamization, especially on the military front. All indicators tend to confirm these judgments.

That, in essence, is what the US and GVN leadership in South Vietnam conveyed to me. What I attempted to convey to them was, in my judgment, likewise important. I emphasized the major constraint on US involvement was now economic. Last year, the principal constraint was diminishing US public support. I assured the people with whom I talked US public support is still vital and should not be taken for granted. But, the actual and prospective diminished US funds available for national security are consistently narrowing our operational latitude in Southeast Asia. Comprehension of that problem is vital to continued progress in Vietnamization. I emphasized the key factor, if we are to (a) operate within the resources available and (b) sustain the support of the American people, is to continue shifting the burden of military combat to the South Vietnamese. The fiscal situation provides an incentive and reinforcement to the Vietnamization policy. It also introduces a new element of risk.

I also emphasized the importance of sound joint planning in all aspects of Vietnamization; of insuring the best possible preparation and

use of our negotiating posture in Paris; and of continuing concern for the security of our remaining forces in South Vietnam. All of these facets, I stressed, must be given attention and integrated into the apparatus and policies by which we continue towards our overall objectives. The situation in Vietnam therefore, continues to present a challenge, the dimensions of which are not readily comprehended.

The Current Military Assessments

A continual decline in the intensity of enemy activity occurred, as you know, during 1969. Enemy combat activity continues to be relatively moderate, or even light, in comparison with the experience of 1968 and early 1969. The overall enemy force levels fell from an estimated strength of 260,000 in September 1969 to about 220,000 in December. From information currently available, it appears the enemy's force levels will continue to decline, at least through the foreseeable future. Furthermore, the composition will continue to shift more and more to a predominantly North Vietnamese force.

The enemy's force accessions through infiltration from North Vietnam and conscription in South Vietnam, continue to be moderate at best. The NVA arrivals in South Vietnam over the next 4–5 months are expected to average about 4,500 men per month. The enemy losses through known combat losses and defections—not to mention the uncertain losses through wounded and illness—continue to run well in excess of those estimated accessions.

Furthermore, the composition of the enemy forces, especially the *combat* element, continues, as indicated, to become more North Vietnamese. According to MACV data, the following is the shift in *combat* strength proportions:

	Oct 1965	*Jan 1970*
NVA	26%	72%
VC	74	28
	100%	100%

The conflict is increasingly a North Vietnamese effort on the enemy's part.

Despite the manpower trends cited, General Abrams and his staff believe the enemy is developing the capability to step up the level of combat activity. The most significant indicator of the enemy's intentions is the sharp increase in the level of his logistic activities. The North Vietnamese started to push supplies through the Laotian panhandle earlier during the current dry season than usual. The supply effort has been unprecedented in numerous other respects. These include the volume of traffic, the intensive work on diversifying and keeping open the Lines of Communication (LOCs), and the efforts to protect the LOCs

against air attack. It is difficult to draw precise conclusions from such activity, but it may reflect:

a. The need to replace large caches lost or destroyed last year in South Vietnam.
b. The need to make larger inputs into the supply system to overcome major losses to US air interdiction.
c. The increasing difficulty in moving supplies through Cambodia.
d. The need to complete supply movements before the rainy season begins in April or May.
e. The intention to stockpile adequate supplies for any tactical opportunities which may arise in South Vietnam.

Against the enemy logistics effort, our naval and air elements continue to exert strong pressure. The Navy has erected effective interdiction barriers between Cambodia and the South Vietnamese Delta region. The air components are exerting strong and increasing pressure against the enemy's logistic operations in Laos, as exemplified by the following record:

US Air Operations in South Laos

	Oct 1969	*Nov 1969*	*Dec 1969*
Attack Sorties	5,421	8,555	10,201
B52 Sorties	358	569	619
Total	5,779	9,124	10,820

In General Abrams' and President Thieu's judgment, the enemy may be expected to look for appropriate "targets of opportunity" in South Vietnam. The massive logistics effort, therefore, does not necessarily portend intensive or widespread military operations in the near future. The logistics push simply gives the enemy the capability to initiate action, if and when he chooses to do so.

The enemy has probably not yet decided, General Abrams believes, where or when to institute combat operations. Most of the enemy units are below strength and are not capable now of any major or sustained effort. General Abrams is uncertain about the enemy's reasons for waiting, but probably center on prospects for:

a. A military opportunity in the field,
b. An exploitable political opportunity, such as riots in Saigon, or
c. An exploitable opportunity in the Paris negotiations.

The two geographical areas in which enemy activity is most feasible are the Delta and the DMZ. Consistent with the general conclusion that adequate friendly forces are available, General Abrams believes any prospective confrontation in either of these two critical regions is likewise manageable. In the Delta, MACV feels the distribution of RVNAF/US forces is "ideal." In the DMZ area, our major

reserve is air power. Our resources would be readily concentrated, I was told, to squelch any prospective threat.

Of potentially special importance to the war in South Vietnam is the current enemy activity in Northern Laos. I inquired of General Abrams and his Air Force Commanders why so many attack sorties were being flown in Northern Laos when the enemy was pressing so hard to move supplies through the Southern Laotian panhandle towards South Vietnam. In November and December 1969, for example, more than 3,000 sorties per month were flown in North Laos. If those sorties had been redirected to Southern Laos, our interdiction sortie level could have been increased by as much as 30–40 percent.

General Abrams indicated hard choices are involved in making sortie applications. He believes, however, the war in Northern Laos could impact decisively on the war in South Vietnam and on the Vietnamization program. If, for example, the North Vietnamese were to put sufficient pressure on the Royal Laotian Government in North Laos to cause it to be willing to ask for a cessation of all US air operations in Laos, the North Vietnamese would be provided a major new advantage in threatening the South Vietnamese borders. That situation could radically affect, according to General Abrams' reasoning, the pace and even viability of Vietnamization. I believe we should urgently reassess our general policy vis-à-vis the entire Laotian situation.

Status of Vietnamization from the Military Viewpoint

You made two exceedingly important observations in your November 3, 1969, speech.[5] Those points were:

a. We have a program to Vietnamize the war.
b. The program is working.

Perhaps the most telling report I can make as a result of my trip is that your November 3 observations are still accurate. I was impressed and gratified with the positive attitude towards the policy. Our leaders talk of the program enthusiastically and point with pride to the South Vietnamese accomplishments in the field. This is an area where figures and physical accomplishment speak loudly. We shall have reduced our authorized forces by 115,500 men by mid-April. Simultaneously, the security in South Vietnam, measured by every available indicator, is improving. That is testimony to the success, to date, of our Vietnamization policy and program.

Of special importance in this regard is the hearty endorsement of the concept by the GVN leadership. President Thieu, Vice President Ky,

[5] For text, see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* pp. 901–909.

Prime Minister Khiem and Minister of Defense Vy discussed Vietnamization with enthusiasm and pride. As Ambassador Bunker has reported to you, President Thieu has succeeded in selling the concept as something the Vietnamese want, rather than as something pressed on them by the United States. Though the origins of President Thieu's convictions are vague, he has volunteered, without prompting by US officials, his government's determination that the bulk of US combat forces should be replaced in 1970.

The view in Saigon is that the dilemma for Hanoi must be severe. If the enemy waits to test Vietnamization in the field, he stands to lose ground, both militarily and politically. If he tests Vietnamization in the foreseeable future, he stands to take massive military losses. The best the enemy can hope for, therefore, is some localized and short-term tactical military success.

If the NVA/VC were to achieve such a success, e.g., by overrunning and occupying temporarily a village or town or by inflicting sizeable losses on a South Vietnamese unit, the enemy might then seize the opportunity (a) to claim Vietnamization had failed and/or (b) to make a dramatic overture in Paris for something like a localized or even general cease-fire. This potential sequence of events is the one most frequently talked about in South Vietnam. It seems to be the option given most credibility by US and GVN leaders. Strangely enough, it is an option for which little or no planning has been accomplished. I shall discuss that situation later in more detail.

There are other continuing problems, as one would expect, with implementing Vietnamization. The South Vietnamese believe the continued success of Vietnamization depends in large measure on (a) better living standards for the military and their families[6] and (b) more weapons, especially for the People's Self-Defense Forces. Improved living standards would include such items as increased availability and lower prices on food, the access to perquisites such as commissaries, and the availability of adequate dependent shelters or housing. The crucial issue is that virtually all of the elements cited by the South Vietnamese as important to continued Vietnamization progress would, if provided, put serious pressure on either US or SVN resources, or both. In point of fact, neither the US nor the GVN budgets can readily provide the resources requested in the amounts desired. This problem is one to which we and the Mission in Saigon will devote strenuous effort.

The continued success of Vietnamization, in the estimate of US leaders in Vietnam, depends in large measure on the availability of

[6] Nixon underlined the phrase after (a) and wrote in the margin: "K?"

sound GVN leadership. The problem, in General Abrams' view, evolves not so much around the numbers or rank structure of the leadership, as the quality in a few select positions. General Abrams told me there were 3 or 4 military positions where a change in leadership is required. Conveniently, President Thieu has asked General Abrams for his views and opinions on the leadership problem. This overture has two major pluses, viz, (a) the problem is recognized by the South Vietnamese and (b) we have a good opportunity to make our views known without overriding concern for South Vietnamese sensitivities. General Abrams assured me he will follow through promptly and forcefully on this opportunity.

Status of Non-Military Aspects of Vietnamization

A significant portion of the discussions with the MACV and Embassy Staffs was devoted to the budget realities which must be faced. These budget realities affect both the US and the GVN. Obvious emphasis centered on the cuts which were made in the FY 1970 US Defense budget and which are contained in the budget proposals for FY 1971.

I did not sense that there had been a full realization of the impact of these cuts. One aspect of the problem, therefore, is the need for a clear concept of the prospective budget implications. It appears the difference between current MACV desires, including GVN support, and available resources is on the order of $1 billion. I explained there could be no reliance on supplemental Vietnam appropriations. This left two feasible alternatives, viz, (a) finding ways to use existing resources more effectively, or (b) increasing US redeployments. I emphasized the essentiality of facing these harsh fiscal facts, as the Administration surveyed the total security requirements of our country.

It would no longer be possible, General Wheeler and I noted, to consider Vietnam outlays separately from our world-wide defense needs. Certainly, we acknowledged, Vietnam would continue to hold a high priority. We made the point that the presentation and defense of the budget before Congress was, of course, our assignment and that we did not wish to burden MACV and Embassy Saigon with additional problems. Yet, we felt that a realistic budget assessment by all concerned was essential.

Our conversations with MACV indicate it would be advisable to provide fiscal guidance to the field well in advance of force planning for Vietnamization. As matters now stand, the SVN requests for improvement and modernization, as approved by MACV, price out at considerably more than the amount provided in the FY 1971 budget. The idea is to be sure all those involved in Vietnamization address priorities and tradeoffs to adjust the program to available resources.

It was my feeling that the participants in our budget discussions, whatever their frustration about the budget picture, were pleased that we had laid the facts on the line and had not attempted to avoid the problem. This attitude of candor prevailed throughout. I am not certain that in past years attention was given at such meetings to the fact that Vietnam war costs have such a direct relationship to our total national defense needs, or that difficult tradeoffs are involved.

In the course of our discussions on the budget situation, it became clear that other economic aspects of Vietnamization are fraught with potential hazards. The South Vietnamese economy, in its major parameters, is almost totally supported by the United States. This includes sustenance of war costs, a viable foreign exchange position, keeping price instability within manageable bounds, and maintaining some prospect for economic growth. As part of the war effort, designed to attract popular support to the cause, we have followed a policy of raising the standard of living for the SVN populace rather than imposing a regime of austerity.

A prerequisite for Vietnamizing the economic institutions and apparatus is first and foremost some definition of the problem. If a stable and reliable SVN economy is to be insured, we must obtain a clear picture of:

a. What the war is costing.
b. How much of the cost is being borne internally and how much externally.
c. What costs are valid and what are not.
d. How the cost and its distribution will change with Vietnamization, and,
e. How the current and future costs should be funded, both internally and externally.

Such a definition does not now exist. It is a matter of the utmost urgency that we obtain this understanding. The South Vietnamese shall be proceeding in the meantime between the Scylla and Charybdis of potentially destructive economic failure, from phenomena such as hyperinflation, and the equally destructive possibility of military failure because of too few resources to accomplish the security mission. This is a matter to which we and the South Vietnamese must devote immediate and concerted attention. Ambassador Bunker has promised the application to the problem of his Mission staff. I shall insure equally concerted attention by my staff.

In other discussions, we reviewed the actions essential to maintain and strengthen the credibility of the Vietnamization program. All agreed your policy of abstinence from public long-range forecasts has been important. The newsmen in South Vietnam, with whom I met on three separate occasions, continue to be skeptical, if not cynically

pessimistic, about Vietnamization. The problem is that, given such a viewpoint, the media will be disposed to elaborate on and, perhaps distort, any temporary setbacks in the Vietnamization program. I know of no way to handle the situation except to (a) recognize the situation; (b) try to obtain media access to South Vietnamese units so they can see the progress for themselves; (c) continue to ask the Embassy and MACV to convey their message, which they do convincingly, to the many US visitors to South Vietnam; and (d) continue to admonish in every possible public forum that some temporary tactical setbacks to Vietnamization must be expected.

All of these actions are being taken.

Both Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams told us how pleased they were in the confidence you have demonstrated in them and in their staffs. They commented, particularly, on the fact there was a minimum of "crash management" from Washington. The importance of their positive attitude and the aura of mutual confidence cannot be quantified. Neither, in my view, should it be underestimated. We should continue to cultivate it.

In the same vein, I was impressed with Vice President Ky's remarks about working relationships between the US officials and the GVN. As I have reported separately to you, the Vice President said that, for the first time in years, there was true mutual understanding between officials of our two countries. "There exists now," he said, "a real common objective and a real common policy with full understanding between our two nations." Most importantly, Ky concluded, the necessary elements for "bigger and faster progress" in Vietnamization were present.

Status of Joint Planning

In every discussion I had with our US officials and the GVN leadership, I raised the topic of joint planning. My premise was that, to make Vietnamization meaningful, it was necessary to involve the GVN increasingly. I wanted to know how good our joint planning was and how it could be improved.

I was assured by both General Abrams that from a military standpoint, in both form and substance, joint planning had "advanced tremendously." The military proposals being tabled now in numerous aspects of Vietnamization are emanating from the Vietnamese. In General Abrams' words, "that would have been unthinkable as recently as one year ago."

There are problems, however. One is in the area of contingency planning in the event of significantly increased, albeit localized, enemy activity. General Abrams is confident that any enemy military initiative can be handled. The plan is to use air power as the principal re-

serve resource. I have the impression, however, that because the reserve resources are principally US, the planning ancillary to situations stemming from major enemy initiatives is also largely US. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and I shall monitor this situation.

A more disturbing problem in the joint planning area involves political or negotiating contingencies which may arise. As I indicated earlier, one of the enemy courses of action deemed most likely by both US and GVN leadership is a sharp enemy military move, followed by a Paris initiative involving some cease-fire feature. Surprisingly, little has been done, or is being done, to think through the handling of such a situation—or of similar situations.[7] Ambassador Bunker was candid in rendering this judgment. In fact, he reasoned, Hanoi would be smart to follow the strategy of occupying one or two towns and then appealing for a cease-fire. General Abrams concurred in that conclusion, contending such a tactic would have been prudent for the enemy at various times during and since TET 1968. Ambassador Bunker informed us the GVN Foreign Minister was scheduled to present a paper shortly which might serve as the basis for contingency planning. I believe we must move expeditiously in this area, taking the initiative, if necessary.

Ancillary to the point of initiatives is another bothersome aspect of joint planning. Perhaps the war, and now Vietnamization, have become so routine that new proposals and new initiatives are scarcely feasible. No particularly new or fresh concepts were offered during our visit. I was somewhat surprised and disappointed.[8]

It seems to me new ideas should be generated—not just at the local level in Vietnam where I am certain there is continuing innovation—but in the broad policy areas as well. I elaborated to our officials and the GVN leadership the recently proposed idea of a large-scale NVA prisoner-of-war release.[9] It was an idea that all agreed has merit. There would be little or no probability of Hanoi's acceptance; but the proposal itself, if made, would put Hanoi on the defensive. It would add new pressure on Hanoi to make concessions concerning US and GVN prisoners they hold. It would detract from Hanoi's ability to foment US and world opinion against our policies and programs in Southeast Asia. But the point is not the potential merit in this one idea. Rather, the point is that so few ideas and new concepts of that kind are

[7] Nixon underlined this sentence and wrote "K" in the margin.

[8] Nixon underlined the two previous sentences and wrote in the margin: "K. Can we shake them up?"

[9] Nixon underlined the phrase, "a large-scale NVA prisoner-of-war release" and wrote in the margin: "K. follow up."

being generated. We must give attention to eliciting, encouraging, and developing fresh new policy and tactical concepts.

A new-concepts area of special significance could be that of guarding against a "wait-and-strike-later" strategy by Hanoi. Faced with the dilemma ascribed to earlier, Hanoi could opt now to lay low, conduct a low-intensity war in South Vietnam, and wait out the US withdrawal. In the wake of that withdrawal, Hanoi might plan to step up its military efforts, seize the initiative, and try to roll up the South Vietnamese forces. The military part of the Vietnamization program is designed to handle such a threat. But there may be other military, political, and economic barriers which would be useful against such an eventuality. Such barriers could be based, for the most part, on involving the national interests of as many other nations as possible in South Vietnam. Among the ideas worthy of consideration might be establishing an international military force along the DMZ and encouraging the earliest possible introduction of foreign capital into public or private ventures in South Vietnam. Confronted with a situation in which renewed attacks would constitute aggression against the military, political, and economic interests of numerous nations, Hanoi might be inhibited in any "wait-and-strike-later" approach.

In any event, these are the kinds of areas in which we should renew our efforts for fresh new initiatives.

Planning for Continued US Redeployments

There is no doubt in Saigon, among US or GVN officials, that US troop redeployments will continue. There is likewise no doubt that the ultimate goal is for a relatively small military assistance group. The question is one of force composition and timing. The South Vietnamese are perhaps more confident on the potential and feasible redeployment rates than our US leadership. Ambassador Bunker made the point cogently when he reasoned that in terms of ARVN combat power "Vietnamization [has][10] proceeded more rapidly than US redeployments."

General Abrams is more cautious. He makes the point that, despite an "entirely satisfactory" current military situation and an RVNAF modernization program that is "moving well," the next redeployment increment, i.e., number four, will be the "crunch" increment. He argues that RVNAF leadership is still weak in some areas. He also argues that, if military difficulties ensue in the wake of the redeployment announcement or movement, the psychological impact could be severe. Finally, he notes increasing problems in handling the logistics aspects of redeployment.

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[10] Brackets in the source text.

I am not certain I fully understand all of General Abrams' argument about the gravity of the next increment. While contending the RVNAF leadership is weak in some areas, which it almost certainly is, he also noted that perhaps as few as four major leadership positions now need President Thieu's attention. Furthermore, General Abrams made a convincing case for the enemy's inability in the foreseeable future to mount any wide, sustained, or decisive military moves. General Abrams speaks confidently of his ability to use air reserves as an adequate source of reserve power. Presumably, a fourth redeployment increment could be devised which impacted relatively little on that reserve power. Additionally, I have directed a full-scale effort by the logistics staffs at all echelons towards easing the postulated logistics problems. Finally, the GVN leadership spoke with confidence of their ability to fill in behind continuing US redeployments. Ambassador Bunker conveyed to me their confidence is sincere.

Therefore, the prediction the next redeployment increment will be "the crunch," at least to date, is not entirely consistent with all the other observable factors. Nevertheless, there could be an element of self-fulfillment about feelings of uncertainty and potential psychological reactions to the next US troop movements. We shall be advised, I believe, to weigh the timing, force composition, and risks carefully. I am prepared to believe redeployment increment four will be more difficult than the immediately succeeding increments.

Still another element of redeployment planning which must bear close scrutiny is the concept, at least as expressed publicly, of the role of the so-called security force after our main combat elements have departed.

As you know, there is a common, though misguided, feeling that, when our troop strengths have declined to about the 250,000 level, we shall have few or no combat troops left in South Vietnam. That is not the plan nor has it ever been the plan.[11] While major combat elements will have departed by that juncture, the remaining force will be weighted as much as 60 percent with combat troops. They are to provide the security assurance which is absolutely vital for the remaining support elements.

General Abrams makes the valid point, with strong conviction, that such remaining combat elements—called security elements, or whatever—must be free to stay active and aggressive in the field. Without such freedom, they will lose their sharpness. Rather than holding down casualty levels, they will, under such circumstances, be apt to sustain higher casualty levels.

The point is that after our so-called combat elements have redeployed, US units must be free to maintain an active and forceful

[11] Nixon underlined the previous two sentences and wrote "K" in the margin.

combat posture. The issue may be one of semantics. It is an important concept, however, on which we must have agreement and a common voice.[12] I support General Abrams' view. Our field commanders should be free to use their resources in whatever way will keep US casualties low. We can and perhaps should portray the operations as "protective reaction," i.e., using whatever means are necessary to safeguard our troops properly. In any event, I repeat my conviction we should agree on the concept and present it with a common voice.

Another aspect of redeployment planning and technique which I emphasized consistently was the procedure on redeployment announcements. All the officials with whom I talked, including President Thieu and Vice President Ky, agreed we should *not* make public announcements on Vietnamization schedules more than 4–5 months in advance. The principal reasons are twofold: (a) to create doubt and uncertainty in Hanoi, and (b) to preclude unnecessary risks of credibility problems, especially in the United States.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Our fighting men in Southeast Asia, under the superb leadership of General Abrams, are fully supported and currently have the resources in men, material, and facilities to accomplish their assigned tasks with maximum safety and security. This is the same conclusion I offered last March, have offered consistently since that time, and which I am pleased to repeat now.

2. Steady progress is being made in the application of military and political pressure on the enemy. There is every indication this pressure and progress will continue.

3. The combination of US, Republic of Vietnam, and other Free World forces is adequate to meet the prospective enemy threat. We should, however, reassess the nature of the threat in Laos and the options for dealing with that threat.

4. Our Vietnamization objectives are valid and the military aspects of the program are proceeding satisfactorily. There are serious problems to be faced, however, in finding and allocating the resources now being postulated as the basis for the on-going program. Hard choices will have to be faced and/or new ideas will have to be generated on either getting more from the resources available or accepting the risks associated with faster redeployments.

5. Progress in the non-military aspects of Vietnamization is less positive. Some glaring, and potentially critical, deficiencies exist in such

[12] Nixon underlined the first three sentences of this paragraph and wrote "*Correct*" in the margin.

areas as economic planning.[13] We should join with the Vietnamese in attacking this problem with realism and urgency. I shall give the problem my immediate and continuing attention and shall insure that my staff does likewise. Perhaps an interagency economic task force, preferably chaired by the Council of Economic Advisors, should be organized in Washington to coordinate planning and actions in the economic area of Vietnamization.

6. Major progress has been made in the field of joint planning. It continues to progress satisfactorily in the military area. There are major gaps, however, in our planning for contingencies that involve economic issues or prospective political and negotiation initiatives. In concert with State Department officials—in Washington, Saigon, and Paris—and with the GVN leadership—in Saigon and Paris—we must accelerate and solidify our contingency planning.

7. Continuing US troop redeployments are now an agreed assumption. The issues are those of force composition and timing. There are tough alternatives among which to choose and there are risks to be faced in the days ahead. Redeployment increment four may involve more problems than we have faced to date or will face in succeeding increments. General Wheeler and I shall address that situation and make appropriate recommendations to you as warranted.

Melvin R. Laird

[13] Nixon underlined and highlighted this sentence and wrote in the margin: "K—we need a new Economic man *fast*—"

188. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 18, 1970.

SUBJECT

Special National Intelligence Estimate on Factors Affecting North Vietnam's Policy on the Vietnam War

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 144, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, March 1970. Secret. Sent for information. A note on the top of the memorandum reads: "ret'd, 2/20/70"

The attached Special National Intelligence Estimate on North Vietnam (Tab A)[2] concludes the following:

—The most likely course for Hanoi during 1970 is to pursue prolonged war tactics much along present lines. The North Vietnamese will continue to try to maintain sufficient military pressure to impose U.S. casualties, to inflict setbacks on Vietnamization and pacification and perhaps to engage in major tests of Vietnamization.

—The Communists will not be prepared to negotiate a general settlement in Vietnam, but they might see some utility in probing the possibility of arrangements which might hasten or fix a timetable for U.S. withdrawal. In this process, any concessions that Hanoi might make would be limited and not aimed at an overall settlement. Hanoi is counting on the odds swinging in its favor once the U.S. withdrawal has become militarily significant.

—Hanoi will not undertake an all-out military effort which would involve greater risks and heavier losses than it seems willing to contemplate at this time. Moreover, such action taken in the next six months would slow U.S. departure rather than hasten it.

—The Communists are in trouble in South Vietnam, and they recognize it themselves. They fear that they have overemphasized military action and neglected the political and subversive base. They are now making a great effort to restructure their apparatus in South Vietnam and enhance its staying power.

—While the Communists believe that they can prevail over the South Vietnamese Government structure over the long run, they cannot be certain of this so long as U.S. forces are in the South. They believe that Vietnamization presents the risk of an indefinite American presence, and they thus see themselves faced for the first time with an allied strategy designed to challenge their fundamental assumption. They see the Vietnamization program as essentially fragile but they recognize that it might work long enough and well enough to give the GVN a fair chance of holding its own. Hanoi particularly fears the pacification program.

—Ho Chi Minh's death[3] has complicated the task of achieving a united policy in Hanoi, though the leadership does not yet seem immobilized or in a state of disarray over policy differences or succession disputes.

—North Vietnam is suffering from economic problems, popular malaise and a degree of disaffection with the regime's goals, and from

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[2] Tab A is SNIE 14.3–70, "The Outlook From Hanoi: Factors Affecting North Vietnam's Policy on the War in Vietnam," February 5; attached but not printed.

[3] Ho Chi Minh died on September 3, 1969.

manpower problems which are perhaps more qualitative than quantitative. There has been a general domestic letdown within the North. This situation has probably compelled the leadership to give more of its attention to the North than it has had to do in earlier years.

—The Sino-Soviet conflict, if it remains at present levels, is a complicating but not determining factor in North Vietnamese policy calculations. Even if hostilities break out, the North Vietnamese leadership would be reasonably certain that it would still get the support it needs. However, if the hostilities spread and persist, Hanoi would deem it prudent to scale down its effort in the South and perhaps to move toward a cease-fire.

Comment: The judgments contained in the estimate impress us as being valid. We would add, though, that the estimate's analysis of Hanoi's policy glosses over somewhat the real dilemmas which Hanoi currently faces. To challenge the pacification program it must commit its main force units which it has been holding in the base areas along the Cambodian and Laotian borders; however, these units when committed run the risk of heavy losses and military defeat. On the other hand, if it holds back its main force units to avoid casualties and to keep its forces in being, its infrastructure in the countryside continues to suffer under the pacification program and its access to the people for food supply and combat support erodes further. The longer it delays, the worse off it finds itself militarily in the South—always the key element in Hanoi's calculations. Meanwhile, by stalling on the negotiations, Hanoi permits the U.S. to carry out Vietnamization at its own pace. The alternative is to offer concessions which the North Vietnamese are presently loathe to make. We believe we can see the pressures beginning to build up on Hanoi for some movement—the French Delegate General in Hanoi, for example, has reported that the North Vietnamese leaders seem depressed and aware that things have not gone as planned—although we doubt that any policy changes have yet been decided upon.

189. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Paris, February 21, 1970, 9:40 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Le Duc Tho, Adviser to the North Vietnamese Delegation
Xuan Thuy, Chief of Delegation
Mai van Bo, North Vietnamese Delegate General in Paris
North Vietnamese Interpreter
Two Other North Vietnamese Officials
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Major General Vernon Walters, Defense Attaché, American Embassy, Paris
W. Richard Smyser, NSC Staff
W.A.K. Lake, NSC Staff

After introducing those accompanying him, particularly Mr. Smyser (so that they would know he was no longer with the Delegation), Mr. Kissinger said that it had been very complicated coming to Paris from Washington. He had told the French he was coming but not why. President Pompidou had invited him to lunch, and he had accepted as it provided a good pretext for being in Paris. Mr. Kissinger said that he would therefore have to leave around 12:15 p.m. In principle, he said, he could return later in the afternoon if it seemed necessary. They could decide whether another meeting would be desirable at the end of the current meeting.

At any rate, Mr. Kissinger said, they should know that the Pompidou lunch is a secret. No one in the United States Government knew he was in Paris except for the President and Mr. Kissinger's associates here at the meeting. We would like to keep this meeting a secret. The other side had been very reliable in this regard. (The North Vietnamese smiled.) Indeed, they had been more reliable than some of Mr. Kissinger's colleagues, he said. (More smiles.)

Xuan Thuy said that Mr. Kissinger had asked for this meeting through General Walters to tell them something further than what he had said previously. With regard to another meeting during the afternoon, Xuan Thuy said that could be decided later.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. II. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only. No drafting information appears on the source text. The meeting took place at 11 Rue Darthe, one of the residences of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Paris. Kissinger sent Nixon this memorandum on February 25 and explained in an attached note that because the conversation was so lengthy, he had "indicated the most important remarks by a line in the margin." (Ibid.) During the meeting, Walters translated Kissinger's remarks into French and the North Vietnamese interpreter translated the French into Vietnamese. The process was reversed when Le Duc Tho or Xuan Thuy spoke. (Walters, *Silent Missions,* p. 515)

Mr. Kissinger said that it was always a pleasure to see them. He knew them better than he knew many other people, as he reads what they say with great care. In his communication to Xuan Thuy,[2] Mr. Kissinger said, he had indicated that there should be a meeting if both sides were ready to speak outside the normal framework—not just us.

Mr. Kissinger said he would like to begin with a few observations. He wanted first to discuss with them the general attitude of the President with regard to negotiations at Paris.

On January 14, 1969, Le Duc Tho had had a conversation with Governor Harriman and Mr. Vance.[3] He had said there were three ways to achieve a settlement. First, by good will; second, for us to try to negotiate from a firm position of strength—which would not work; and third, without negotiations, for us to try to gain military victory—which also would not work. Mr. Kissinger said that we are approaching the negotiations with good will and serious intent. The discussions he had with them should start from this assumption.

Of course, Mr. Kissinger continued, we all know that negotiations between our two sides are extremely difficult. It is difficult to decide what we are trying to achieve; and even agreeing on that, it is hard then to do it. Also, he said, the North Vietnamese have a long history of not being easy to negotiate with. (Mai van Bo and Xuan Thuy smiled; Tho did not.)

We recognize the negotiations are made harder by their distrust, Mr. Kissinger said, a distrust which is rooted in history. But he did not wish to discuss this history. If negotiations are to progress, we must surmount this mistrust. However difficult it will be to overcome this distrust now, it will be harder one or two years from now, or whenever we make peace. And sooner or later, we will have to make peace.

Mr. Kissinger asked if, as a professor on leave, he could next make a theoretical point. He had read that they believed they had been tricked in 1956 and that we were trying to trick them now. But we are not, he said, trying to do so—not because we are particularly benevolent, but because it would not be in our interest. We have learned that they fight when they believe they have been tricked. After a settlement, Mr. Kissinger said, they would be closer to South Vietnam than we. Therefore, we will want a settlement which is in their interest.

It was in this spirit, Mr. Kissinger continued, that he had come a long way to this meeting—in order to make one basic point. We all

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[2] See Document 166.

[3] As reported in telegram 734/Delto 1173 from Paris, January 16. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 172, Paris Talks/Meetings, Paris Talks, Vol. I, Nodis/Paris Meeting Plus)

could sit here and use phrases like good will, or endlessly discuss issues along the lines of speeches we know by heart from the Majestic meetings. But the problem is how to bring the negotiations to a conclusion. For this, we need agreement on the objectives of the negotiations and a program of work.

Last August, Mr. Kissinger went on, when he had had a private meeting with Messrs. Xuan Thuy and his old acquaintance Mai van Bo, he had suggested a settlement in a specific period of time.[4] For some reasons, the other side did not agree. Mr. Kissinger said that he believed we had all missed an opportunity. Now, we believe that the other side's situation is not better. Nor will it get better. We should now see if we can accomplish something.[5]

Mr. Kissinger said that when they had met in August, he had indicated he did not believe it was in their interest to make this Mr. Nixon's war, as once they had done so, it would be difficult for him not to try to win it. He had said that they were an heroic people, and no one knew the result of such a sequence of events. We would prefer not to test it.

When they had met in August, Mr. Kissinger said, it was reasonable for the other side to believe that our domestic situation would become more and more complicated. In the interval, our domestic situation had become stronger. Mr. Kissinger said he would explain why. The North Vietnamese in Paris see many Americans who are extremely sympathetic with their position. But in the last election, the big bloc of votes which could make a difference was not on the left, but on the right. Last October, when there had been a public opinion problem, the President moved toward these votes. Mr. Kissinger said that he was speaking in a good spirit, but it was important that the other side understand that the normal support of a Republican administration is on the right; the President can appeal to people whom President Johnson could not reach. Mr. Kissinger said that the Administration does not want to move this way, but the President may have to.

Mr. Kissinger stated we also believe that since August 1969 the situation in South Vietnam has become more problematical for the other side. We know that they may not agree with this assessment, but don't wish to argue it. We would simply say that nothing is to be gained by waiting.

Finally, Mr. Kissinger said, it is our judgment that the international situation has complications which may make Vietnam no longer the undivided concern of other countries and may mean that Vietnam will

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[4] See the attachment to Document 106.

[5] Kissinger highlighted this and the following paragraph for the President.

not enjoy the undivided support of countries which now support it. He would simply say that this was another reason why we believe there is nothing to be gained by waiting.

Mr. Kissinger said that he was saying this in a good spirit and with an attitude of trying to resolve the conflict—not from any attitude of hostility or intransigence. He was at the meeting to discuss whether they could agree on the objectives of the negotiations and a work program.

Many people, Mr. Kissinger continued, seem to believe that the negotiations are like a long, drawn-out mystery in which their side throws out faint clues and we guess at the solution which has eluded us so long. Minister Xuan Thuy, he said, is expert at making enigmatic declarations to visiting Americans, to make them believe that they are at the edge of something. Having read everything that the other side had said over the years, Mr. Kissinger held the opposite view. When they had something new to say, they made it clear. Therefore, Mr. Kissinger said, we believe we should speak frankly from a clear position. He hoped they could be clear in this channel.

Mr. Kissinger therefore wished to state two propositions: First, it seems to us that the other side wants as a condition of negotiations to be guaranteed political predominance, with us to rely on their good faith and self-restraint. On the other hand, to them, it may seem that we seek military predominance and would have them rely on our good faith and self-restraint. We believe, Mr. Kissinger said, that the task we have here is to see if we can resolve this difference.[6]

In order to make clear our position, Mr. Kissinger said, he would like to put forward some views of the President. Mr. Le Duc Tho once said that he thought the U.S. wants to drag out the war in order to strengthen the government in Saigon, and so we did not want to withdraw our troops. Mr. Kissinger said he was at the meeting to tell them that we agree to the principle of total withdrawal of American forces and there would be no American bases in Vietnam after the conclusion of negotiations. We prefer negotiations to Vietnamization and would choose the latter only if it were obvious that negotiations would not succeed.[7]

Secondly, he continued, we recognize that Hanoi has a special problem in placing their troops on the same legal basis as ours, since they do not consider them foreign troops and indeed have never

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[6] The North Vietnamese did not understand the translation of this. Mr. Kissinger said that at Harvard, "heavy words" are often confused with profundity. Everyone laughed, and Mai Van Bo said that Xuan Thuy is not the only one to make enigmatic statements. [Footnote in the source text.]

[7] Kissinger highlighted this and the next two paragraphs for the President.

admitted their presence in the South. Mr. Kissinger said that we respect their attitude, and are interested in practical, not theoretical, solutions.

With respect to a political solution, Mr. Kissinger said, there are two ways of dealing with it. First, after withdrawal of external military forces, the South Vietnamese could settle it among themselves. Secondly, if it is to be part of our negotiations, we would follow the following principles:

—The political solution must reflect the existing political realities in South Vietnam and we realize that neither side can be expected to give up in negotiations what had not been conceded on the battlefield.

—We believe that a fair political process must register the existing relationship of political forces.

The question then, Mr. Kissinger said, is how to proceed. We could proceed in this channel to discuss their ten points and our eight points.[8] This was attempted at some private meetings.[9] While we are ready to proceed this way, it was Mr. Kissinger's personal opinion that we would quickly arrive at serious disagreements. Therefore, he said, another way of proceeding might be to put aside their ten points and our eight points, and define some general principles—objectives—of what we might achieve. The details could be negotiated in the meetings between our delegations at the Majestic Hotel. If this procedure is adopted, we would be ready to send a new negotiating team which is not married to the old form of the negotiations.

We would approach such a procedure with a constructive attitude, Mr. Kissinger continued, attempting to take into account their concerns, and in the hope that this would be their attitude as well. We would also suggest setting a deadline of June 1 or July 1—we are flexible about the exact date—to let us know what we are working towards. The President had also authorized Mr. Kissinger to say that he would let Mr. Kissinger go on participating in these discussions.

Once we establish such a timetable, he said, we will do our best to maintain it, but progress depends on maintaining what we have done to date. Mr. Kissinger said that he would tell them in all frank-

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[8] The 10-point peace program was put forward by the National Liberation Front at the 16th plenary session of the Paris negotiations on May 8, 1969. The text of the NLF's 10-point program is in Stebbins and Adam, *Documents on American Foreign Policy, 1968–1969,* pp. 249–252. Nixon responded with an eight-point program which he enumerated in a May 14 televised address to the nation. The text of Nixon's eight-point program is in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* p. 373.

[9] Kissinger highlighted the rest of this paragraph beginning at this point and the next two paragraphs for the President.

ness that an increase in violence would be inconsistent with this, would be to no one's advantage, and could have serious consequences.

At our last meeting, Mr. Kissinger said, Minister Xuan Thuy said that their side wants peace, not war. We feel the same way. The President will be in office another seven years. It is not necessary or desirable for either side to prove its courage any further. They have proved the great skill, tenacity, and heroism with which they could make war. Mr. Kissinger said he was at the meeting to see if we could make peace. We want a peace which both sides will wish to maintain; any other peace will not last. Strange as this may seem after all we have been through together, an independent, prosperous, and self-reliant Vietnam is in our national interest as we see it. In any historic period, we are not a threat to Vietnamese independence.

Mr. Kissinger said he would like to conclude by repeating something President Nixon had said in his speech to the UN: "The people of Vietnam, North and South alike, have demonstrated heroism enough to last a century. When the war ends, the United States will stand ready to help the people of Vietnam—all of them—in their tasks of renewal and reconstruction."[10]

Mr. Kissinger said that he was at the meeting in that spirit, and expected it to carry over into our future relationship.

He then apologized for speaking so long, explaining that Harvard professors always speak for 55 minutes. (North Vietnamese smiles.)

(There was then a 10-minute break. Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy went off to consult.)

After the break, Mr. Kissinger noted that Joe Kraft had urged him to see Le Duc Tho, whom Kraft greatly admired. Kraft would probably soon write articles accusing Mr. Kissinger of being war-like. (North Vietnamese smiles.)

Xuan Thuy then said that since he had last met Mr. Kissinger on August 4, the negotiations between the U.S., DRV, PRG, and Saigon administration, at the Avenue Kleber, as well as the private meetings, had obviously deteriorated.

Mr. Kissinger had suggested at that time that we should reach a settlement by November 1st. But Xuan Thuy remembered that on August 4 Mr. Kissinger did not raise any concrete contents in his remarks. Mr. Kissinger had suggested that they open another forum between Xuan Thuy and the U.S. As for the North Vietnamese, they had put forward two concrete points for August 4. Xuan Thuy had said on that

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[10] Kissinger is quoting two extracts from the Vietnam portion of the President's address to the 24th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, September 18, 1969. (*Public Papers: Nixon, 1969,* pp. 725–727)

day that the U.S. should withdraw its troops rapidly within five or six months. Secondly, the formation of a provisional coalition government including three components had been raised. Since that meeting was concluded, the North Vietnamese did not see any response from the U.S. side. Therefore, between the two dates of August 4 and the end of October, if we had not settled any questions, it was not on account of the North Vietnamese side but because the U.S. did not give any answer to their proposals.

Then in November, Xuan Thuy continued, President Nixon gave a speech[11] that the North Vietnamese have publicly qualified as a war speech. Public opinion has also considered it a war speech.

Mr. Kissinger asked: Whose public opinion? Xuan Thuy replied, "The U.S. and elsewhere."

Mr. Kissinger said, "not in the U.S." President Nixon's popularity has increased 20%, he noted. Xuan Thuy said that this was Mr. Kissinger's assessment. He was speaking of his own. Mr. Kissinger had a theory from Harvard, he said smiling, and he had one from Hanoi. Mr. Kissinger said that they should wait until he lectured at Harvard on public opinion in North Vietnam.

Xuan Thuy said that Mr. Nixon's November speech had put emphasis on Vietnamization, and belittled the Paris negotiations. Actually, he said, the policy of Vietnamization was applied before President Nixon made his speech. But in his November speech, he publicly announced emphasis on Vietnamization. Since then, the U.S. Government side made great publicity about the success of Vietnamization. This is its right—Xuan Thuy would not argue about that. But from their point of view, they could see that if Vietnamization does not bring any success, but the U.S. believes it does, this would be subjective thinking. If it is really not a success, and the U.S. says it is, that would be deceiving U.S. public opinion.

With regard to the Paris conference, Xuan Thuy said that since the August meeting, the U.S. Government had agreed to the retirement of Ambassador Lodge without naming a successor.

Now, he continued, Mr. Kissinger says that the U.S. really wants peace. He says that it is the real intention of the U.S. to withdraw all U.S. forces and military bases. But in reality, in practice, one doesn't see any evidence of this desire. With regard to troop withdrawal, the U.S. does withdraw troops, but this the North Vietnamese have characterized as withdrawal by driblets. It has no significance at all in comparison to the total of more than 500,000 men. Besides, many person-

[11] Reference is to Nixon's Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam, November 3, 1969. (Ibid., pp. 901–909)

alities in U.S. political circles have publicly made known the U.S. intention to leave behind 200,000 to 300,000 troops. If the U.S. announced it will totally withdraw its troops without any reservation, but with the withdrawals going on for years and years, this too will have no practical significance at all.

What they would like to know, Xuan Thuy said, is when total withdrawal of U.S. troops—without leaving behind any troops or bases—will be completed.[12]

In the meantime, he continued, U.S. air activity has greatly intensified, as well as the spreading of toxic chemicals. Pacification operations and massacres of the civilian population have also been stepped up.

So they wonder, Xuan Thuy said, how we can say that we have been reducing our activities in South Vietnam. Moreover, reduction is not the act they are demanding. They are demanding the withdrawal of all troops, to put an end to the war.

Xuan Thuy said that in Laos, it is the same thing—the U.S. Air Force carries out activities throughout Laos with increased intensity. All this makes them put an interrogation point on the good faith of the U.S.

Moreover, Xuan Thuy continued, in his November speech President Nixon seemed to make a threat against them. Xuan Thuy had often stated, and even in the meeting on August 4, that threats have no effect at all on the Vietnamese people. It is not their intention to have a test of force with the U.S., because it is known to the whole world that the U.S. has more people and resources than Vietnam, and is technically and scientifically stronger. But the question is that they have to defend their independence, to defend their real freedom and the peace of their people.[13]

Xuan Thuy then recalled that Mr. Kissinger had said that public opinion in the U.S. and the world is now different from what it was in August, and Hanoi could not wait for it. This idea was expressed many times, Xuan Thuy said, by Mr. Cabot Lodge, and now Mr. Kissinger repeated it. Xuan Thuy had been answering that the Vietnamese people are fighting for genuine independence, freedom and peace. In fighting, they rely mainly on their own force, on their own line and policy, on their own spirit, on the cohesion and unity of the Vietnamese people. In the past, when fighting against other imperialist powers, it had been the same thing. They have been fighting U.S. aggression for tens of years. This is not a new fact. But the anti-war movement in the U.S. and the world began only a few years ago. Before the movements

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[12] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph for the President.

[13] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph for the President.

began, on what did they rely to fight aggression? Therefore, they don't wait for the peace movement in the U.S. But naturally, Xuan Thuy said, if the anti-war movements in the U.S. and the world support their struggle, they must be grateful to them.

Xuan Thuy said that what they are waiting for is when Vietnam will be really free, independent, and peaceful. As long as Vietnam is not free, independent and peaceful, the Vietnamese people have no other way but to fight for these objectives.

Xuan Thuy said that Mr. Kissinger had asked what could be our objectives. Xuan Thuy said he did not know about American objectives. For them, it is to carry on negotiations and come to real freedom, independence, and peace for Vietnam. To do so, the U.S. must stop reconnaissance flights over the DRV and stop bombing raids between the 19th and 17th parallels. As for South Vietnam, the U.S. should totally withdraw its troops and those of other countries in the U.S. camp, and put an end to all acts—chemical warfare, bombing raids, and massacres of the civilian population.

Xuan Thuy said that they have spoken about rapid withdrawal. Mrs. Binh had put it more concretely. If the U.S. agrees to withdraw in six months, concrete discussions could be held about the security of the troops as they left.[14] As for the political program, Xuan Thuy said, they have proposed a coalition government including the three components. This would not be a monopoly of anyone—of the NLF, the PRG, or of the Saigon administration. It would belong to the people of South Vietnam.

Moreover, Xuan Thuy continued, in August Mr. Kissinger had raised the question of keeping the existing format at Kleber and establishing a new format as well. If so, the U.S. should have appointed a new head to the delegation, because Xuan Thuy had agreed to those procedures.

Xuan Thuy then asked if he could remark that Mr. Kissinger had had to make arrangements at home in order to come to Paris, which had involved him in complexities. He too had work at home, in Hanoi. He had been in Paris for two years, which shows that the North Vietnamese want peace too.

Now, Xuan Thuy said, with regard to a peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese war, if we thought the situation had deteriorated for their side and they thought it had deteriorated for our side, it would take much time to speak of this.

So, Xuan Thuy said, that is the fact of the matter. Mr. Kissinger had come a long way. They were prepared to settle the matter, Xuan

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[14] The second of the NLF's 10 points of May 8, 1969.

Thuy said. If we wanted to talk, we should go straight into the heart of the matter, and find a solution.

Xuan Thuy said that he had listened to Mr. Kissinger's explanation, and found no great differences from last time. There are two main questions:

—The first is troop withdrawals, and Mr. Kissinger had not said when they would be completed.

—The second concerns the government. Mr. Kissinger still was saying that neither side could give up at the negotiation table what had not been conceded on the battlefield. The U.S. still placed emphasis not on troop withdrawals, but on settlement among the Vietnamese. This is the main thing.

For them, Xuan Thuy said, they think that if there is a settlement it should be a "package settlement." It could cover how really to respect the right of the South Vietnamese people to self-determination and how to really end the war.[15]

And so, Xuan Thuy said, he thought that with regard to how to proceed in the negotiations, that is one question. We should go straight into the problem. Then the question of how to proceed can be easily solved. This is what he had to say about Mr. Kissinger's explanations. They would agree to meet again at 4:00 p.m. or 4:30 p.m.

Mr. Kissinger asked if he could make two or three points about what Minister Xuan Thuy had said, so that they could begin on a positive note in the afternoon. He said that he would speak with the frankness which is the only point of a meeting where he met with people of their level.

Mr. Kissinger said that Minister Xuan Thuy had stated that they made two specific proposals at the last meeting, to which we didn't respond. He would like to point out two things:

—Both had been made before, and did not require his presence in Paris.

—It is easy to make proposals demanding that the other side do something. This is not a negotiation. This, he believed, is the difficulty of our negotiations. Minister Xuan Thuy and others have said repeatedly that if we withdraw in six months, they will discuss the modalities. But we don't have to discuss this with them—we could do it on our own—and would not expect them to do anything about it. They would not—and could not—oppose our withdrawal.

Mr. Kissinger said that he was at the meeting to tell them on behalf of the President that we are willing in negotiations to fix a

[15] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph and the first three sentences of the next paragraph for the President.

deadline for U.S. withdrawal, so that the other side can see whether all Americans have really withdrawn. All the discussions of how many troops will remain under Vietnamization are theoretical. If Vietnamization succeeds, we will withdraw the most. If it does not, we will be in an uncertain area.[16]

Mr. Kissinger said that we face an area of conflicting judgments. They believe our judgments are subjective. We believe theirs are subjective. The only way we can find out who is right is to continue the war. They have told us that they prefer not to do that. We feel the same way.

We read every word that Minister Xuan Thuy, Le Duc Tho and other North Vietnamese said with the greatest care. In reading the records of the negotiations in August, September and October, we came to the conclusion that nothing was happening. Certainly they made no effort to activate this channel after we had opened it in August, and this meeting was being held at Mr. Kissinger's initiative. Mr. Kissinger said we believe that the level of delegation we now have is adequate for the level of discussions now going on. As he had pointed out in his statement, when it appears that negotiations are on a new basis, we will put in new individuals who are not so committed by the patterns of the past.[17]

Mr. Kissinger then said that he would like to make one statement of fact. Minister Xuan Thuy had said that we have intensified our air activity. We don't care what they say publicly, but they should know in Hanoi that we have in fact made a reduction of 25% of the activities both of B-52's and of other aircraft. Their propaganda was up to them, but this is a fact their leaders should know. Mr. Kissinger then noted that he agreed with Minister Xuan Thuy—we are not talking about how to reduce the war, but about how to end it.

Mr. Kissinger said that he accepted with pleasure the proposal of Minister Xuan Thuy to meet at 4:00 p.m. We could then go to the heart of the matter, in a spirit of reciprocity, and not repeat what we already know and have said.

Xuan Thuy said he would like to add one word. With regard to what he had been saying, he had documents, records and proof. The U.S. had often said that the North Vietnamese were here for propaganda. If this were the case, Xuan Thuy said, they would have sent cadres who are expert at propaganda and would have had no need to send him and Le Duc Tho. Also, the U.S. had much stronger means for propaganda than the North Vietnamese.

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[16] Kissinger highlighted this and the next paragraph for the President.

[17] Kissinger highlighted the last two sentences of this paragraph for the President.

As a final word, Xuan Thuy said that he would like to speak about keeping secrets. Mr. Kissinger had spoken of this. So had President Nixon's letter to President Ho Chi Minh,[18] and Ambassador Lodge had also recommended secrecy. Then President Nixon spoke of everything on November 3. Was this for propaganda? They, Xuan Thuy said, keep their word; they match their words to their deeds. The leakage was on the U.S. side.

Le Duc Tho said that Mr. Kissinger had spoken also of how to overcome mistrust. When our side did not keep so minor a promise, how could we speak of mistrust?

Mr. Kissinger said that if we made a catalog of grievances, he would not get back to Washington for a long time. He recalled that the North Vietnamese had published an exchange of letters between President Johnson and President Ho Chi Minh.[19]

As for the private meetings, a number of U.S. journalists were told by people on their delegation that we were not ready for private talks. This question therefore became part of the public debate.

In any event, Mr. Kissinger continued, they could be certain that any undertakings in this channel would be strictly protected. No one can fool Mr. Le Duc Tho and Minister Xuan Thuy twice. (Smiles all around.)

Le Duc Tho said that they have been fooled many times. Mr. Kissinger said, "Not by me."

Mr. Kissinger said he recognized that anything Minister Xuan Thuy said was based on documents. Minister Xuan Thuy is a serious man. We have great respect for him. The difficult problems are not when falsehood confronts truth, but when two truths confront each other.

The North Vietnamese all smiled and Le Duc Tho exclaimed—"Philosophy!" Mr. Kissinger said that he understands Le Duc Tho is an expert in theory. Xuan Thuy said that actually Mr. Kissinger was a professor of philosophy at an American university, so his speeches always contained philosophy. Mr. Kissinger said that he does believe philosophy must precede practice, so he finds Marxism interesting. (More North Vietnamese smiles.)

Mr. Kissinger said that he would see them at 4:00 o'clock and regretted any inconvenience his having to go to lunch may have caused them. The North Vietnamese said that there was none.

(The meeting ended at 12:20 p.m.)

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[18] Dated July 15, 1969; see footnotes 3 and 4, Document 97.

[19] On March 21 the DRV broadcast on Radio Hanoi the text of President Johnson's letter to Ho Chi Minh, February 8, 1967, as well as the text of Ho Chi Minh's response, February 15. Both are printed in Department of State *Bulletin,* April 10, 1967, pp. 595–597.

190. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Paris, February 21, 1970, 4:10 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Le Duc Tho, Adviser to the North Vietnamese Delegation
Xuan Thuy, Chief of Delegation
Mai van Bo, North Vietnamese Delegate General in Paris
North Vietnamese Interpreter
Two Other North Vietnamese Officials
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Major General Vernon Walters, Defense Attaché, American Embassy, Paris
W. Richard Smyser, NSC Staff
W.A.K. Lake, NSC Staff

Xuan Thuy: I spoke at this morning's meeting. I would now like to hear what you have come to say.

Mr. Kissinger: I spoke last this morning. Minister Xuan Thuy said it was essential that we arrive at the heart of the problem. I believe that you, Minister Xuan Thuy or Mr. Le Duc Tho, should say what this means.

Xuan Thuy: I said this morning that you had said nothing new in comparison with the last time. You had said in asking for this meeting that you had something further to say. Please tell us what you mean by that.

Mr. Kissinger: I said this morning, as in the communication through General Walters, that we are willing to talk outside the existing framework. I said this morning that two things are needed: instead of arguing about the 8 and 10 points, we should establish a list of agreed objectives, and a work program. We are prepared to negotiate as part of this program the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops after a settlement is reached.[2]

Xuan Thuy: I would like to ask a few questions. What did you mean by the phrase "logical political process" in South Vietnam in your statement last August? This morning there was another point not clear to me. What did you mean by your statement that we want political superiority and you military superiority?

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. II. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only. No drafting information appears on the memorandum. The meeting took place at 11 Rue Darthe. Kissinger "indicated the most important remarks by a line in the margin" for Nixon.

[2] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph for the President.

Mr. Kissinger: As the Delegate General has pointed out, I may have read so many of your words that I am beginning to speak in paradoxical terms myself, but the question the Minister has put is an important one. I want to talk to you seriously about it.

I know it is part of the Vietnamese mentality—easily explained by history and recent events—to believe that all foreigners, especially those at war, have a desire to be treacherous to the Vietnamese people. I will not therefore try to impress you with what I say, because as Vietnamese and as Marxists you are not too impressed by anything but objective factors.

But I try to understand why it is that the two sides have reached a complete impasse in the negotiations. For selfish reasons, I try to understand your position as well as I can.

What I tried to say this morning was that from *our* point of view the objective consequence of your proposals is to give political dominance to the NLF, after which we must rely on your good faith and self-restraint. You do not say this is your intention, but it is the practical consequence of your position. At the same time, I can understand from your point of view, it may seem that what we are trying to do is get military predominance, and put you at our mercy.

Xuan Thuy: That is now clear.

Mr. Kissinger: Since neither side wants to put itself at the mercy of the other, we have a problem. This is the problem I have come here to help start solving. Please excuse the long answer.

Le Duc Tho: You said that we should list the objectives we want to reach. What are your objectives? What is your work program?

Mr. Kissinger: We have two problems:

The first is to agree that this is a good approach.

The second is to give content to this approach.

Let me answer your second question first.

With respect to a work program—and we of course are willing to listen to your counterproposals because this is a delicate problem—as I told Minister Xuan Thuy when we met in August and can repeat more specifically now, the President has said that to show his interest he is prepared to let me act in a principal, if informal, capacity, on matters of fundamental importance and to meet with someone from your side at regular intervals to resolve these questions.

It may be necessary from time to time to substitute someone for me who has our confidence, when my visibility does not allow me to come.

If we agree on what it is we want to accomplish and how, we could agree also on what tasks to give to the delegations at Avenue Kleber.

In other words, the delegations would handle the details of what we agree on in principle. And, as I pointed out this morning, we would see to it that our representation would be of a background to handle this new approach.

As for the first question, I think we should take the two problems which Minister Xuan Thuy and I mentioned, and liberate them from the liturgical quality which they have had at Avenue Kleber.

We should agree on an approximate timetable on which to accomplish our work.

Le Duc Tho: You mean two problems, military and political?

Mr. Kissinger: Yes.

Le Duc Tho: You said you are willing to listen to our counterproposal. But we cannot give one since your proposal is not yet concrete.

Mr. Kissinger: What would Mr. Le Duc Tho consider a concrete proposal?

Le Duc Tho: If a discussion is to be held, there should be a program. What program do you have in mind? The definition of your program is not clear yet.

Mr. Kissinger: I shall speak with the frankness I hope I have shown before. I do so with some somberness because this is an important meeting. If it fails completely, we will be in an impasse and it would be difficult to see how to get out of it except by a continued testing of each other. As you know, I belong to those who since 1965 have tried to find a negotiated end to that war in Vietnam. I belong to those who believed that an end of the bombing would lead to productive negotiations. I have attempted to understand and study you very carefully.

It seems to us that there is a certain pattern in your method of negotiation. This method is that you are attempting to make us pay again and again for the beginning of negotiations. You bank every proposal we make, and in return you offer only your presence at negotiations. We believe that the biggest problem we face now is whether you are in fact willing to negotiate as we understand negotiation.

It is, of course, difficult for men who have shown your heroism and dedication to envisage an end to the war which doesn't guarantee all of your immediate objectives. It is not easy for us either, because we too have had over a period of time to adjust some of our thinking.

Therefore I do not think I should put before you a very concrete list of proposals—except to say that in a real negotiation, the President has said many times you will find our side flexible and generous. If we tried to fool you, you would discover it very quickly.[3]

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[3] Kissinger highlighted this and the next two paragraphs for the President.

The President has charged me with this responsibility of talking to you gentlemen because we thought this private vehicle would allow both sides to speak more frankly, and would make it easier to change positions already taken in the established framework.

Our basic approach is to deal with you on a basis of reciprocity and respect. On this basis, we believe we both might try to move the negotiations forward.

We could, for example, agree today on a time to meet again, and put as the first item on the agenda the withdrawal of forces, as I stated in my statement—not just of our forces, but of all non-South Vietnamese forces.

We understand that the arrangements for the withdrawal of your forces could be put in a special category. We would not insist that they be placed on the same legal basis as ours.[4]

Le Duc Tho: I have met you for the first time today. I have read the minutes of your previous meeting in August. I have attentively listened to your statement this morning. Minister Xuan Thuy has answered you on all the points you have raised. Now I would like to add some views of mine.

I would like to speak about your views of a settlement of the Vietnam problem, and about our views on a settlement, and about the issues. But I would like to speak first about your assessment of the situation on the battlefield in South Vietnam, of which you spoke this morning. Only when we have a correct assessment of the balance of forces, can we have a correct solution.

Mr. Kissinger: I agree.

Le Duc Tho: I believe that your assessment is not correct and not in conformity with reality. But it is your right to assess in accordance with your subjective assessment.

I believe that over the past 15 years your assessment of the balance of forces was incorrect. I would like to recall the facts. From that, I think you can have a more correct assessment, and we may have a correct solution.[5]

After the restoration of peace in 1954, our cadres and troops were regrouped to the North. The French left Indochina. You built a puppet administration in South Vietnam, and equipped it.

There were a number of massacres against the people, of even greater barbarity than under the French.

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[4] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph for the President.

[5] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph for the President.

You thought that with such repressive measures the people of South Vietnam would not stand up against these forces, but they did. They staged simultaneous uprisings and seized power in many localities. That was the first time you were mistaken in your assessment.

Afterward, you further strengthened the administration of South Vietnam and then came the strategic hamlets. But the people in South Vietnam destroyed the strategic hamlets and defeated the special war. That is the second time you made a mistaken assessment.

Then you massively sent troops to South Vietnam, to a total of nearly 600,000 if you count your allies. You used a quantity of shells and bombs greater than in any war, including toxic chemicals. It was thought that no life was possible in such shelling and chemical sprays. But the people, the compatriots in South Vietnam, not only stood up, they also defeated these attacks. That was the situation when General Westmoreland and Ambassador Lodge reported back to the U.S. Government that the situation was very good.

Then came Tet Mau Tanh (1968). It was a big failure for you. It was the third time you were mistaken in your assessment.

Now, Dr. Kissinger once again is mistaken in his assessment. If you continue to make your assessment in such a way, I am convinced you will again meet with failure. Yesterday I read President Nixon's message on the world situation[6] and today I have listened to your speech.[7] You said again that since August 1969 the situation has deteriorated for our side. This is your assessment in South Vietnam. In North Vietnam, you think we have great difficulties. You think the situation in the U.S. is better and better, and that in the international situation, the support we get will be less certain.

My subjective assessment is that it is not as you say.

You are applying Vietnamization, which you think is bringing success. But actually in South Vietnam, Vietnamization is beginning to suffer initial defeats. Even Secretary Laird visited South Vietnam and has said that it is having success but may have setbacks. As for South Vietnam, many U.S. journalists have come. Recently Cyrus Eaton visited North Vietnam. As for the situation in North Vietnam, we must say that the air war did create destruction in North Vietnam. But even under such fierce conditions of war, we succeeded in keeping the people's life normal. The journalists' assessment of the recent Tet will show

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[6] Reference is to Nixon's First Annual Report on United States Foreign Policy, transmitted to Congress on February 18. For text, see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* pp. 115–190.

[7] At this point, Mr. Kissinger interjected: You should be careful; some of the report's authors are here. They don't mind what you say about me, but they do care what you say about the report. (North Vietnamese smiles.) [Footnote in the source text.]

that life was normal. Living conditions in North Vietnam are lower than in the United States. But the war has not quenched the spirit of our people. We live in a normal way.

You opened a new battlefield in Laos, and tried to crush the Pathet Lao forces, and coordinated military pressures in Laos and Vietnam. But recently, the Pathet Lao have reoccupied the Plain of Jars.

As for the situation in the United States, you understand it better than I. Yesterday I read a statement by Humphrey. He said the U.S. is faced by two problems, Vietnam and the economy. I think they are linked. You said that since August 1969 the situation in the U.S. has changed for the better, but actually since then the anti-war movement has surged higher than ever. I also want to cite the recent Gallup poll, which showed that some months ago 21 per cent of the people in the U.S. wanted immediate withdrawal, but now 35 per cent.

But a sounding of public opinion is only public opinion. In addition, I have seen many statements by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, by the Democratic Party, by Mr. Clifford, which have demanded the total withdrawal of American forces, the change of Thieu–Ky–Khiem, and the appointment of a successor to Ambassador Lodge.

As for the world supporting us, we think we understand that better than you. Within one month of its founding, over 30 countries have recognized the PRG. That is support.

With the death of President Ho Chi Minh—he was our leader—but due to the resistance struggle of our people, his death became a source of inspiration to us.

You are still following the situation in North Vietnam to see if it will create problems for the people. This is an illusion.

Thus I must tell you that your assessment is not correct, according to my subjective assessment.

Naturally, in this war we have had many hardships to go through. But we have won the war. You have failed.

Mr. Kissinger: What?

Le Duc Tho: We have won the war. Due to your wrong assessment, you have lost the war, the longest and most costly in your history. This is not just our own view. Americans also think that.[8]

Now you think that since August the situation has deteriorated for our side. This wrong assessment will lead you to the wrong policies also. So I feel you have not realized this objective reality. You still believe in making maximum military pressure on the battlefield.

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[8] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph for the President.

We believe that up to now you are not yet willing to have serious negotiations to settle the problem. In his November 3 speech, President Nixon said that no matter what may happen in Paris, he will carry out his private plan—his Vietnamization plan. In the annual message about the world, he said Vietnamization would push forward negotiations. Does that mean that he wants through military pressure to have a strong position at the negotiating table?

We think that you have two methods to try to end the war: (1) Vietnamization; and (2) negotiations from a position of strength. How do you want to apply Vietnamization? You proceed with a gradual withdrawal of U.S. forces down to a level bearable to the American people in human lives and cost. You will leave behind enough support forces to help the puppet forces to prolong the war. You try to strengthen the puppet troops, so they can assume responsibility for the war, and leave behind a large number of advisers. This is what people, including Secretary Laird, have said.

But we wonder whether and when the puppet troops can do that. It will take an unlimited time. We don't know when, or whether, it will be done. If it does not work, you will have the choice to remain in Vietnam or leave. We are convinced the puppet troops cannot assume this responsibility. So you will stay, and the war will drag on, and you will remain in our country.[9]

We are not alone in saying that Vietnamization will prolong the war. Many Americans also say this and are protesting. Therefore many are asking themselves whether Vietnamization can achieve success. You still believe that it can, according to your assessment. But we are firmly convinced it will meet with failure.

Because you were mistaken in your assessment, you met with failure in the special war; because you were again mistaken you met with greater failure in the local war; now again, because you are mistaken, you will meet with greater failure. Because the policy of Vietnamization contains many contradictions in itself.

In the beginning, you applied de-Americanization in the special war. Then, failing, you Americanized the war and met with failure. So you again de-Americanize. Before, there were over a million U.S. and puppet troops, and you failed. How can you succeed when you let the puppet troops do the fighting? Now, with only U.S. support, how can you win?

The trend of the war is heading for failure for you. So how can Vietnamization be a success, when you are already heading for failure?

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[9] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph for the President.

Public opinion in the U.S., the press, and many U.S. political figures, doubt the success of Vietnamization. In his annual message, President Nixon said that he is still testing this policy. Let him test it.

How can you force us to accept your conditions in negotiations if Vietnamization is failing? If you continue to persist in the wrong assessment, to Vietnamize the war, and to exert maximum military pressure, that is your right. But in our view you have been mistaken, and you will commit a greater mistake. Our people will not step back before military pressure. We have been fighting for tens of years with weapons in our hands.

If you prolong the war, we have to continue to fight. If you intensify the war in South Vietnam, if you even resume bombing North Vietnam, we are prepared. We are determined to continue the fight until we win victory.

If our generation cannot win, then our sons and nephews will continue. We will sacrifice everything, but we will not again have slavery. This is our iron will. We have been fighting for 25 years, the French and you. You wanted to quench our spirit with bombs and shells. But they cannot force us to submit.

You have threatened us many times. The last time when you spoke to Minister Xuan Thuy, you threatened us. President Nixon also threatens us. But you have read our history. We fought against the French for nine years. We were empty-handed. Myself, I participated in this resistance war against the French, without knowing military things. Yet we won victory.[10]

You have been fighting us for many years and you see how we have been fighting back for our independence and freedom.

Even though you continue, you cannot change the trend of the war.

This is not a challenge. I am frank. We are a small people. We cannot challenge anybody. We have been under domination for many years.

Therefore, if you continue with Vietnamization, with the search for a position of strength, maximum military pressure, we will continue to fight, and I am convinced we will win victory.

But on the contrary, if you really want to have serious negotiations to settle the war, if you really want to follow up what I said to Harriman, we are prepared to join you.[11]

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[10] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph for the President.

[11] Kissinger highlighted this and the next three paragraphs for the President.

We have negotiated many times; in 1946, with the French; in 1954, with the French, and the participation of the Americans too. In 1962, again with Americans. We settled matters in a logical and reasonable way.

In fact, if one side wants peace and the other war, no settlement can be reached. If you want war and we peace, we cannot settle. If we want war and you peace, we cannot settle. When both want peace, we can settle.

I think it is time for you and for us to reach a peaceful settlement. But I wonder whether really you want peace. You talk a great deal about peace. President Nixon talks about peace. You did so this morning. But, as you said, we have distrust.

You talk peace, but you make war. The problem is how to get around this. Your words are sometimes not matched by peace. We are an oppressed people, who have often been fooled by other people. We signed an agreement in 1946 with the French, but they brought in forces. After nine years, the responsible French told us they had been wrong. In 1954, as soon as the agreement was signed, it was torn up. You said this morning we have the impression we were fooled in 1956. But it is not an impression; we were really fooled. In 1962, the Pathet Lao and the Vietnamese people signed an agreement. You tore up the agreement, and the war went on.

In brief, we have been fooled many times. People do not respect agreements.

We were not the first to violate agreements. It was you and the French who were first.

Therefore, it is my hope, but also a question, whether you will abide by what you said this morning, about good will, and respect for agreement. Therefore, I think that to create conditions for settlement, we should create some frankness in negotiations. This is in the interest of the American people. The American people have no profit in Vietnam. After ten years, you have only spent money. You have gained nothing back. They are great expenditures. Only slightly less than World War II. So it is not in your interest to prolong the war.

I think that the settlement of the war is in the interest of the American people, of the people in South Vietnam and North Vietnam, and in the interest of the relations between the people of the United States and Vietnam.

Now the hard question is how to reach a peaceful settlement. As you say, it is difficult indeed. Of course, we shall not begin today with a discussion of specific problems. Now, how to pose the questions for discussion, how to proceed, and about the timing of the negotiations as proposed by you? These are the questions to be settled first. Only then can we go into concrete negotiations. This is not the first time Minister Xuan Thuy and I have expressed our views. We said this to Am-

bassador Lodge, if you read the record. But you did not go into concrete questions. You still want to prolong the war, and to apply maximum military pressure. Please read the record again.

Mr. Kissinger: I have read it carefully.

Le Duc Tho: This is our viewpoint on your proposal:

As you have proposed, we have to agree on the problems to be discussed and on the work program. But we have a different approach to the problems. You think the first item is to discuss troop withdrawal. On this very point, we feel that you have not good will and are not prepared to settle the matter.[12]

It is our desire to discuss all the problems. This is our conception. Because only by discussing all problems can you come to a settlement of all problems, come to agree, come to the signature of an agreement, and then to a discussion of the implementation of the agreement.

This is our way of posing the problems.

When we pose all the problems, the ten points cover all the problems. On this basis, we shall express our views, and you your views. Then we come to agreement on how to settle in a logical way. Neither party will coerce the other party to a solution by applying pressure. Because we understand that these are now negotiations.[13]

The second part is how to proceed.

We understand that in all negotiations (Minister Xuan Thuy has been in many) there are public and private sessions. Has President Nixon officially appointed you to have private talks with Minister Xuan Thuy and me to settle the matter? Or will you come only from time to time to discuss matters, just to have probing? And in the public sessions, will there now be a chief negotiator?

There cannot only be private talks. In the public forum also there must be somebody to lead the talks. And beside the negotiations between the U.S. and ourselves on important problems, there are other negotiations between the four parties. For the time being, the PRG does not agree to have private talks with the Saigon Administration. This is a great obstacle, too.

The present administration of Thieu–Ky–Khiem is opposed by the people and the press of the U.S., as by the great majority of the people of South Vietnam. It is very warlike.

How can we come to a settlement with this administration? We want to have talks with people of good will. We do not refuse to talk with the people of the whole U.S. administration in Saigon.

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[12] Kissinger highlighted this and the next paragraph.

[13] Kissinger highlighted this and the next three paragraphs.

This is the situation now. For the time being, talks between the PRG and the Saigon Administration cannot be held yet. Therefore, you and we can have talks to settle all the problems we have just mentioned. Then we can both have discussions about all fundamental problems. Then agreement, and then there must still be a four-party conference too. There must be some competent leaders of delegations.[14]

As for the time limit you have proposed, we cannot set a time limit. If you show goodwill and serious intent, a settlement will come quickly. If you do not, discussion will be prolonged.

So in brief, our point of view is very clear. We wish you to have a correct assessment of the situation. We ourselves have a correct assessment of the situation. If you have an incorrect assessment, you will propose wrong solutions. Then the war will continue. There is no other way. We do not want the situation to develop this way. Xuan Thuy said that before and I reiterate it.

But if you continue the war, we shall have to continue to fight. This is an objective reality.

About the settlement, there are views we have to express. There are two problems between us: peace or war. We should choose one. If you choose peace, we are prepared to have it, and we do wish to come to a peaceful settlement.[15]

As you said, after a peaceful settlement, relations between our two countries will open a new page of history. We also wish what you said at the end of your speech this morning. It is our wish too, about relations between our two countries.

What Minister Xuan Thuy and I said this morning shows our good will.

Mr. Kissinger: I appreciate the frankness with which you spoke. I would suggest a five-minute break, and then I will have some questions so I can be sure I understand correctly.

(Ten-minute tea break)

Le Duc Tho: Have you visited South Vietnam?

Mr. Kissinger: I have been to Vietnam three times. I admire the courage and dignity of the Vietnamese people.

I am not sure whether I should call Mr. Le Duc Tho "Special Adviser" also? (Smiles all around)

Le Duc Tho: Whatever you like.

Mr. Kissinger: I would like to ask a few questions for clarification and then make a few observations.

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[14] Kissinger highlighted this and the next paragraph.

[15] Kissinger highlighted this and the next 30 paragraphs.

The point was made that the ten points encompass the totality of the problem. Does this mean that we have to accept the ten points? Or can we assume that we can discuss the totality of the problem, with each side free to pursue its own position?

Le Duc Tho: The ten points have been laid down. We shall express our views on the ten points. You will express your views on the ten points. We shall then discuss the ten points, and come to an agreement.

Mr. Kissinger: Supposing we wish to discuss our eight points, and ask for your views on them, while you have your ten points. Together we could discuss the 18 points. (North Vietnamese smiles)

Le Duc Tho: We feel that our ten points cover all problems. In expressing our views on the ten points, you can express any views you like. We will discuss and come to an agreement.

Mr. Kissinger: Let me sum up. You would express your views on the ten points; we can express our views on the eight points, and each side can discuss the other's—and so to agreement.

Le Duc Tho: Agreed.

Mr. Kissinger: I understood Mr. Le Duc Tho to say, in a sentence which did not express unqualified approbation of the Saigon administration, that Hanoi is willing to talk to all of the administration in Saigon.

Le Duc Tho: That is not so. I said that the administration of Thieu–Ky–Khiem is a great obstacle to negotiations. We have often expressed our views on this subject. We will talk with any Saigon administration, without Thieu–Ky–Khiem, which stands for peace, which has good will, and which shows a serious attitude in negotiations. We have said many times why no Thieu–Ky–Khiem.

Mr. Kissinger: I am therefore correct in understanding that the four power talks can include the government of South Vietnam without Thieu, Ky and Khiem.

Le Duc Tho: Right.

Xuan Thuy: But the important thing is that the administration without Thieu–Ky–Khiem must support peace and serious negotiations because if the Saigon administration without Thieu–Ky–Khiem applies the same policy as before, the negotiations cannot succeed.

Le Duc Tho: With such a change of people and politics, a favorable atmosphere for fruitful negotiations will be created.

Mr. Kissinger: I would like to ask one more question on this subject, and then go on to the next subject. Is this posed as a preference or as a condition?

Le Duc Tho: This is a condition. We have often expressed our views. To lead to fruitful negotiations, in the present situation, public opinion in the United States and the overwhelming majority of the

people in South Vietnam are demanding a change in that. This change will create conditions for a quicker settlement.

Mr. Kissinger: May I make one general point so that all will understand and we need not discuss it again. It concerns public opinion in the United States. It is important because we must assess the objective situation correctly.

Mr. Nixon was elected President, and is confident that he will be re-elected. And he believes that he understands U.S. public opinion better than some of the American visitors you see here from time to time. You must let us be the judge of U.S. public opinion.

Now, let me get back to my questions, and ask a question on procedure.

If I understood the discussion, it was that there be some forum for going for an overall settlement along the lines discussed, and at some point during these discussions, a four power conference would be revitalized.

Le Duc Tho: This is not so. In my view, there are two forums.

There is the public forum, the four-party forum. We think you should appoint a competent leader of the delegation to settle the matter.

Another forum are the talks with you or another fully authorized to have talks with us. Because there are problems which should be settled with you. But if you cannot come, there should be some competent person to deal with, so that the negotiations will be continuous.

Xuan Thuy: The last time, you told me Kleber should continue as it was. At the same time, you said another forum was opened concretely between you and myself. Therefore I raised a number of questions. You did not respond until now.

Mr. Kissinger: What questions?

Xuan Thuy: I told you this morning, the questions of troop withdrawals and of coalition government. Now we meet again, and I would like to recall the views you expressed in August 1969; that we agree to open another forum, between you and me. At the same time, the Kleber forum will continue as in 1969.

That means that there must be a successor to Ambassador Lodge. Because if you do not keep the promise made in August 1969, this may exert an influence on our talks here.[16]

As for the Saigon administration without Thieu–Ky–Khiem, this is another problem. Because you are demanding, and the Saigon administration is also demanding, that we and the PRG have private talks

[16] Kissinger highlighted this and the next three paragraphs.

with the Saigon administration as now constituted. The PRG has refused this, and we have supported it. We must do that. Therefore, if we are to have private talks, Thieu–Ky–Khiem must be got rid of. We have described the reasons.

Mr. Kissinger: Yes, I understand, Mr. Minister. On the first point concerning the agenda, I see no problem. That is the point that you will talk on the basis of the ten points, and we will talk on the basis of anything we choose, including the eight points. This is no problem.

As to the second point, relating to our talks and the talks at Avenue Kleber, Minister Xuan Thuy has understood me with his usual precision. (North Vietnamese smiles) There has to be a competent forum at Avenue Kleber for discussions as soon as there is something to discuss. This can be arranged.

(Mr. Kissinger then said that since he was not a diplomat and lacked time, he would speak frankly in saying that the third point is impossible. Only the first part of this was translated into French, and none was translated into Vietnamese, as Le Duc Tho broke in.)

Le Duc Tho: This is your show of good will—to appoint a successor to Ambassador Lodge.

Mr. Kissinger: As I explained to Mr. Special Adviser Tho, we do not believe that we always have to pay—to show good will—to gain an opening of negotiations. (Le Duc Tho laughed appreciatively.) This is particularly true since we watched the negotiations between August and October and nothing new was said, certainly by your side. You have the word of the President that negotiations will not fail for lack of an appropriate U.S. representative in Paris if there is really something to discuss.[17]

Xuan Thuy: But what I pointed out is that the negotiations in August were not the same as now. We should return to August.

Mr. Kissinger: We want to do better.

Le Duc Tho: Since you withdrew Ambassadors Lodge and Walsh, public opinion says the U.S. is not serious.

Mr. Kissinger: I must remind Mr. Le Duc Tho that we have excluded discussion of public opinion.

Le Duc Tho: We must take it into account.

Mr. Kissinger: That is our problem.

Xuan Thuy: We have two ears and must listen.

Mr. Kissinger: We will take care of U.S. public opinion, you take care of opinion in North Vietnam.

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[17] Kissinger highlighted the last sentence of this paragraph.

Le Duc Tho: Okay, but we must make an assessment of U.S. public opinion, too.

Mr. Kissinger: Okay.

We have watched the negotiations at Avenue Kleber, and in his UN speech the President even recalled a statement by Minister Xuan Thuy in a press conference,[18] in order to show our seriousness. But there was no movement in August, September or October, and we therefore had to conclude that there was no progress at Kleber as presently constituted.

I don't think it is useful to pursue this particular line of argument very much longer. We will establish a relationship between Avenue Kleber and conversations which are going on elsewhere. And we will see to it that the proper possibilities exist if there is a real possibility for progress.

Xuan Thuy: It is a fact that there has been no progress made at Kleber for the last few months. There is a deadlock. It is not our fault. It is your fault because you withdrew the chief of your delegation. If you follow the negotiations, that is your right. We also follow them. If you continue to follow this line now, we will have a different attitude from now. Therefore, I tell you that negotiations at Kleber may have an influence on our talks here.

Le Duc Tho: We met Ambassadors Harriman and Lodge many times, both at Kleber and in private meetings. Often there was no progress made. But it comes later. Progress could have been made. But you have withdrawn your delegate suddenly. This was a way of putting pressure on us. Minister Xuan Thuy is right. You are responsible for the deadlock. Difficult problems cannot be resolved overnight. There must be many meetings, even fruitless meetings, and ultimately problems will be solved. But you left the conference. So the fault is yours.[19]

Mr. Kissinger: We did not leave the conference; we left a skilled and experienced diplomat there.

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[18] In this speech of September 18, 1969, Nixon stated: "On September 2, 1969, North Vietnam's chief negotiator in Paris said that if the United States committed itself to the principal of totally withdrawing its forces from South Vietnam, and if it withdrew a significant amount, Hanoi would take this into account." Nixon had announced on September 15, 1969, that by December 15, 1969, U.S. troop strength in Vietnam would be reduced by a minimum of 60,000 men. Nixon told the UN General Assembly that: "I repeat what I said in my speech of May 14: that we are prepared to withdraw all of our forces from Vietnam. And the replacement of 60,000 troops is a significant step. The time has come for the other side to respond to these initiatives." (*Public Papers: Nixon, 1969*, p. 727; the May 14, 1969, Address to the Nation on Vietnam is ibid., pp. 369–375)

[19] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph.

Le Duc Tho: Mr. Habib has spoken with us many times. He is an experienced man. But he is not fully competent to settle the matter.

Mr. Kissinger: The President sent me, as high-ranking a person as he could have sent, to demonstrate our interest in a settlement.

Xuan Thuy: That is another problem. If there had not been the deadlock in the Kleber negotiations, it would have been easier for you and us to talk together. Only when Kleber is what it was in August, is there a full reason for me to remain here to talk with you. If Kleber is deadlocked, then I cannot stay indefinitely. If I leave for Hanoi, I cannot meet you every weekend.

Mr. Kissinger: The Minister is blackmailing me on the basis of my personal affection for him. (North Vietnamese smiles)

Xuan Thuy: It is you who blackmailed me first.

Mr. Kissinger: If we meet every weekend, there will be many in Washington who will be angry at me. Now, I believe we can go no farther on this subject at this meeting. I have taken careful note of what Minister Xuan Thuy said and understand. If there is any sign of progress, we will establish a rapid relationship which will enable the most elevated people on your side to deal with us. And we will think very carefully about what Mr. Le Duc Tho and Minister Xuan Thuy have said on this point.

If we have faithful negotiations, it will be in our interest to conduct them so that they will proceed as rapidly as possible.

This brings me to the most difficult point, having to do with the composition of the government in Saigon. Minister Xuan Thuy will remember that I told him in August that it would be impossible for us as an American action to change the government in Saigon. We recognize that when we discuss all problems, as Mr. Le Duc Tho has said, the outcome will have to be one which satisfies the existing political forces in South Vietnam and will reflect their relationships.[20]

Le Duc Tho: We'll see when we discuss this matter. We should not now enter this discussion.

Mr. Kissinger: I simply want to make clear that we are not entering these discussions with an agreement or understanding that we will change the government in Saigon.

Le Duc Tho: Negotiations are held to settle the South Vietnam problem. The parties to such negotiations are not just you and ourselves. They are the PRG and the Saigon administration. Therefore the maintenance of Thieu–Ky–Khiem makes difficult the settlement of the problem. Suppose now you really want to settle the problem, and to

[20] Kissinger highlighted this and the next seven paragraphs.

withdraw your troops. Then Thieu–Ky–Khiem would have to agree, and they would not. Therefore the maintenance of Thieu–Ky–Khiem shows that you are not ready to settle.

Mr. Kissinger: There are two separate problems.

Suppose we make an agreement and Saigon opposes it—that is one problem.

The second problem is if you say in advance that the existence of the Saigon government is proof that we don't want a settlement.

With respect to the first problem, we do not ask you about your making an agreement and the NLF's not agreeing. We assume you will use your influence. The same will be true with us. (Le Duc Tho blinked slowly to show he understood.)

Now, Mr. Special Adviser, I have two observations about some points you made in your presentation.

As I had occasion to tell you outside this room, I was very impressed by what you said. I would point out only that our assessment of the situation might be wrong, but it is sincere. It is a sign of our good faith that while we sincerely believe the situation is better, we are still willing to talk on the same basis and in the same framework. (Le Duc Tho nodded his understanding.)[21]

I would also like to say a word about a very important question. You, Mr. Special Adviser, asked me how you can know we will observe an agreement. For all the reasons which you explained with such eloquence and power, we know that if we do not live up to an agreement, you will fight with the same tenacity and courage you have displayed before. We don't want an armistice; we want a peace which will enable our peoples to develop their relationship. Since the President will be in office seven more years, it is in our interest to deal with each other honestly.

Maybe I should speak one brief word about Laos. (North Vietnamese smiles) Although my students at Harvard say it is impossible for me to say anything briefly. (More relaxed smiles)

Le Duc Tho: You are a philosopher.

Mr. Kissinger: Mr. Le Duc Tho has said that we are trying to defeat the Pathet Lao and are increasing the intensity of the war. To us, it appears that exactly the opposite is happening. (North Vietnamese smiles) Most of the Pathet Lao we observe speak Vietnamese. (Brief smiles) We would like to maintain the 1962 agreements, and are willing to listen to any proposition which would do so. I must say frankly that the confidence we have in any agreement on Vietnam must be affected by what happens concerning the 1962 agreement on Laos.[22]

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[21] Kissinger highlighted this paragraph.

[22] Kissinger highlighted this and the next three paragraphs.

Xuan Thuy: I helped to negotiate the Laos agreements in 1962, so there is all the more reason for me to understand this question.

Le Duc Tho: The limit of the line of the Pathet Lao in the 1962 Accords had been penetrated.

But that is enough for Laos for today. You have spoken about good will, sincerity, respect for agreements, and about the relations of our people after peace. We hope your deeds will match your words.

Mr. Kissinger: May I express the reciprocal sentiment?

Le Duc Tho: If you really show good will, you will be responded by good will. As I told you, we are an oppressed people. You violate agreements; we do not.

Mr. Kissinger: We will make every effort to understand your problems. We know this is hard between different cultures. You must try to understand our problems and our concerns. (Le Duc Tho nodded his understanding.)

Now, Mr. Le Duc Tho, how do we proceed from here, in your opinion?

Le Duc Tho: We have raised a number of problems. Now we will have an overall discussion of all problems. You are fully authorized by President Nixon. We, Minister Xuan Thuy and I, are fully authorized by our government to have these discussions. The time is up to you. You let us know when we shall meet again.[23]

Mr. Kissinger: General Walters will be away for a week, acting as interpreter for President Pompidou's visit in the U.S. Should we fix a time now, or leave this for a later arrangement?

Xuan Thuy: It is up to you to decide. If you fix a date, we shall arrange a program of work.

Mr. Kissinger: My absence from Washington is very noticeable. We would prefer Sunday to Saturday.

Xuan Thuy: Yes.

Mr. Kissinger: If I leave on Sunday, everyone will think I have a girl.

Xuan Thuy: Leave the girl somewhere, and come here for the discussions. This is a suggestion of good will.

Mr. Kissinger: As always, Minister Xuan Thuy has left out the essential element. First I need a girl friend.

Xuan Thuy: Look for one. I am told you have many.

Mr. Kissinger: On Saturday, March 14, I have a dinner from which my absence would be very noticeable. Having just said that Sunday is best, could I now propose a Monday?

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[23] Kissinger highlighted this and the next two paragraphs.

Le Duc Tho: All right.

Mr. Kissinger: March 16?

Le Duc Tho: All right.

Mr. Kissinger: Here?

Le Duc Tho: All right. 9:30 a.m.?

Mr. Kissinger: 9:30 a.m. would be fine.

I would like to thank you for your hospitality. I appreciate the frankness with which you spoke. I hope we can soon look back on this meeting as a turning point in the relations between our two people.

Xuan Thuy: Before coming here, I thought that you had come with something new in content. But today's meeting shows that you have nothing new in content. So we are not yet further than we are at Kleber. But now we have agreed on the forum of meeting again.[24]

What we have been saying today, you have said you will carefully consider. We hope your consideration will lead to future results. We hope at the next meeting you will have something new and practical in content.

Mr. Kissinger: Let me speak frankly. I am extremely busy. For me to spend all of my time on one problem is almost impossible. I am doing this only because of my own personal, and President Nixon's, intense desire to make a just and fair peace.

We told Minister Xuan Thuy in August, we stated in the communication General Walters brought to you, and I have repeated today, that you must not think these discussions are a means for the U.S. to make unilateral concessions. We will be generous and open-minded, but we hope and expect your side will meet us part of the way.[25]

Xuan Thuy: It seems that there is a difference of views on this also. You think you have made all the concessions and we none. So I think we should not use this word "concessions" any longer. Let us say that we shall meet each other to meet the common goal, peace.

You have a lot of work to do in Washington. So do Mr. Le Duc Tho and I in Hanoi. Paris is not my only job. The question of being busy is not a problem. The question is that of peace. The question is respect for independence, of willingness for peace.

Mr. Kissinger: Let's not argue now about what we will argue later.

(After friendly goodbyes, the meeting ended at approximately 8:00 p.m.)

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[24] Kissinger highlighted this and the next paragraph.

[25] Kissinger highlighted this and the next paragraph.

191. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

My Meeting with Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy, February 21, 1970

I met with Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy near Paris for about seven hours on February 21. It was a significant meeting. We had a frank exchange of views. They basically accepted our proposed procedure for future private meetings, dropped their preconditions for substantive negotiations, and gave the impression of being much more ready for business than before.

I will send you a separate memorandum on where we go from here.[2]

I. What Happened

—I presented our prepared statement during the almost three-hour morning session. The remainder of the morning I rebutted some of their statements, replied to questions, and had them clarify some elements of their positions.

—During the morning session, Xuan Thuy produced a very perfunctory speech full of standard accusations with some interesting omissions (see below). In the afternoon session, Le Duc Tho made a long, rather defensive speech in which he rejected my statement that our situation had improved and claimed that in fact it had deteriorated. He even claimed that we had lost the war. He then proceeded to accept most of our suggestions for the format of future meetings, and to accept some rather significant changes in their position with just a minimum of face-saving.

—The atmosphere during the meeting was remarkably frank and free of trivia. Tho readily agreed to the proposed time for the next meeting. He did not appear to have a prepared statement, suggesting that he had some latitude on which he could accept. His long speech was apparently triggered by my suggesting that our position had improved since my August meeting with Xuan Thuy.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Camp David, Sensitive, Vol. II. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only. A note on the memorandum indicates that it was typed on February 21 and given to the President on February 22 by Kissinger.

[2] See Document 192.

II. What Was Agreed

—To continue private talks in this channel.

—On that basis, to meet again on Monday, March 16, at 9:30 a.m., as the first of a series of meetings.

—To discuss all problems related to the war. They will do so on the basis of their ten points, we on the basis of anything we choose, including our eight points.

—If there is progress, we will appoint a successor to Ambassador Lodge.

It was also implicitly agreed that,

—after we have discussed all the issues, and if we reach agreement, the other parties will be brought in to ratify it. It is not clear whether this will be done at the Majestic or at some other special meeting, and it is also not clear whether and how the Majestic sessions will be coordinated with our private negotiating process.

III. What Was New, or Dropped

—They dropped their demand that the GVN be changed as a precondition to substantive talks, saying that this could be discussed later. Instead, they linked the change in the GVN variously to private GVN talks with the PRG, to the ratification process, and to gestures of U.S. good will which could lead to a "rapid settlement." They implied that the main problem was not the composition of the GVN per se but the PRG's refusal to deal with Thieu, Ky and Khiem, and the GVN's possible unwillingness to accept an agreement and abide by it.

—They did not use the word "unconditional" when speaking of U.S. withdrawals, and did not challenge me when I said we would discuss the withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces.

—When I spoke of "reciprocity," they did not argue. Xuan Thuy even said that we would "meet each other" on the road to peace.

—There was little emphasis on a coalition government, or any suggestion that we had to accept one as a precondition to talks.

—They stressed that they wanted an overall settlement, a "package."

—They also stated flatly that now is the time to negotiate one.

IV. Significance

It was clearly a significant meeting. While it is still very hard to assess their objectives, they seem to want very much to get some exchange of views in a private forum separate from the Majestic sessions, and they appear prepared to pay the price of dropping their preconditions and perhaps some of their more extreme demands. But our positions are still very far apart, and we must expect that once they have got us talking they will prove tough for at least a while. In the past,

the first meetings with them in a new channel have often sounded more promising than was justified by the results of later meetings.

—They have accepted a procedure which has a built-in time pressure that may work to their disadvantage. They know they cannot keep this channel going very long if they do not offer anything new. At the present frequency of meetings, they cannot get agreement in the near future unless they make some progress in at least one of every few meetings.

—They appear worried about Vietnamization, because if it succeeds they have lost and if it fails we may keep some forces there a long time.

—They showed some concern about whether we would live up to an agreement, which provides a piece of evidence that they are at least thinking ahead to the real possibility of a settlement.

—There are suggestions that they may be ready to talk seriously about troop withdrawal on a reciprocal basis.

—They are entering discussions on an overall settlement without including the PRG or insisting as a condition of talks that the Saigon government be changed—a key point for the PRG.

—This has been an important meeting, certainly the most important since the beginning of your Administration and even since the beginning of the talks in 1968. It remains to be seen what will happen next, but the early clues suggest that the course is certainly worth pursuing seriously.

—They accepted the condition for the appointment of a new Ambassador.

—Their omission of the word unconditional from their demand for U.S. withdrawal suggests that they are ready to pay some price.

—They may be in a hurry to reach some agreement, since they indicated several times that they wanted a quick settlement.

192. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 27, 1970.

SUBJECT

How to Proceed in My Private Meetings with the North Vietnamese

This memorandum is to submit for your approval the general lines on which I believe we should proceed in my next meetings with the North Vietnamese in Paris.

General Strategy

It is essential that our method of carrying out these meetings be as different as possible from the pattern of private talks during the past two years between our representatives in Paris and those of the other side. In the past, the U.S. has shown anxiety for progress. The North Vietnamese strategy has been to question our position without allowing exploration of their own. The effect of this has been movement on our side—such as the bombing halt—while their only "concessions" have been agreements merely to talk. We have never forced them to come up with really new formulations.

This secret channel has certain assets which should help us change this pattern:

—My position is not tied to the negotiations. They know that the only way I can justify my continuing participation in these meetings is if they show real progress.

—I speak directly for you. Therefore, anything I say has a final quality.

—Since the time and frequency of our meetings is necessarily limited, if there is to be progress the talks must be to the point. There is no time for traditional maneuvering.

—If they want us to appoint a new chief negotiator in Paris, they know there has to be progress in this channel.

—They have agreed in the last meeting to talk seriously and they did not insist on pre-conditions before doing so. They cannot, therefore, consistently now ask for concessions in return for serious talks.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Camp David, Sensitive, Vol. II. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only. Sent for action. An attached note by Alexander Butterfield to Nixon reads: "Mr. President—Henceforth these particularly sensitive papers will come to you in red folders—so as to be kept separate from all other. Henry or Al Haig will bring them directly to me—circumventing the Secretariat—and I will return them directly."

Issues

There are basically two issues involved in the talks:

—mutual withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese military forces, which we have raised; and

—political settlement in South Vietnam, which they have raised.

Agreement with the North Vietnamese on a verifiable mutual withdrawal is in our and the GVN's fundamental interests, even if there is no political settlement. But the North Vietnamese will almost certainly not wish to withdraw their forces until they have a good idea of the shape of a political settlement, since the GVN seems at the moment to have the upper hand over the VC.

As a general line of approach in the next meetings, therefore, I propose that I put forward a precise and fairly attractive proposal for mutual withdrawal, which could be negotiated with regard to timing but would necessarily include absolute reciprocity and devices for verification. I would seek to get from them a counter-proposal on this issue and a new proposal on political settlement.

At the same time, we must recognize that they may not really want to negotiate seriously or to reach an overall settlement despite what they say. They may merely want to see if they can gain some relief from our present military and diplomatic pressure so as to keep up the fight for a longer time at a different level. But, no matter what their purpose, they apparently want to maintain this dialogue and we can perhaps now elicit answers which they might not have given us otherwise.

Next Meeting

In line with this strategy, in our next meeting on March 16, I believe I should begin by saying that since I am there as your spokesman, the talks must be completely serious. There is no time in our meetings for traditional maneuvering. Both sides must come quickly to the points they wish to make. If they want slow private talks, there is no point in my taking part, and we can make arrangements to carry on at a different level.

Consequently, the position which we put forward, I would say, is not an opening bargaining position. It is a forthcoming proposal from which we will move little, if at all. I would make it clear that this statement is not a bargaining tactic, but a statement of fact.

After these introductory remarks, I would ask a number of clarifying questions on their statements at our last meeting on February 21.[2] I would include a specific question on what they meant when Le

[2] See Documents 189 and 190.

Duc Tho said, "Neither party will coerce the other party to a solution by applying pressure. Because we understand that these are now negotiations." I would also probe them on Laos.

I would then put forward a detailed mutual withdrawal proposal, stating that this is the chief thing we now have to offer. I would invite their reaction—noting again that we believe it is a forthcoming proposal from which we will move little, if at all. I would also invite them to make a proposal on political settlement, reminding them that the GVN must participate in any agreement.

I would refuse to answer their questions about our position until they had come up with a specific reaction to our mutual withdrawal proposal. Nor would I answer questions on the issue of a political settlement until they had made a serious proposal.

At the following meeting, we would be ready to answer their proposal on a political settlement, and they should be ready to answer our proposal on mutual withdrawal.

The Bureaucratic Problem

We do not have a precise negotiating position which has been agreed within the U.S. Government, or a general position agreed with the GVN. The Vietnam Working Group has moved very slowly in developing inter-agency drafts of our position since the Review Group meeting on the subject last July.[3] I have not wanted to press them to move faster until we could heal the wounds inflicted on the GVN by the past administration, and for fear that State would turn coordination with the GVN into a pressuring exercise. We still have to move very carefully. I will indicate to Ambassador Sullivan in low key your desire that they give us a work schedule on preparing agreed positions, so that the NSC can review where we stand some time this summer. This should stimulate action without compromising secrecy or triggering State into putting pressure on the GVN.

In the meantime, our most urgent requirement is for a precise mutual withdrawal position, if you agree to my putting forward such a proposal at the next meeting. We would need questions designed to probe their position. We also would need a counter-proposal on political settlement for the following meeting.

The positions we develop should be reasonable enough to be attractive, but strong enough so we would not have to back away from them in another more conventional negotiating channel if this one should break down.

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[3] See Document 96.

Coordination with the GVN

The lack of an agreed position with the GVN will require you to make decisions on our position which could, if later revealed, embroil us in difficulties with Saigon. This is risky, but I see no other way to proceed if we are to maintain momentum and secrecy.[4]

Our relations with the GVN will require us, however, to avoid making concessions on a political settlement until it is clear that there is a good chance of an agreement. In addition, we must be particularly careful in the wording of our statements on this issue.

I will discuss this problem in detail with Ambassador Bunker.

Recommendation: That you approve this general procedure. I will, of course, present to you for approval the detailed talking points and statements which I would propose to use.[5]

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[4] Nixon wrote next to this paragraph: "OK, will do."

[5] Nixon initialed the approve option and added by hand: "Don't haggle so much over 'what did they mean by this or that'—they thrive on this kind of discussion. Come directly to the hard decisions on the two main issues & say 'we will leave details to subordinates'—otherwise you will spend two days on details & make no progress on substance. We need a breakthrough on principle—& substance—Tell them we want to go immediately to the core of *the problem.*"

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193. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, February 27, 1970.

SUBJECT

National Security Council Meeting to Consider Public Posture on Laos

The National Security Council is meeting at 4:00 p.m. on February 27[2] to consider what our public posture should be on Laos in order to meet growing demands on the Hill and among the people for a

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 101, Vietnam Subject Files, President's March Statement on Laos—Background/Miscellaneous. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action. A note on the memorandum reads: "ret'd 3–2."

[2] On February 26 at 9:35 a.m., Laird and Kissinger discussed the problems of U.S. covert operations in Laos. Laird told Kissinger, "It's in my budget whether it's CIA or Defense. I have to defend it." Laird reported that he had informed the House Foreign Affairs Committee about operations in Laos: "—they know the past and everything in

full explanation of the U.S. role in Laos.[3] State has proposed that it be authorized to accede to the request by Senator Symington for public release of the censored part of the testimony on Laos which was delivered in executive session before his Subcommittee.[4] Secretary Rogers believes that this step would ease the pressures to which State has been subjected by Senators Symington, Fulbright, and others on the Hill over our role in Laos, and also would be desirable in putting our actions in Laos in a good light before the American people.

The Problem

So long as the Communists in Laos were willing to let the political and military balance in Laos remain roughly what it was when the 1962 Geneva Accords were signed, i.e., a standoff in Northern Laos between neutralist Prime Minister Souvanna and the Lao Government forces on the one hand against the Communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces on the other, with Hanoi controlling the Ho Chi Minh Trail, Laos was not the major issue for U.S. policy which it is today. Our bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail with Souvanna's consent was regarded domestically as essentially being part of the Vietnam war.

However, when the Communist's dry season offensive of 1969 in Northern Laos pushed beyond areas traditionally held by them and began to threaten the old political and military balance, both our involvement and public and Congressional attention went up. At Souvanna's request we greatly increased our tactical air strikes in the North in support of his forces, and this aid helped materially in the success of Vang Pao's counterattack in 1969, which captured the Plain of Jars. With the current Communist offensive to retake the Plain, our air strikes have increased still further, and have included B–52 as well as tacair strikes. (This air support is running at a rate of over $500 million annually.) We have helped Souvanna not only to prevent hostile forces

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Helms' operation but they were really shocked about the increased raids in the north. It shakes them to the bottom of their feet. You know the problem there." Laird doubted there would be any leaks from the House Committee, but he could not say the same for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and he feared that the Department of State had already informed them about the operations. Kissinger stated: "If Souvanna should ask us to stop the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which is not in his best interests, we are in trouble." Kissinger suggested a backgrounder to Republican Senators, but Laird suggested that "the whole thing is pretty much in the open" and that the Nixon administration had increased bombing sorties over Laos by 400 percent over the Johnson administration. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 362, Telephone Conversations, 1969–1976, Chronological File)

[3] See Document 194.

[4] U.S. Senate, 91st Congress, 1st session, 1969, U.S. Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on U.S. Security Arrangements and Commitments Abroad, *Hearings on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Kingdom of Laos,* Part 2, October 20, 22, 28, 1969.

from gaining control of the Lao Government and possibly forcing a halt in our bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, but to preserve Souvanna's legitimate neutralist government established by the Geneva Accords and maintain it as a buffer between Thailand and Communist subversion originating in North Vietnam. These actions have been misinterpreted—deliberately or otherwise—as pointing to another U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia like that in Vietnam, which the Administration is trying to cover up despite the "right" of the American people to know. The B–52 strikes and news stories about armed Americans in civilian clothes aiding the Lao Government troops have blown the issue up to major proportions.

The real issue in Laos is entirely related to Vietnam:

—There is no question but that the North Vietnamese can overrun Laos at any point in time that they care to, providing they are willing to pay the political and psychological costs of upsetting the 1962 Accords.

—Should North Vietnam overrun Laos, our whole bargaining with respect to the Vietnam conflict would be undermined. In fact, if North Vietnamese military operations in Laos succeed to the point that Souvanna believes he must succumb to their influence in order to survive, we could then anticipate that he would refuse to permit us to continue our interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and thus our military operations in South Vietnam would be catastrophically damaged.

—These are the fundamental considerations with all the rest amounting to balderdash. It is probably these fundamental points which are recognized by our domestic Vietnam war critics.

The Meeting

Your purpose at the meeting will be to listen to the points of view of the principals on how we should best handle the problem of dealing with the Congress and the public, and to approve a specific procedure. I suggest that you begin by explaining your reasons for calling the meeting and what you hope to achieve. You might then:

—Call on CIA Director Helms for a brief intelligence assessment of the situation in Laos;

—Follow this by calling on Secretary Laird for a similar briefing on our military operations;

—Ask me to review the issues and the options with respect to public information policy;

—Ask Secretary Rogers to explain just what would be released if State handled it;

—Call on the principals for their opinions;

—If you desire, end the meeting by going over some of the broader policy issues which are at stake in Laos. I will be prepared to review the principal issues.

The Issues

—State regards the release of the Symington Subcommittee testimony as being the simplest way to do this. We might kill two birds with one stone: placate Symington, Fulbright, et al, and show the public what we are really doing.

—On the other hand, it is doubtful whether the release of the sensitive parts of the testimony will placate the Senators. They *know* what is going on in Laos, and why. The executive sessions have given them all this. Their purpose is to undermine existing commitments. Release of the Laos testimony would help serve this purpose, since the testimony was slanted in directions desired by the Committee.

—Releasing the testimony would help North Vietnam to document its case that we are violating the Geneva Accords, without admitting that it is violating them, and thus seriously undermine the real basis for our action. It would also make it more difficult for the Soviets to preserve their present relatively friendly posture towards the RLG.

—If the transcript is released uncensored, much of the work of the White House coordinating apparatus that you set up in your decision of November 6,[5] which has worked so effectively, will be undone. This would make future Symington hearings such as the upcoming NATO hearings vastly more difficult to control.

—Furthermore, by giving in on Laos, the Administration's stand on not releasing sensitive parts of the proceedings would be eroded with respect to other countries. We might be opening a real Pandora's box of problems for ourselves, not only domestically, but in our relations with other countries. Our good faith in preserving the sanctity of international agreements could no longer be trusted, and the usefulness of the diplomats who negotiated them would be compromised. I am particularly concerned over the reaction of the Thai, who already question our commitment to them.

—If we passively agree to publish this sensitive material, our private assurances to foreign governments that Fulbright's actions do not bind the U.S. Government lose all credibility.

—Finally, the passive action of releasing the sensitive material does not give us an opportunity to control the coverage given by the news media. The materials will simply be used to give whatever slant its users desire. We should get whatever public relations credit there is, not the Foreign Relations Committee.

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[5] The Ad Hoc Committee on Laos was established on December 6, 1969. The December 6 memorandum from Kissinger to Rogers, Laird, and Helms announcing the creation and describing the membership and responsibilities of the group is in the National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS.

The Options, Pro and Con

Basically, the options boil down to releasing the sensitive testimony, or finding some other way of getting our message to the public if this is accepted as being desirable. We might arrange a press backgrounder, either by State or the White House, or alternatively arrange private, sensitive briefings of Administration supporters on the Hill who might then help to defend the Administration's position. A review of the options follows:

1. *Releasing the testimony*

Pro:

—Might help to ease Congressional and public criticism of the Administration over Laos.

Con:

—Would involve the many disadvantages inherent in the issues outlined above.

2. *Arranging for a press backgrounder*

A. *By State*

Pro:

—Would allow us to control what is said, and how, without releasing sensitive information.
—Would preserve State's primary role in handling the Laos issue before the Congress and the public.

Con:

—Would not satisfy Senatorial criticism.

B. *By the White House*

Pro:

—Would allow us to control what is said, and how, without releasing sensitive information.

Con:

—Would bring the White House directly into the controversy before the lines are completely drawn.
—Would focus Senatorial criticism on the White House, which so far has not been the case.

3. *Arranging for private briefings of designated supporters*

Pro:

—Would allow our case to be made most fully on the basis of sensitive information.

Con:

—We could not be assured that the help of supporters would be sufficient to overcome the publicity accorded the critics of our Laos policy.

Talking points for your use at the meeting are attached (Tab A).[6]

[6] Attached but not printed.

194. Minutes of the National Security Council Meeting[1]

Washington, February 27, 1970.

PARTICIPANTS

The President
Vice President Agnew
Secretary of State Rogers
Secretary of Defense Laird
Attorney General Mitchell
CIA Director Helms
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Wheeler
Henry A. Kissinger
Bryce Harlow
William Watts

RN—I want to run through the Laos situation. We must think about the best way to present what we are doing. We may have to leak some information, but we have a good story to tell.

When the leaders of the Veterans groups were in the office the other day, they asked about Laos. I told them it all began in 1962 with the Accords which were violated as soon as they were signed. North Vietnam encroached into the area, and the Ho Chi Minh trail runs right through Laos. I said we had to be concerned over the possibility of an overrun. I have said we will [not] put in troops.

Kissinger—Not "will not", but "have not".

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–109, NSC Minutes, Originals, 1970. Top Secret. Apparently drafted by Watts. Talking points for Nixon and Kissinger for this meeting are ibid., NSC Meeting Folder, Feb. 27, 1970.

RN—There are no present plans to put in troops.

Rogers—No plans, but if needed we would want to get Congressional approval.

Laird—Concerning ground forces, we do insert some from time to time on the Ho Chi Minh trail.

RN—That is all right. We bomb the Ho Chi Minh trail and we will continue to do so. I say that categorically.

(CIA Director Helms then gave his briefing (attached).[2])

RN—Where is the 1962 demarcation line?

Helms—To the west of present battle lines. The farthest west they have gone is into Moung Suoi.

RN—When does the rainy season begin?

Helms—It is 2 or 3 months away.

Rogers—They usually leave then and execute a pull-back.

Helms—We were surprised last year by their tactics. Vang Pao was encircled. We did get weapons in to him.

RN—Was there much weapon loss for us?

Helms—Yes. But we destroyed the ammo. We fly matériel in with helicopters or light planes.

The enemy now seems to be probing for weaknesses rather than preparing for an all-out attack. They are bringing in long-range artillery.

RN—What does the Senate know about Vang Pao?

Helms—We have briefed since 1961, including such people as Admiral Felt and Ambassadors Parsons and Brown. CIA was ordered to terminate activities [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]. The Meo's observed restrictions placed on them. We did have case officers [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]. The North Vietnamese did not comply with Articles II and IV, and on June 25, 1963, President Kennedy said to go back in.

RN—Have we lost anybody there?

Helms—Five CIA men have died; 4 in helicopters shot down and one by accident.

RN—The picture in the paper of the air base triggered public inquiry.

Helms—[*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] There are 53 Americans there all the time, [*1 line of source text not declassified*] in Vientiane.

Rogers—Has there been an increase in sorties?

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[2] Not attached.

Helms—No.

RN—Where was the 25% reduction in air activity undertaken?

Laird—It has been cut down in Northern Laos. The monthly sortie rate has gone up as follows:

1966—513
1967—458
1968—908
1969—3800
1970—3428

Rogers—This is the figure the Senate is most interested in.

RN—Why has it gone up?

Helms—The North Vietnamese upped their personnel.

Laird—Our priorities are as follows: first priority is against in-country Vietnamese; second priority is against the Ho Chi Minh trail; third priority is in support of the efforts of the Plaine de Jarres. Our in-country needs have gone down.

RN—That coincides with the bombing halt.

Rogers—But we stepped up again at the time the Plaine de Jarres was taken by us. That time we went farther.

Laird—Bill (Rogers) has a point. We did go farther than ever before.

Rogers—Yes, we escalated. At least that is what our opponents say.

Helms—But last year the enemy made a major mistake.

Rogers—Do you think the enemy could take Laos?

Helms—There is an uncertain equilibrium, and it hinges on the political situation.

Mitchell—But they have put more troops in.

Rogers—We have increased our sortie rate.

Helms—They have a major frustration over developments in Vietnam.

Rogers—They would hope to put enough heat on Souvanna to put a stop on bombing on the Ho Chi Minh trail.

RN—We don't have to stop. Do we bomb only with Laotian approval? I don't care what they say.

Wheeler—We have agreements with Souvanna on rules of engagement. Souvanna says the Ho Chi Minh trail is North Vietnamese controlled, which gives us a free hand.

Laird—If Souvanna asks us to stop, we don't have to. But the squawks here are great. We could knock off Dick Helms' operation, plus air operation.

I think Congress will concentrate on Laos this year.

RN—Where do we go for funds?

Helms—Senators Russell and Young decide.[3]

RN—That is no problem.

Laird—But Russell doesn't know how long he can work this way.

RN—If the Royal Laotian Government crumbles, the Thais would be psychopathic. Concerning the trail, we will continue to hit it. The Thais wanted us to send guerrillas in. There is no problem about getting into a deeper involvement in Laos. Who wants to defend it anyway. But if we move to include the Thais, then that is a real problem.

Rogers—Under the SEATO Accords, we can go the defense of Laos through the constitutional process.

RN—It would never get through the Senate.

Rogers—I am not worried about defending the Thais.

Laird—They are not strong enough to do it.

Rogers—Why do we always support people who can't defend themselves?

Laird—You can't get the Thai army to move very far from Bangkok.

Wheeler—They have weak junior leaders in the military.

RN—Where do we stand?

Rogers—We are heading to a serious problem with Congress. They are looking for an issue, and this is it. They see in it a repetition of Vietnam. A replay in escalation is occurring. Our sorties have been doubled. B–52 strikes have taken place. We look as if we are supporting at all costs, but we have refused to make anything public. We need some kind of testimony by the Administration, which is complete.

RN—But what the critics say is dishonest. How many advisers do we have in Laos?

Helms—It is not that simple. [*1 line of source text not declassified*]

Laird—The U.S. military has 229 people.

Rogers—Have any Green Berets been rehired?

Helms—There are 15 ex-Berets, under 2-year contract. But they are not Green Berets, they are not sheep dip.

Rogers—We have refused to make anything public on air sorties.

Laird—But the President did talk about that in November and December.

Rogers—That only applied to the Ho Chi Minh trail.

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[3] Senator Richard B. Russell (D-Georgia) and Senator Stephen M. Young (D-Ohio).

The Committee proposes to make a major confrontation. They are placing it on the ground of Executive privilege versus congressional authority. How about the air sorties? How can I defend keeping this secret?

Do we gain by failing to make this public? [*1 line of source text not declassified*] But we are running into a credibility problem.

Mitchell—If you get a statement out, will that turn off Symington?

Rogers—No. He would just release more testimony.

Mitchell—But that just opens Pandora's box. The testimony must come out of the Executive branch.

Rogers—This can go out of the testimony. They always have been concerned over Executive privilege.

Laird—There has been only one B–52 strike on the Plaine. We hit the Ho Chi Minh trail every day.

Whatever we do, it will not quiet the people on Laos. How we handle this is a major issue of credibility of this Administration.

I see 7 or 8 ways to handle things:

(1) Let Symington release it. This would look like the Committee smoked it out.
(2) Have a State backgrounder, or even on the record.

Rogers—You can't try to resist Symington and Fulbright and yet leak the story. That would lead to a real fight.

Laird—That depends on how much you give. It didn't necessarily help to talk about the Ho Chi Minh trail.

(3) Brief selected members of Congress. This is no good since they all know anyway.
(4) Continue to hard-line.
(5) Issue a new government statement, as a follow-up to the Presidential speeches of December and January.
(6) Make a new statement, plus a backgrounder which could be done by State or Henry.
(7) Let the Royal Laotian Government put out a statement first and then we follow-up.

Rogers—If we go along the lines of #7, that would be a catastrophe.

Laird—We could announce something together.

Honestly, I only like #5. I think we need a new statement. I have several suggested drafts. I am not concerned about quieting interest on Laos but on our credibility.

Rogers—I agree—just as we were successful in Vietnam when the President came out publicly. So if we tell a good story here it will quiet down. Why hide everything?

Laird—I agree. We should come out. We can point to this as an adjunct to the war in Vietnam—part of helping the overall situation.

RN—I did imply that in December; now we must get it out. We can't have testimony saying CIA is involved. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]

Rogers—I can get by without mentioning CIA.

Helms—[*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]

Laird—One unit is ready to go.

Rogers—We can get Souvanna to say he asked for them, and that this was done at his request.

RN—Yes, to uphold the Geneva Accords.

Rogers—And I can say we have no combat troops there.

RN—We have [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] advisors.

Kissinger—Do we have advisors with the Royal Laotian Government?

RN—[*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] military men, but none have been in combat and none killed.

Wheeler—We did lose some crew at a radar station.[4] [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]

Helms—I am not sure about that.

Rogers—I think we can get the Committee to go along with sorties, [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]. When a release is made the President can make a policy statement. He can point to no escalation.

Kissinger—I see two problems. First, what should we make public? Second, what about the material the Symington Committee has?

On the Symington Committee release, we can make a deal with the air sorties kept in, but the critics will keep after the CIA story. Others will go after it as well.

Laird—We have other committees who already know about it. We must go with an Administration statement.

Rogers—That is no problem; we can work this out with Congress.

Laird—But don't give sortie levels.

Rogers—I thought you said that was okay.

Laird—No. The number business is dangerous.

Rogers—We shouldn't do this on a background basis. We should go to the committees openly, and be forthright.

RN—Who goes first? I think we should go first. We don't want to give an impression that we were withholding something. This has been going on for 6 years.

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[4] Eleven "contract" employees were killed at the radar and navigation site 85 at Phou Pha Thi, Laos, in March 1968 when it was captured by the North Vietnamese. See *Foreign Relations,* 1964–1968, vol. XXVIII, Document 342.

Harlow—To the degree the Committee report can be sanitized, you should go talk with the Committee.

Rogers—Symington knows everything.

Laird—The Symington Committee should not have all that.

Harlow—Symington is up for reelection and he will keep after this. So will Fulbright who is sure you preempted the Vietnam issue with your speech.

The major interest is on the ground and CIA. Symington is giving the impression of an enormous covert effort, on the edge of becoming a new Vietnam.

You could say to Symington that we will give you the most sanitized version within national security interests. We can't go further, in fairness to your colleagues. But Symington wants a confrontation with the President.

He brought up with me at lunch the issue of the Philippines [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*].

Laird—I see Symington embarrassed by having this conversation laid on the table. He is all bent out of shape.

RN—Of course, we will continue to talk. If we do something, we must get our story out. If the Symington Committee goes out first, that is an insult to the other committees.

Mitchell—Again, the credibility gap.

RN—We must lay it out. We will not disclose CIA activities. On sortie rates, I think people are more worried about ground involvement.

Laird—It costs $2 billion, including Northern Laos and the Ho Chi Minh trail.

Rogers—Why do you refuse to tell the sortie rate?

Helms—Why not admit bombing Northern Laos at the request of Souvanna.

Laird—For a long time Souvanna did not want that.

Rogers—But that has changed now. What do I say when we assert Executive privilege?

Kissinger—You are not claiming Executive privilege, but the national interest.

Rogers—It is the same thing.

Mitchell—On the sortie rate question, why do you need the number?

Rogers—Why not?

Mitchell—Can't you say that we increased when Souvanna asked, because of the increase of North Vietnamese troops.

Harlow—I assumed there was a military reason for not giving sortie numbers.

Laird—We can announce daily rates.

RN—When Souvanna came here I was told not to announce sortie rates.

Helms—State didn't want it done. They felt this would embarrass Souvanna and might bring the Soviets in, claiming violation of the Accords.

Rogers—We could work that out. We could announce something with Souvanna.

Helms—We have deliberately held news of the increased North Vietnamese troops quiet.

Laird—The cost has gone up from $500 million to $2 billion during this Administration. But we can ride that out.

Kissinger—We can take a position which could include the following points:

(1) Assert that North Vietnamese troops are there and admit that our own activity is underway.
(2) There has been escalation from the other side.
(3) Enormous pressure has come on Souvanna.
(4) But the focus of attention will shift to ground operations, and a fear that we are going to war through CIA.

We must stress we are trying to negotiate a settlement in Vietnam. With respect to the public, we need to keep a low level.

With respect to Hanoi, we need ambiguity. I worry about too much explicitness. We should tell the story. Show a good reason, but with restraint.

Rogers—I agree with most of that. But this was done in the Vietnam speech. The statement must be made by the President.

Harlow—This all makes sense. We should preempt the area. It should be brief.

Laird—I have some draft suggestions.

Mitchell—What about the bombing on the Chinese road?

Wheeler—That was not done. You could say with assurance that there is no use of ground troops in Laos.

RN—There are no ground forces, and there will be none without going to Congress. That takes care of North Vietnam, Congress, and the public.

Wheeler—You can't defend Laos from Laos. You must go to North Vietnam to do that and you must go in through Thailand.

RN—I agree. That is insane.

Wheeler—There were proposals earlier to put troops in the panhandle. I was opposed.

RN—Laos is a country where there are more elephants than people. There are 2 million elephants and 1-1/2 million people. That is one country where the Republicans are in the majority.

Rogers—I can delay testifying until next week.

RN—I want to think about this over the weekend. We should make a statement next week. A backgrounder won't work—it looks tricky. On the Committee business, if we give to Symington the others will be damned mad. They have kept quiet in the past. The method is either to bite, or respond to questions.

Rogers—How about five minutes on television?

RN—I could go on at night. But that would spread to 70 million people what only 10 million people are worried about. I could give a 5 minute statement in the middle of the day—low-key.

Should I make it live like the withdrawal statement?

Harlow—This is not that kind of an issue.

RN—We must line up the troops. We must write in a simply way. There is a lot of confusion on this. I don't want any questions left.

What about Souvanna?

Rogers—I can let him know.

RN—I was going to have a press conference Monday. Now I won't.

All of you please try your hand at talking points, and let me have them by the first of next week, by Monday p.m. Set forth the points I should make and the points I should avoid.[5]

[5] On March 6 the White House released from Key Biscayne, Florida, a "Statement About the Situation in Laos." The text is in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* pp. 244–249; see also Document 197.

195. Memorandum From President Nixon to his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, March 2, 1970.

Bill Rogers raised a very pertinent point when he asked why it is that those forces trained by Communists seem to have a will to fight whereas those that are trained by the United States usually are pretty sad.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 144, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, March 1970. Confidential. The memorandum is unsigned.

Of course, there are exceptions to this proposition. The UAR pilots are pitiful and the South Koreans turned out to be rather effective. On the other hand, I wonder if our whole training program doesn't need to be examined. This brings me back to the fundamental concern I have with regard to Vietnamization. I feel that Abrams et al are putting too much emphasis on building the image of the U.S. division with a huge division slice rather than building it as the North Vietnamese have built theirs, lean and strong and effective. I want a study made of this situation and I do not want simply a rationalization and defense from those involved.[2] I think we have to get to the heart of this proposition if we can.[3]

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[2] In a March 3 covering memorandum to Kissinger, Haig stated that "attached is one of those extremely troublesome memos from the President." Haig was "especially disturbed at the President's misunderstanding of General Abrams' concepts and style. Of all the generals that I have observed, he has the best grasp of how to conduct guerrilla warfare and hopefully how to structure the force to do so." Haig suggested that the study Nixon asked for "is the kind DOD has conducted wholesale over the past eight years under the Democratic Administration." Haig also suggested that the President should know that Vietnamization emphasized the development of RF/PF and PS/DF rather than additional ARVN conventional forces. (Ibid.) Haig asked Lynn to task Defense with the study, but warned that Lynn would have to make sure that the report was responsive to the President and not just DOD "rationalizations." (Memorandum from Haig to Lynn, March 6; ibid.)

[3] In a March 3 memorandum to Nixon, Kissinger responded to a request from the President about the truth of a CBS report on February 15 that ARVN was "cursed" privately and "patronized" publicly by U.S. forces. While admitting that there was some substance to the charge, Kissinger suggested it was a distortion to say it held true for all relations between U.S. forces and ARVN. Good relations were seldom newsworthy. Kissinger reported that Defense was studying ARVN pay and support for dependents as a factor in motivation and desertion rates. Nixon wrote the following note: "K. Let's watch this closely—we cannot let a failure in this area to cause us to lose the game."

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196. Memorandum From the Deputy Director for Plans of the Central Intelligence Agency (Karamessines) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, March 6, 1970.

SUBJECT

Further Developments Concerning the Plans and Intentions of the Cambodian Ambassador to the United Nations

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 84, Kissinger Office Files, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Sambath [Cambodian Ambassador to United Nations]. Secret; Eyes Only.

1. I am forwarding for your attention the following recent information concerning Huot Sambath, the Cambodian Ambassador to the United Nations, whom you have agreed to meet informally.

2. According to [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] educator with whom this Agency is in touch, Ambassador Sambath returned to New York from France on 25 February 1970. Sambath stated he had several conversations with Prince Sihanouk and his advisers. When informed of your agreement to meet Sambath, the Prince expressed his pleasure and instructed Sambath to proceed. In describing this development, Sambath told [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] educator: "We have diplomatic relations of a sort but we want friendly relations as well."

3. On 27 February, Ambassador Sambath prevailed upon [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], to telephone the White House to request an appointment. Although [*name not declassified*] stressed his personal reluctance to become involved in a governmental affair, Sambath argued that his English proficiency is poor and he did not desire to rely upon members of his office staff for fear the matter would become known at the United Nations and among employees of the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [*1½ lines of source text not declassified*]

4. When he telephoned the White House, [*name not declassified*] eventually was put in touch with Mr. Young of your office. It was agreed the appointment would be set sometime during the period 1–6 April[2] and that the precise date would be fixed after further consultation on 23–25 March. [*2 lines of source text not declassified*] During his visit to Washington Sambath will also call upon Senator Mansfield, Senator Fulbright, Congressman Zablocki and Mr. Robert McNamara. The purpose of these visits is not known at this time.

[*2 paragraphs (24 lines of source text) not declassified*]

TH Karamessines

[2] A marginal note reads: "set lunch 6th April."

197. Editorial Note

On March 6, 1970, President Nixon released from the White House in Key Biscayne, Florida, a statement entitled, "About the Situation in Laos." The text of the statement is in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* pages

244–249. Nixon announced that "in light of increasingly massive presence of North Vietnamese troops and their recent offensives in Laos," he was writing British Prime Minister Wilson and Soviet Premier Kosygin as co-chairmen of the 1962 Geneva Conference for their help in restoring the 1962 agreements. Nixon's letters to Kosygin and Wilson, both March 6, are in the National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 101, Vietnam Subject Files, Laos Statement, Vol. II. The President reported in the statement that there were 67,000 North Vietnamese troops in Laos and 30 North Vietnamese regular battalions with tanks, armored cars, and long-range artillery currently involved in a campaign attacking the Plain of Jars. The Pathet Lao's role was "insignificant." After reviewing events in Laos from 1962 to 1969, Nixon explained that there were no American combat troops and no plans to introduce them, but there were 616 Americans employed by the U.S. Government in Laos and 424 U.S. Government contractors. Of the 1,040 U.S. military and civilian employees, military advisers or trainers comprised 320 and logistics personnel comprised 323. No American had been killed in ground combat operations, and U.S. personnel had not increased in the past year while North Vietnam increased its forces by 13,000. Nixon reported that the United States provided, at the Lao Government's request, military assistance to its regular and irregular forces. The United States continued air operations on a first priority to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and secondly to reconnoiter and provide combat support for Royal Lao Government forces. The President ended with a promise to continue the search for peace in Laos on the basis of the 1962 Geneva Agreements.

On February 27 Kissinger and the President discussed this statement and agreed that before making it the President should write to the Geneva Co-Chairmen, the Soviet Union and Great Britain. Kissinger suggested that the President should tell the American people about the letters and give them the facts about what "both sides" were doing. Nixon stated that "the main thing is to nail this—Kennedy did this, and Kennedy did that." Kissinger added: "and get Harriman in there." The President responded: "More Harriman than Kennedy. I will say that they've [North Vietnam] stepped up from 40 thousand to 70 thousand." The President did not want a long statement, noting that "It's a Washington story—people in Oklahoma know nothing about Laos." Kissinger added that "you should not be talking about wars all the time." The President stated that "we want to make it clear we have no combat forces in Laos. No one cares about [B] 52 strikes in Laos. But people worry about our boys." Kissinger thought that was the problem with the CIA. Nixon responded: "We won't mention that. We can put out some silly figure and they are there—I'll have to fuzz their capacity. Non-combative and none killed. That's the only way you can show they are non-combat." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division,

Kissinger Papers, Box 362, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) On March 4 at 9:45 p.m. Kissinger and Nixon again discussed the statement. Nixon stated, "If we had left the statement for them [Department of State] to make it would have been an utter disaster—whining, defensive. You can't win on a situation like this without hitting it on the head, if you are going to have to hit it." Kissinger suggested that this was the lesson of Nixon's November 3, 1969, speech and that "we have a good case on this [Laos]." The President agreed. Kissinger suggested that the North Vietnamese "are moving in Laos to stampede us in Paris. I like the line you are taking because it will help us in Vietnam." Nixon agreed and suggested, "what we are really saying is, all right boys, yes we are, what of it. State did not want us to take that tone?" Kissinger stated, "I know what they wanted us to say, we are not going to do it any more." (Ibid., 2–9 March 1970)

When released on March 6, the Nixon statement resulted in criticism from Congressional critics of the war, pointed questions from the press corps, and leaked stories about the extent of U.S. operations in Laos and the number of pilots lost and combat deaths. Press Spokesman Ron Ziegler had to qualify the President's statement that no Americans had been killed in ground combat operations. On March 9 Kissinger told Haldeman that "I knew it wasn't true [no ground combat deaths]. The President should have never made the statement." Haldeman thought that "It should have been made by State." Kissinger complained that "they never volunteered any information and gave us no warning. Laird gave us one of his fudged statements and Rogers, as for the Nov 3 [1969] statement, we didn't hear from. Nevertheless, I'm here to prevent that sort of thing." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Haldeman, March 9, 8 p.m.; ibid., Box 362, 2–9 March 1970)

On March 7 the Pathet Lao outlined on the Vietnamese news service its terms for a political settlement in Laos including five extended points which can be summarized as: respect for Laos' sovereignty, neutrality and integrity; a neutral foreign policy for Laos; respect for the monarchy and democracy through free elections; a consultative political conference prior to elections to create a provisional government; and unification based on consultations among the Lao parties without resort to force. The text of the statement is in Foreign Intelligence Broadcast Service No. 51, Hanoi international service in English, March 6, 1631 Greenwich mean time. It is attached to a March 7 memorandum from Kissinger informing the President that while the Pathet Lao statement "was much more moderate in tone than previous statements," it included for the first time a "definite scenario ('provisional political conference' to create a 'provisional coalition government' followed by elections) for a political settlement in Laos." Kissinger concluded that, "The present proposal can hardly be seriously offered, since it calls

upon Souvanna to throw all his cards first, and does not offer a scenario for negotiations which could have the slightest appeal to him." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 19, President's Daily Briefs)

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198. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, March 8, 1970, 9:30 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker
Henry A. Kissinger

Meetings with North Vietnamese of February 21

Mr. Kissinger had given Ambassador Bunker the night before a copy of the transcript of the meetings on February 21;[2] Ambassador Bunker had gone over it and made written notes.

Mr. Kissinger asked Ambassador Bunker's impressions. The Ambassador said that he was very encouraged—this was the most forthcoming approach in his experience, "by a good deal." He said that he thought Mr. Kissinger's comments on our not agreeing to the overthrow of Thieu were strong enough, and he found it interesting that they acquiesced when Mr. Kissinger said that we assumed they would use their influence with the PRG after an agreement just as we would use ours with the GVN. They had gotten the point that there would be a GVN at that time.

Ambassador Bunker also found significant the fact that they said that "for the time being" talks between the PRG and the Saigon administration cannot be held. He was further encouraged by the fact that Le Duc Tho proposes to stay in Paris.

He was also impressed by the atmosphere of the meeting which, he said, indicated that they want to move forward.

Ambassador Bunker said he thought that the North Vietnamese are not so sure Vietnamization won't work. And he agreed with Mr.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. II. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only.

[2] Documents 189 and 190.

Kissinger's point that they fear the consequences if it doesn't work, since that could mean American troops will be there for a long time.

The Ambassador said he also thought that Mr. Kissinger's statements that a political solution must reflect the existing political realities in South Vietnam and that a fair political process must register the existing relationship of political forces had sunk in.

He found further encouragement in the fact that they had agreed for the first time to discuss both the 10 and the 8 points.[3] He agreed with Mr. Kissinger on the significance of their saying only that we should discuss the 10 points, and not insisting that we accept them.

In addition to these points, the Ambassador agreed with the following encouraging signs listed by Mr. Kissinger:

—They did not take exception to Mr. Kissinger's use of the word "reciprocity."

—They did not use the word "unconditional" in referring to American withdrawal.

—They did not insist that the GVN be changed before serious negotiations.

—They based their argument for dropping Thieu, Ky and Khiem primarily on the grounds that the PRG would not now agree to talk with the GVN.

—They did not lay emphasis on coalition government, or talk about the provisional government before elections.

—They allowed Mr. Kissinger to make the appointment of a new chief of delegation conditional on progress in this channel.

—They indicated a desire for more frequent meetings, and let us choose the time for the next meeting.

—They have accepted a procedure for negotiations in which it would be difficult for them to pursue their usual tactics, since progress must be shown.

—On the Monday after the meeting,[4] Mai Van Bo thanked French Foreign Minister Schuman for helping with the arrangements for Mr. Kissinger's trip. Bo said that Mr. Kissinger unfortunately had been very tough, but nevertheless the talks would continue. This was encouraging, and if the French leak it, it won't hurt us with the GVN.

In short, Ambassador Bunker said, he found "every aspect encouraging."

Approach at the Next Meeting

Mr. Kissinger described the assets we have in this channel:

—He speaks with the President's direct authority.

—The North Vietnamese can't kick him around, since his personal position does not depend on progress in the negotiations.

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[3] See footnote 8, Document 189.

[4] Monday, February 23.

—There must be progress in this channel if they are to get a new U.S. Ambassador at the talks.

—We will not follow the usual approach, but will state a position and stick with it.

Mr. Kissinger then summarized the statement he proposed to use at the meeting, subject to the President's approval.[5] He said that the basic objective is to get their agreement to the principle of reciprocity in the withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese forces. If they accept this principle, we have passed a fundamental turning point. We should not get bogged down in details. Ambassador Bunker agreed. He noted that we should not flood Hanoi with proposals.

Ambassador Bunker specifically agreed with Mr. Kissinger's (1) stating our acceptance of the principle of total withdrawal, (2) presenting a schedule showing what a U.S. withdrawal in 16 months would look like, (3) stating our understanding of their special problem with linking their withdrawals to ours, (4) asking them for a separate schedule for their withdrawal, (5) saying there should be means of verification and an exchange of POWs, and (6) stating that if there were agreement in principle the technical issues could be discussed at the Majestic. (Mr. Kissinger noted that this approach would enable them to save face, since there would not appear to be exact mutuality, and it would give them a tougher problem since they would have to respond or be open to blame for blocking progress. In addition, we could always hold out for something different when they came back with their proposal.)

Mr. Kissinger said that this was all he intended to do at the meeting. He would say nothing about political settlement except to ask questions, if they raise the subject, and reiterate that we will not overthrow Thieu. He would then inform Ambassador Bunker, who could inform Thieu, of what was said on political settlement, in accordance with our understanding with Thieu. If the North Vietnamese accepted the principle of mutual withdrawal, the question of a political settlement should fall into place somehow. Agreement on this principle would put heat on the NLF to reach agreement with the GVN on political issues.

Ambassador Bunker said he thought the whole approach was "very good tactics."

Mr. Kissinger said that he wanted to be sure that Ambassador Bunker was not agreeing reluctantly. Ambassador Bunker said, "on the contrary," he was whole-heartedly in accord.

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[5] The President approved the statement; see Document 200 and footnote 3 thereto.

Informing President Thieu

Mr. Kissinger suggested that Ambassador Bunker give Thieu the essence of the transcripts of the February 21 meetings.[6] He should inform Thieu that it was the President's wish that he receive this information. Ambassador Bunker said that he would call Thieu's attention particularly to Mr. Kissinger's strong statement to the North Vietnamese that we were not entering the discussions with an agreement or understanding that we will change the government in Saigon.

With regard to informing Thieu of our approach at the next meeting, Mr. Kissinger said that he thought we should be as candid as possible. We would leave it to Ambassador Bunker to judge the amount of detail into which he should go. He should inform Thieu that we will not let the North Vietnamese use the negotiating process to overthrow him.

Mr. Kissinger said that the Ambassador should emphasize to Thieu that Thieu and Bunker are the only two people in Saigon who know of this, and Thieu should mention it to no one, including other Americans. Ambassador Bunker said that we can trust Thieu not to talk about it. He kept his promises to be silent about secret negotiations in 1968.

Thieu's Probable Reaction

Ambassador Bunker said that he thought Thieu would be encouraged by these moves. He knows that while Vietnamization can lead to the end of the war for us, it does not mean the end of the war for him. This is why he has been publicly taking a harder line recently. He is thereby steeling his people for a longer struggle, and is trying to overcome the effect of Big Minh and Senator Don in lessening the resolve of the Vietnamese people. (Thieu had, however, handled the Chau case badly.)[7]

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[6] In backchannel message 331 from Saigon, March 11, Bunker reported to Kissinger that he informed Thieu of the February 21 meetings with Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho. Thieu agreed to tell no one else. Bunker told Thieu of the "encouraging signs" and informed him that Kissinger would meet again with the North Vietnamese on March 16 to discuss mutual withdrawal, reciprocity, and to ask for a schedule of total withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces. Bunker assured Thieu that nothing would be said about the political structure in South Vietnam and Kissinger would state again that he would not agree to the overthrow of Thieu. Bunker asked if Thieu agreed with this strategy. Thieu replied, "by all means" and suggested that the problem "was to find out what the other side wants and how they will react." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. III)

[7] According to a March 5 memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, Tran Ngoc Chau, a South Vietnamese Deputy in the National Assembly, was being prosecuted by the GVN for alleged Communist connections through his brother, Tran Ngoc Hien, a senior North Vietnamese official sent south in 1965 to explore the idea of coalition government. Tran Ngoc Hien was later captured in Saigon in 1969. Chau claimed he was trying to get his

Thieu knows that while Vietnamization has gone well so far, there are problems ahead for the GVN and for Thieu himself. Thieu therefore hopes that things will go well now so that the other side will come to terms.

Thieu will therefore be "reassured" by Mr. Kissinger's meetings with the North Vietnamese.

While Thieu has the "usual Vietnamese suspicious nature," he has great confidence in the President. The President's meetings with him at Midway and during the Asian trip, and the November 3 speech,[8] helped build this confidence.

Mr. Kissinger asked if Thieu would be bothered by Mr. Kissinger's statements that a political solution must reflect the existing political realities in South Vietnam and that a fair political process must register the existing relationship of political forces. These statements mean that both Thieu and the NLF must have a role. Ambassador Bunker said that Thieu would not be bothered by these statements; he is committed to the same position.

Knowledge of Meetings within the American Government

Ambassador Bunker agreed with Mr. Kissinger's doubts about the wisdom of spreading knowledge of his meetings with the North Vietnamese. In addition to the dangers of leaks, knowledge of the meetings would lead to increased pressure for a flood of initiatives such as ceasefire. They agreed, however, that at some point we should bring in a selected and very limited number of people. Mr. Kissinger said that he thought the Secretary of State should be informed, perhaps after two more meetings.

Arrangements for Keeping Bunker Informed

Ambassador Bunker said that he had set up a special procedure for backchannel messages on this subject. Only one man in Saigon, [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], knows the code. Mr. Kissinger said that he would send Ambassador Bunker a brief account of the next meeting through this channel by the morning of March 18, Saigon time, and would then send him a full account by courier. He would probably use a code for names in these messages. (This code would be as

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brother to defect, but Thieu pursued his prosecution with single mindedness to demonstrate his opposition to a coalition with the Communists. When Thieu pressured the National Assembly to lift Chau's parliamentary immunity and try to convict him *in absentia,* Chau went into hiding. Bunker spoke twice to Thieu about the case, suggesting it was hurting U.S. support of Thieu, but with little effect. (Ibid., Country Files, Box 144, Vietnam, March 1970)

[8] Regarding Nixon's Midway Island meeting with Thieu, June 7–9, 1969, see Documents 79–81. For the November 3, 1969 speech, see Document 144.

follows: Kissinger=Luke, Xuan Thuy=Yul, Le Duc Tho=Michael, Mai Van Bo=Nestor, General Walters=Xerxes.)

Troop Withdrawals

Ambassador Bunker said that he thought the next troop withdrawal should be for about 50,000 men. Mr. Kissinger asked if he favored such a withdrawal. Ambassador Bunker said that he did, if it were spread over four months. Mr. Kissinger said that he had been told that it might damage the military situation. Ambassador Bunker said that the Vietnamese expect us to withdraw about 150,000 troops this year, and two more increments of 50,000 each during the year would be acceptable.

Mr. Kissinger asked if his conversations with the North Vietnamese provide a reason for holding withdrawals down. Ambassador Bunker said that perhaps they do. Mr. Kissinger said that he himself would therefore favor holding off, but "hell would break loose" if we did. Ambassador Bunker agreed.

Mr. Kissinger said that he could tell Ambassador Bunker in great confidence that the President is thinking of making the next increment 20,000 men over a two month period. Ambassador Bunker said that he would prefer this to 50,000 over four months.

Ambassador Bunker recalled that Thieu was the one who had first mentioned the figure of 150,000 men to be withdrawn during the course of 1970. Mr. Kissinger suggested that he might have been saving face. Ambassador Bunker agreed, but said that Thieu had volunteered that the President should decide whether to announce the 150,000 at the beginning of the year or do it in stages. He noted also that the South Vietnamese want us to follow the three criteria.

Military Situation

In response to Mr. Kissinger's question, Ambassador Bunker said that General Abrams is doing what he can to keep on the pressure, and that there is no indication of contrary orders from Defense.

199. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 13, 1970.

SUBJECT

Special Prisoner of War Committee

I have been considering various ways of setting up the action-oriented team on prisoners of war which you wish to have established within the White House, and believe that the most effective and efficient way to accomplish this purpose is to set up a committee composed of members of all Departments and Agencies concerned with the POW issue to meet regularly under the chairmanship of a member of my staff. In this way White House direction can be assured without the administrative problems connected with creating an entirely new office within your staff, and new ideas and concepts can be put forward without running up against the frequently stultifying inter- and intra-agency clearance process.

This committee, which could come into existence almost immediately, could be created by calling on each of the Departments and Agencies now concerned with POW affairs to nominate one or two representatives, depending on the extent to which it has been involved in this particular aspect of our operations. For example, Defense might nominate two people, one from the office of the Special Assistant to the Joint Chiefs for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities and one from ISA; State one individual who has experience in POW affairs; CIA one person familiar with Southeast Asian operations; and USIA one person with psychological warfare background. Support staff would be supplied by the NSC.

The charter of the committee would be to function both in the overt and clandestine field in all ways which could put pressure on Hanoi. Overtly, it would assure that a hard-hitting series of statements on POWs is drafted for the Paris talks,[2] it would consider contacts with

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 94, Vietnam Subject Files, U.S. POWs in North Vietnam to April 30, 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action.

[2] On February 27 Nixon read a summary account of the 56th session of the Paris Peace Talks in which the third-ranking North Vietnamese and NLF officials refused to respond to Habib's questions on POW issues, especially mail privileges. Nixon wrote the following comment: "K. I have changed my mind—From now on until further direction from me—Habib is to talk *only* about prisoners. In the meantime get Thieu to move on unilateral release [of some POWs held by South Vietnam]." (Ibid., Box 18, President's Daily Briefs) Kissinger sent Rogers instructions to this effect on March 3. (Ibid.,

foreign governments as appropriate, and it would coordinate efforts to achieve inspections of POW facilities, exchange of mail and packages, release of name lists, and release of sick and wounded POWs. This would, of course, be in accordance with consultations with State and Defense. On the clandestine side, it would undertake to exercise jurisdiction over the various efforts of CIA and Armed Forces units to free our POWs. It might also see that contacts are maintained with "peace" groups which have opened up some degree of access to POWs in North Vietnam. It would propose and regulate psychological operations of both a "black" and overt nature.

I have drafted a memorandum to the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence and the Director of USIA (Tab A)[3] which informs them of your decision to implement the plan described above and directs them to nominate personnel.

Recommendations:[4]

That you approve the plan outlined above.

That you authorize me to issue the memorandum at Tab A.

RG 59, Central Files 1970–1973, POL 27–14 VIET S) In a March 14 memorandum to the President, Kissinger reported that at the 57th and 58th plenary meetings of the Paris Peace Talks, Habib talked only about POWs. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 94, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam—U.S. POWs in North Vietnam to April 1970)

[3] Tab A, a March 24 memorandum signed by Kissinger, is attached but not printed.

[4] Nixon approved both recommendations on March 23.

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200. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

My Meeting with North Vietnamese on March 16

My meeting with the North Vietnamese on February 21 contained a number of new elements which indicate that they are serious in their

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. II. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. A handwritten note on the memorandum indicates it was typed on March 16.

approach to our next meeting. (My memorandum of February 22 listing these elements is at Tab B.)[2]

We cannot yet conclude that they have made a decision to seek a negotiated settlement now. They may be on a diplomatic reconnaissance, exploring our position before they make a decision. Or they may be looking only for a means to reduce our military pressure so they can continue the conflict at length. But their readiness to engage in talks without insisting on pre-conditions—and in a channel in which they can neither make public propaganda nor stall too long—suggests that this is a serious effort. We may have a chance for a real negotiation.

Our next meeting in the channel will therefore be very important.

1. Strategy at the Meeting

In the past negotiations, the usual strategy of both sides has been to put forward initially positions each knew would be unacceptable, for bargaining purposes. This has led to lengthy and usually pointless debates and maneuvers.

In addition, we have usually reached the position we would put forward by seeking a bureaucratic consensus. This has meant that we began with very complicated positions which we then had to jettison, losing sight of the most fundamental issues in the process.

With the opportunity for serious negotiations now in this channel, we need a new approach which can help us move quickly to the fundamental issues.

(a) Objective

From our viewpoint, there is one issue to which all others are subordinate—*reciprocity* in the withdrawal of non-South Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam (and foreign troops from Laos and Cambodia). Our first objective must be to reach agreement on reciprocity in principle or in fact. Once they have done so, they will have given up their claim to moral superiority and can no longer argue privately that their forces are in South Vietnam on a different moral and legal basis than ours. This would be a quantum jump in the negotiations.

There has been a special problem in the past in gaining their agreement to the principle of reciprocity, which was their belief that they could not accept reciprocity publicly. On the basis of your statement last May 14 that "If North Vietnam wants to insist that it has no forces in the South, we will no longer debate the point," I believe we should move for private acknowledgement of the principle rather than public recognition.

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[2] Document 191.

(b) Tactics

I believe the best way to gain their agreement on this issue is by the following:

—telling them we accept the principle of total withdrawal (as stated in your UN speech and in my last meeting with them);
—offering a specific timetable for U.S. withdrawal, without proposing a timetable for theirs;
—pointing out that we will not withdraw unless they do;
—saying that we recognize their special problem regarding a public connection between their withdrawals and ours; and
—suggesting that they make a proposal on how to overcome this problem, so that we can negotiate an agreement *based on two concurrent schedules.*

This approach has several important advantages over the traditional one of simply insisting on mutual withdrawal:

—It should make it easier for them to agree to withdraw their troops, since they can save face by not having to agree to a *single* withdrawal schedule.
—While it helps them save face, it also gives them a tough problem. If they do not come back with a schedule, they cannot argue that we are blocking progress.
—If published, our approach will show that we made a serious and fair effort to achieve agreement.
—By asking them to come forward with a specific proposal, we avoid vague "understandings" about what they would do.
—It enables us to smoke them out: if their basic problem in accepting mutual withdrawals is merely one of "image," we will have given them the best chance so far to work out a settlement; but if they want us to withdraw without pulling out their own forces at all, that position will be clear.

I would also seek during the meeting to draw from them their proposals on the other basic issue—political settlement—without appearing too anxious to get into this subject. (The record should show that they, not we, pressed this issue, for the sake of our relations with the GVN.) I would also probe them on Laos—again without appearing overly eager to go into the subject.

2. Statement at the Meeting

Attached at Tab A is the statement I propose to make.[3] It is in three parts—some questions, some remarks on the procedure we should follow, and a substantive section. At various points in the statement, I would try to draw out their immediate reaction.

[3] Attached but not printed.

(a) Questions

I would begin with questions about two of their statements at the last meeting, one on how they viewed the course of these negotiations and the other on neither side's putting pressure on the other since "these are now negotiations." I would also ask about Foreign Minister Trinh's statements on their negotiating position in a recent interview.[4]

Asking these questions first would have a number of advantages. It would allow me to test the temperature at the beginning of the meeting, and it would provide a means for trying to get out of them whatever they were instructed to say. It would also show them from the outset that we expect them to clarify their position, and will not be put in a position in which they ask all the questions and we make all the explanations. It would also show for the record that we have not missed possible "signals."

(b) Procedure

I would then set out the procedure which must be followed at our meetings, emphasizing the necessity—and your specific instructions—that we move quickly to the basic issues. I would reiterate our general attitude and approach toward these negotiations.

(c) Substance

I would then state that they have often asked us (1) whether we accept the principle of total withdrawal and (2) when the withdrawal of all U.S. troops will be completed. I would say that we do accept the principle of total withdrawal, and then present in principle a schedule for the withdrawal of U.S. troops over 16 months (based on the proposal in your May 14 speech). The schedule would include the withdrawal of all U.S. troops in Vietnam, in accordance with our acceptance of the principle of total withdrawal.

After presenting this schedule, I would say that these withdrawals could not be unilateral, and that we recognize their special position of not wanting to equate their troops with our own. A way of handling the issue would be for them to tell us how they view the problem. We could then negotiate an agreement on this question on the basis of two

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[4] According to a March 10 memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh gave an interview to AP correspondent Dan DeLuce in which the Foreign Minister gave a "softer version" of conditions for a peace. In the oral version, Trinh did not say that the U.S. should recognize a provisional coalition government which would then organize elections. Rather he indicated that free and democratic elections would be organized and a broad conventional provisional government set up. The problem was that in his written response to the question submitted by the AP correspondent, Trinh took the "the usual Hanoi line" based on the ten points. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 144, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, March 1970)

concurrent schedules. I would next mention the importance of verification measures and the exchange of prisoners of war during the withdrawal process.

I would have papers with me on how we think they should perform in a reciprocal withdrawal, and on ways of handling the issue to publicly keep separate our withdrawals. I would tell them that, if they wished, we could make proposals on these questions. (And I would use the papers to check any proposals they make.) But I would make it clear that they should make proposals on their own performance.

My substantive statement would end with a statement that the technical issues involved in such a withdrawal could be negotiated between our delegations. I would conclude that we now have an opportunity to reach an agreement in principle which could bring an end to our sacrifices.

3. Tactics at Rest of Meeting

During the rest of the meeting, I would question them about their position on mutual withdrawals and, obliquely, a political settlement. If asked, I would also comment in very general terms on the technical issues I listed. But I would not go into real detail on any subject, at this meeting or at the next, unless they make new proposals of their own.

Recommendation: That you approve the approach for the next meeting described in this memorandum, and the statement attached at Tab A.[5]

[5] Nixon initialed the approve option.

201. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Paris, March 16, 1970, 9:40 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Le Duc Tho, Adviser to the North Vietnamese Delegation
Xuan Thuy, Chief of Delegation
Mai van Bo, North Vietnamese Delegate General in Paris
North Vietnamese Interpreter
Two Other North Vietnamese Officials
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Major General Vernon Walters, Defense Attaché
W. Richard Smyser, NSC Staff
W.A.K. Lake, NSC Staff

Mr. Kissinger was greeted warmly. Although at the beginning of the meeting Xuan Thuy seemed less friendly than at the last, all of the North Vietnamese except Xuan Thuy were even more friendly than at the last meeting, and Xuan Thuy himself warmed up during the latter two thirds. They seemed to enjoy the less serious exchanges as much as ever.

Mr. Kissinger: My plane last night had mechanical difficulties, so we had to land in Germany and I did not get as much sleep as planned. So you have me at a great disadvantage today, since I am tired.

I would like to make a technical point today before we begin.

When I came here last time, we informed the French Foreign Ministry. This time, only the Presidency knows. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not.

We would appreciate it if you would keep this in mind if you talk to anyone in France about my visit.

We have also kept knowledge of these meetings to a very small circle, both in the U.S. and elsewhere. Specifically, we have not spoken to any of your allies. We think that this is your problem, if you want to tell them.

Xuan Thuy: This is up to you.

Mr. Kissinger: I wanted you to know that we have no intention of doing so. I say this only because we are asked sometimes.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Material, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. III. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only. No drafting information appears on the source text, but Smyser and Lake sent it to Kissinger for transmittal to the President. The meeting took place at 11 Rue Darthe. Kissinger sent Nixon this memorandum explaining in an attached note that, "the important passages have been sidelined in red. I have not sidelined any of my opening statement." (Ibid.)

Xuan Thuy: We take note of that.

Mr. Kissinger: I had two questions which grew out of the last meeting and wondered if this is a good opportunity to ask them.

Xuan Thuy: Please explain what you have in mind.

Mr. Kissinger: Special Adviser Le Duc Tho said at the last meeting, when he spoke about the procedure of the negotiations, (I will have to read this in English as we translated it), "neither party will coerce the other party to a solution by applying pressure. Because we understand that these are now negotiations." Could I ask Mr. Special Adviser Le Duc Tho what he had in mind?

Le Duc Tho: What is your second question, please?

Mr. Kissinger: I also have a subsidiary question to the first, but will have to hear your answer before asking it. I also have a second principal question.

Xuan Thuy: May I say a word here?

Mr. Kissinger: Please.

Xuan Thuy: Last time, we agreed between us that this time we enter into discussion of substantial questions. We said that we fully approve and support the 10 points of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. As to you, Mr. Special Adviser Kissinger, you said that you would speak about your views. Therefore, I think today we should not speak about procedural points. Today we should go directly into the matter. When we go into substantive questions and when we go into substantive views, we can put questions—not at the beginning of the meeting. This is more logical.

Mr. Kissinger: I wanted to put these questions because it is important for us to know clearly where we are going from here, and to understand each other before proceeding. It is particularly the phrase "without applying pressure" which interested me.

Le Duc Tho: May I speak now? I would propose this: Because your questions are related to one another, I propose you put forward all of them, so that my answers will be related to one another.

Mr. Kissinger: I would like now to ask my second question. We will then be finished with the last meeting, and we can go on. My second question is a procedural one. I want to understand how the Minister and the Special Adviser envisaged the course of the negotiations. It is not clear to me what Mr. Le Duc Tho meant when he spoke about the procedure of our negotiations. I want to understand whether he meant that we would first come to an agreement, then sign an agreement, then have separate discussions about implementation of an agreement, and then there would be a separate ratifying meeting, or if some of these would be concurrent. I want to know how you visualize all this.

You have been unusually clear. I have only two questions.

Xuan Thuy: The first question is not related to our discussions here so Le Duc Tho will answer it today whenever he likes.

The second question is related to our discussions here. We have repeatedly said that we fully approve and support the 10-point solution of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. In this, the last point concerns the signing of an agreement. As we have said at Avenue Kleber and at many other meetings, we are ready to sign an agreement with you.

Mr. Kissinger: You and we?

Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho: All four parties.

Xuan Thuy: In private meetings with Ambassador Lodge, I repeatedly told him that the United States should have direct private talks with the PRG. But since the U.S. is not ready to do so for the time being, the DRV will meet with the U.S. to discuss all questions and come to an understanding. These are private meetings but there should also be meetings among all four parties.

Mr. Kissinger: After we have come to an agreement?

Xuan Thuy: Yes.

Le Duc Tho: This is the experience we have had with other international negotiations. There are public meetings, but (also) private meetings to come to agreement before coming to the plenary. It is the same thing every time. After the private agreement, as Minister Xuan Thuy said, it will then be tabled at a public session with all parties, for public agreement.[2]

Mr. Kissinger: I understand. It is clear. Now how about the first question? If you do not answer it, I shall be obliged to answer it myself, which would be embarrassing.

Le Duc Tho: Please express your view. There is nothing difficult here.

Mr. Kissinger: Our view is that while we talk, any effort by either side to bring military pressure in Vietnam or in one of the related countries would be inconsistent with our purposes here.

Le Duc Tho: Is that one of your questions, or your view?

Mr. Kissinger: I am trying to see if I understand Mr. Special Adviser correctly. What I have said is my interpretation of his remarks.

Le Duc Tho: This is your interpretation, which forces me to answer your question.

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[2] This paragraph was highlighted in red.

Mr. Kissinger: It is always a pleasure to hear from the Special Adviser. I hope I will not hear from him that military pressure is desirable.

Le Duc Tho: I would now like to speak about the negotiations here. We have our standpoint, our position. You have yours. The ten points and your position.[3] If negotiations are to take place, discussions should be about both sides' positions, to come to agreement and to settle the problem. This is the purpose. That is negotiation. We cannot force you to accept our position, and you cannot do the same to us. So here each side can negotiate, change views, and come to agreement. That is the problem, and it is clear.

Mr. Kissinger: It is partly clear. But I want to add that neither side will bring *additional* military pressure to bring the other to agreement.

Le Duc Tho: This is a misinterpretation of what I have said. What I was saying, was pressure *in negotiations.* As to *military* pressure, this is another question. In this regard, we think you are the side which is constantly making military pressure.

Mr. Kissinger: Well I have explained our position with regard to it, and I think that I now understand the Special Adviser.

Xuan Thuy: Now let us shift to other questions. Please explain your points.

Mr. Kissinger: Let me speak in two parts—the first procedural, the second substantive. Regarding the procedural points, I have two: I have noted that at each of our meetings, I have spoken first. The same happened at our other private meetings. But I don't think it is fair of us to take advantage of your good nature this way. I therefore suggest that at the next meeting we reverse the procedure and you speak first.

All right. Now, concerning the general procedure of these meetings.

We agreed in February that these would be serious negotiations. I told you then that we were entering these discussions with good will and earnest intent. We know that these negotiations will be difficult, but it will be no easier—and perhaps harder—to make peace at a later point. Therefore we are ready, as I told you, to be forthcoming and flexible in these negotiations. We respect your ability in negotiation as we respect your bravery in fighting. We believe, as I said last time, that our negotiations must come to a conclusion which is in the interest of both sides.

We are not here to repeat polemics or to repeat familiar positions. We are here to address the hard and specific questions, and to find agreement.

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[3] The rest of this paragraph and the next three paragraphs were highlighted in red.

In that spirit, President Nixon has asked me to emphasize especially his conviction that what we achieve here will depend entirely upon the directness of our approach. I can make that point to you no more directly than to read you one of his handwritten instructions to me as I was preparing for this meeting.

He said, "I want you to come directly to the hard decisions and I want you to say 'we will leave details to subordinates'—there should be a breakthrough on principle—and substance. You should tell them we are ready to go immediately to the heart of the problem."

There are two principal reasons for such a direct approach. First, these talks offer a new opportunity to discuss essentials. We are obviously concerned about the fundamental issues, considering the level of representation around this table. We can go rapidly and authoritatively to the heart of those issues, without the restraints of normal diplomatic channels.

The second reason is the one Minister Xuan Thuy mentioned at our last meeting, when he said we all have urgent duties elsewhere. Our participation in these talks is justified only if there is real progress. Repetition of standard positions, which leads to an impasse, should take place at a different level. As a student of these meetings, I am struck that both sides take extreme positions and later change them slowly. And, as a student of these meetings, I can even say that you have taken extreme positions from which you do not move at all. This particular forum is not suited to that process, and we do not intend to follow it.

We will give you our best judgment and not a bargaining position, and we will take into account your concerns. We assume you will do the same thing.

Should I stop at this point? Do you have any comment to make on what I have just said about the approach to these meetings? Or should I go on now to substance?

Xuan Thuy: (Xuan Thuy began to say something, but was cut off by Le Duc Tho before it was translated. Xuan Thuy then said:) Please speak on substance, then it will be our turn to speak.

Mr. Kissinger: I am told that in Vietnamese culture it is not proper to come too quickly to the point. I hope I have now proved my respect for your civilization, and will proceed to substance.

Xuan Thuy: It is out of our respect for American culture that we ask you to speak. Americans are known to be practical; they go right to the point.

Mr. Kissinger: Not professors, they are never practical.

Xuan Thuy: But you are a professor now doing practical work. There has been enough philosophy, so you should go to the point.

Mr. Kissinger: I know I will get a grade from Special Adviser Le Duc Tho.

Le Duc Tho: No, no.

Mr. Kissinger: At the last meeting we agreed that each side would present its position and we would then see where we stand. At today's meeting, I will state our position on the withdrawal of forces, and put forward a proposal. You then may wish to respond to this and perhaps make other proposals.

At the next meeting, if there is one, we each will have an opportunity to make further proposals and present further responses.

At our last meeting, Minister Xuan Thuy said he would like to know, "when the total withdrawal of U.S. troops—without leaving behind any troops or bases—will be completed." Your statement raised two questions which you have often asked: whether the U.S. withdrawal will be total, and what is the exact nature of the schedule of our withdrawal.

With regard to the first question, I want to repeat what I have said before: We are prepared to negotiate now the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops. This includes *all* U.S. troops, and the evacuation of *all* U.S. bases—without exception.

Le Duc Tho: And also allied troops?

Mr. Kissinger: Yes. You have often said that there will be progress if we accept the principle of total withdrawal. We accept this principle.

As for a schedule for the withdrawal of United States troops, I am today prepared to present such a schedule to you, for such a withdrawal extended over a sixteen-month period from the date of an agreement. This schedule is based on the level of American forces which will exist by April 15—that is to say 422,000 men. In addition there are other allied forces not included in this number, which will be withdrawn.

I will now give you the proposed schedule:

—In the first month, we would withdraw 5,000 U.S. troops. Other non-South Vietnamese allied forces would be withdrawn in this and subsequent months in about the same proportion as U.S. troops.

Le Duc Tho: Please repeat the first month. (He also asked other clarifying questions of Xuan Thuy and the interpreter.)

Mr. Kissinger: I have given you only the first month. Since there are 16 months to go through, I don't want total confusion. I want you to know the whole schedule. Each month, the same proportion of allied forces will withdraw as U.S. forces. For example, in the first month the same proportion will withdraw as 5,000 troops is to total U.S. forces. It would be the same with other months, so at the end, there would be no U.S. or allied forces.

I will now give the figures for each remaining month.

—In the second month, 10,000 U.S. troops.
—In the third month, 10,000 U.S. troops.

And in addition always allied forces, you understand, in the same proportion.

—In the fourth month, 27,000 U.S. troops.
—In the fifth month, 35,000 U.S. troops.
—In the sixth month, 35,000 U.S. troops.
—In the seventh month, 35,000 U.S. troops.
—In the eighth month, 35,000 U.S. troops.
—In the ninth month, 35,000 U.S. troops.
—In the tenth month, 10,000 U.S. troops.
—In the eleventh month, 15,000 U.S. troops.
—In the twelfth month, 10,000 U.S. troops.
—In the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth months, 40,000 U.S. troops in each month.

The reasons for these numbers depend on complicated technical studies, some of which I can discuss with you.

I know the temptation is to argue about this or that figure, or this or that time schedule. The important thing to remember is this: it is a plan for the total withdrawal of American forces. It is a plan that leaves no U.S. or non-South Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam. It is a plan that, once started, will proceed with ever greater acceleration, the consequences of which are obvious to you.

We reach here the heart of the problem. Both Minister Xuan Thuy and Mr. Le Duc Tho said at the last meeting that a settlement had to be on the basis of reality. I said at our last meeting that reality requires some reciprocity. It is for this that we are at these negotiations.

At the last meeting, I said that you have a special problem in placing your troops on the same legal basis as ours in a settlement, because you do not acknowledge their presence in South Vietnam and you cannot admit that they are "foreign." I said that we would take full account of your special view of this question. We certainly have specific ideas on how this question can be resolved. But we think—in order to break the impasse—that the most productive way to handle the issue at this stage would be for you to tell us what your view is of how to handle this problem. We can then come to an agreement on the basis of two concurrent schedules which are not, however, directly linked.

In addition to this question, we believe that an essential part of an agreement would be measures which would allow each side to verify that the agreement is being maintained and completed.

Another essential principle is that all prisoners of war on both sides should be released at a very early point in the withdrawal process.

There are, of course, numerous technical questions involved in reaching an agreement on the basis of the principles I have stated. These

would include such questions as the methods of communication between the two sides, regroupment areas, and whatever military arrangements such as cease-fires are related to the withdrawal process.

Once we have agreed in principle these technical issues can and should be negotiated rapidly between the two delegations at the Hotel Majestic. We would appoint a new head of delegation to conduct such negotiations.

As I said at our last meeting and repeated at the outset of this session, we are under no illusion about the difficulty of resolving these issues.

But we believe the issues can be fairly resolved, and that both sides can keep faith with their sacrifices and their interests.

We hope that you agree that the specific proposals we have made today represent a major move and that, together with the frank discussions we had in February, this could amount to a turning point.

Minister Xuan Thuy and Special Adviser Le Duc Tho agreed at the last meeting that we were engaged in "serious negotiations." I propose now that we should make the negotiations successful.

Xuan Thuy: You are finished?

Mr. Kissinger: Yes.

Xuan Thuy: I propose a litte break.

Mr. Kissinger: OK. We have a plane wandering around Germany so General Walters must make a phone call to bring it back.

Xuan Thuy: Therefore a break is suitable.

(There was then a 15-minute break.)

Xuan Thuy: After listening to what Special Adviser Kissinger has said, I have two clarifying questions. Madame Nguyen thi Binh has stated that U.S. troops should be withdrawn within six months. We have supported this demand. And the U.S. side has said repeatedly, and publicly too, at Avenue Kleber that the U.S. is prepared to withdraw all its troops and bases within 12 months. And now Mr. Special Adviser says the U.S. would withdraw its troops and bases within 16 months after signing an agreement. So it is a longer period than, and not in accordance with, what the U.S. said previously.[4]

Mr. Special Adviser spoke about technical complexities, but not complications, so we don't know why the period is prolonged. This makes us think about your intention of linking your withdrawals with the Vietnamization policy.

I am convinced that if you link withdrawals to Vietnamization, it would be difficult to settle the matter.

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[4] This and the next 11 paragraphs were highlighted in red.

The second question is that Mr. Special Adviser Kissinger has today spoken about other non-South Vietnamese troops and said we should express views on this, although you have said that you have specific views. I therefore ask Mr. Kissinger to express his special views on this subject.

I then have the following remarks. You have spoken today about military problems and said nothing about political problems. In our view, military problems should be linked to political problems. Therefore, I wonder when Mr. Kissinger will speak of political problems?

Mr. Kissinger: Let me take the second question first. At our last meeting I raised military problems and your side raised political problems. We therefore assumed responsibility for making a presentation to you on military problems today, and we assume you are free to make a presentation on any problem at this or the next meeting, including political problems, and we could then comment on it. But we recognize that political problems have to be discussed also.

On the first question: you asked about the relationship between our troop withdrawal schedule and Vietnamization—whether our schedule is based on Vietnamization.

In case you and we come to an agreement, the agreement will supersede the Vietnamization policy. Under the Vietnamization policy, our troop withdrawals depend on the three criteria established by President Nixon.

Under a negotiated agreement, our withdrawal continues under the schedule of the agreement as long as the agreement is being maintained, and regardless of what happens elsewhere.

As for the time period of withdrawal, of course Madame Binh did not consult us when she established a period of six months for the period of our withdrawal.

The period we have given here represents our best judgment of what is technically feasible under present circumstances. But it has certain elements of flexibility.

The major problem is to agree on the principles—including some of the principles of reciprocity. We could consider this one of the technical modalities.

Xuan Thuy: And what about modalities?

Mr: Kissinger: I have listed a series of issues. We think they can be discussed at Avenue Kleber in greater detail.

If you want to, I can give you some rough ideas we have on how other non-South Vietnamese forces should be withdrawn, but we would like to hear your ideas on this. We think it might be more natural.[5]

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[5] This paragraph, the note in parenthesis, and the next paragraph were highlighted in red.

(Thuy and Tho talk among themselves.)

Xuan Thuy: Because this is a requirement of yours, you have been thinking about it. We haven't asked questions about it, so we haven't been thinking about it. What is your demand?

Le Duc Tho: You have demanded from us, so what is your demand? We demanded six months for your withdrawal. Now you have demanded something from us, this is Minister Xuan Thuy's question.

Mr: Kissinger: I find it difficult to believe that Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho have not yet thought about any question on Vietnam. But since you have appealed to my dominant characteristic—my vanity—I will give you some thoughts.

I want to repeat that if for historic, legal or moral reasons, you prefer to operate on the basis of two schedules, we are prepared to consider this. I am responding to Minister Xuan Thuy's request.

We regard the presence of non-South Vietnamese forces in sanctuaries in neighboring countries as having a direct impact on the war and as being part of the problem—particularly those in camps along and near the borders of South Vietnam.[6]

We believe that with the agreement, no new non-South Vietnamese personnel should be introduced, and the withdrawal then begins.

We believe that 25 percent of the non-South Vietnamese personnel should be withdrawn by the end of five months.

We believe that the return of *all* American prisoners of war should be completed at the end of five months.

After eight months, the withdrawal should be 50 percent completed.

After 12 months, it should be 75 percent completed. After 16 months, it should be totally complete, and all the bases in Cambodia and Laos along the frontier and the infiltration trails should be closed. (There was a long delay then while the North Vietnamese compared notes.)

Xuan Thuy: That is clear. Do you have more?

Mr. Kissinger: No.

Xuan Thuy: Now we will express our views.

Mr. Special Adviser Kissinger today has spoken first about procedural questions, and then about substantive questions which you called the "heart of the issue."

As to the question of speaking first, I think it is not an important question. In the previous meetings, since we met on your request, we invited you to speak first.

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[6] This and the next five paragraphs were highlighted in red.

You also recalled today the words "serious intent." As we understand by the words "serious intent," we understand negotiations so as to come to a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem on the basis of respect for the independence, sovereignty and self-determination of the Vietnamese people. And under this meaning of earnest intent, we are serious at the Kleber Street meetings.

At this meeting, our attitude is also serious. Naturally, we do want to make rapid settlement, and we will speak frankly as you say. We understand the problem is difficult and complicated. But we are prepared to find a just solution with you. Now I shall express our views on how to discuss the problems.

We have said we support the overall solution of the PRG. Now, I think it unnecessary to repeat the 10 points. We have spoken a great deal about them. I would like to propose that the negotiation should be held on two principal questions out of these 10 points. That is, military and political problems. We would like to discuss all of the problems. But the main problem is that military and political problems are linked together.[7]

The discussion cannot be held on military problems without discussing political problems, and discussions cannot be held of political problems without discussion of military problems. Therefore, we would like to discuss both political and military problems. And, if the discussion of these two military and political problems leads to agreement, then the solution of other problems should be easy.

Mr. Kissinger: What else is there besides military and political problems?

Xuan Thuy: I am coming to that.

I have been speaking of our point of view. Now I will present my views on the way to discuss the problem. Military and political problems must always be linked together. First, when talking of military problems, we may shift to political problems, and when talking of political problems, we may shift to military problems. Secondly, when discussing political and military problems, when either side thinks of a problem outside political and military problems, it may raise them.[8]

As to the schedule of withdrawal, you said Madame Binh did not consult you. But Madame Binh raised it a number of times at Kleber Street. It is not necessary to repeat here.

As for political problems, we have raised the question of replacing Thieu-Ky-Khiem, and forming a coalition government composed

[7] This paragraph was highlighted in red.

[8] This paragraph was highlighted in red.

of three components. This is our policy, and this is our view on the way to discuss the problem.

I now leave word to Mr. Le Duc Tho.

Le Duc Tho: I now have something to add to what was said by Minister Xuan Thuy.

It is difficult indeed to reach a peaceful solution to the war which has been going on between us and you. But whether these differences will be resolved will depend on good will and serious intent as defined by Minister Xuan Thuy.

If you continue the policy of Vietnamization or you decide to negotiate from a position of strength, then it will be difficult to resolve the problem.[9]

But if now you want really to settle the problem peacefully and seriously, we are prepared to have such an attitude. But a rapid solution will depend on this good will and attitude.

To settle this matter, Minister Xuan Thuy has asked a question of whether you are prepared to discuss all the problems contained in the 10 points. Among these problems contained in the 10 points there are two main problems: political and military problems. Minister Xuan Thuy has proposed a manner of discussion. I would like to ask if you agree on this manner of discussion. Last time I spoke clearly of my views in this connection. But today we have not received a clear answer. Instead you raised only military problems. We recognize you have gone partially into the substance of military problems. But we think we should agree on a work program and second on the manner of discussion, and then begin our work. When discussion begins, we shall present our views on political and military questions, linked together.[10]

But in the course of discussion, if we meet an obstacle in discussing military problems, we will shift to political problems; and if we meet an obstacle in discussing political problems, we will shift to military problems. There must be agreement between us and you on this point.

And if now we and you come to agreement on principles, then details may be referred to Avenue Kleber. When the discussions at Kleber Street are completed, then we come to the signing of the agreement.

This is one question we would like to have clear views from you on. As to military problems, you have started into the substance today,

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[9] This sentence was highlighted in red.

[10] The last two sentences of this paragraph and the next six paragraphs were highlighted in red.

and we shall carefully study your position and I shall give you our answer at the next meeting, if any. But I would like to make some preliminary remarks. These are my remarks, not yet a counter proposal.

As far as your presentation is concerned with military problems, you have stated the U.S. would withdraw all U.S. and allied troops. It is a legal basis. As for what you have said on non-South Vietnamese troops, it is a different legal basis, it is a practical and technical question.

But when speaking about a schedule, your program shows two concurrent programs for the withdrawal of your and North Vietnamese troops, to be completed in the same period.

Therefore, your proposal amounts to mutual withdrawal. Your way of speaking is in very technical terms.

As for the period of withdrawal, we think there is some setback in your proposal. It is a longer period than that proposed by you at Kleber. It was 12 months for both sides to withdraw, and now it is 16 months for both sides to withdraw, a longer period.

Moreover, this schedule is withdrawal by driblets. Previously, under Vietnamization you withdrew your troops, in what we called driblets, on an average of over 10,000 men a month. Now, under this schedule, there are months in which you withdraw under 10,000, even 5,000 men. You said we should go into substance, not bargaining, then what is this schedule?

This is one of my preliminary remarks on your presentation. But we shall study your presentation, and give a response later. Now I would like to speak about what you said at the beginning of the meeting about military pressure.

In fact, we are an oppressed people. You came to our country to oppress us, and you have constantly maintained military pressure. And for the time being, the war continues to be intensified in South Vietnam in air activities, toxic chemical operations, and pacification operations.

And you have extended the war to Laos. Since Mr. Nixon came to power he has intensified the war in Laos. He occupied the Plain of Jars, and intensified the air war to unprecendented fierceness, so as to make pressure on the Northern part of our country, and to coordinate with the South Vietnamese battlefront.

With regard to Cambodia, you have been constantly maintaining military pressure on Cambodia so that country would give up its peaceful and neutral policies. It is the U.S., for the time being—no one else—who has created and maintained this tension in Phnom Penh.

We therefore wonder which side is using military pressure to put pressure on in negotiations.

It is our firm conviction that so long as you prolong and intensify the war, you will meet defeat. The experience we have had in Laos is clear.

In Laos, as in Vietnam after the peace, you intervened. You also launched the war on the Pathet Lao. But the Pathet Lao forces were not overwhelmed. Then in 1962 the Geneva Agreements were signed. The Geneva Agreements of 1962 were torn again and war resumed. But you cannot overwhelm the Pathet Lao. You occupied the Plain of Jars. Now you lost it again. Laos is evidence of your policy of using Asians to fight Asians. But your policy fails and you cannot win.

Therefore, your Vietnamization policy will fail. If you refuse to draw experience from this situation, then there would be a second Laos in Cambodia. Prince Sihanouk said himself that Cambodia will be turned into another Laos. If you failed in Laos and Vietnam, how can you succeed in Cambodia?[11]

We have repeatedly said that we respect the 1962 agreement on Laos and the 1954 agreement on Cambodia. But if you don't respect these Geneva Agreements of 1962 and 1954, and you intensify the war, then the Laotians, Cambodians and Vietnamese will unite to fight you. These three people were united in the fight against the French.

If you don't respect what you have signed, then certainly the three Indo-Chinese people will unite and defeat you. Therefore, the military pressure you speak about is not military pressure from our side. There is no other way for us but to continue to fight if your military pressure continues.

As for us, we don't want to make military pressure. We are an oppressed people, and we do not want to fight, but we must against aggression.

If you really want a peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem with good will, then we are prepared for it as I said.

This is what I have to add today. We should agree on a program of work, and then begin discussions.

Mr. Kissinger: Let me make some observations. This is a quick reaction to what you have said. I have not had an opportunity to study my colleague's notes.

Very frankly, the problem exists between us that it is hard to tell when you are saying something for psychological effect and when you are saying what you believe. For example, last time and today you keep saying that our air operations have intensified. But they have actually been reduced 25 percent. I do not know what this may mean to you, but I know they have been reduced by 25 percent. It is a fact.

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[11] This and the next paragraph were highlighted in red.

Xuan Thuy: Theoretically speaking.

Mr. Kissinger: No. Practically speaking.

Le Duc Tho: Counting raids against North Vietnam, including B52's around the DMZ?

Mr. Kissinger: Counting everything. I am not saying that this is a consolation for those still receiving the bombs, but it is a fact.

Secondly, what you say concerning Laos is an interesting example of the problem we both face. You say you want to preserve the Accords of 1962 and that we are trying to upset them. We sincerely believe that we are trying to preserve them, and you are trying to upset them.

If I can make a personal observation, you are doing better in upsetting them while "seeking to preserve them," than we are doing in preserving them while "trying to upset them."

Le Duc Tho: What you have just said about Laos reminds me of what you say about South Vietnam. You are constantly saying that we scrapped the 1954 Agreements but the opposite happened. This was like Laos.

Mr. Kissinger: Rather than debate what happened in Laos and who is responsible for what in Laos, let me make the following statement.

If you are really interested in preserving the 1962 Accords and are not trying to advance further, we have no interest in increasing the bombing in North Laos. Under these conditions, any bombing by our side in Northern Laos would be sharply reduced to very minimal proportions.[12]

On the other hand, if offensive operations on your side continue, then the question you have put to me becomes very relevant to us—how can we have confidence in any future agreement between us if present agreements are being broken.

Le Duc Tho: It is the reverse of what you said. It is our side which must wonder whether you will respect and maintain agreements you sign, from the fact you violated the agreement in Laos.

Mr. Kissinger: I do not want to debate with Mr. Special Adviser. Rather than accuse each other of violating agreements, I think it is important to make a concrete step, and for both of us to stop what we are doing.

Le Duc Tho: This is our firm conviction: We have always been respecting the Geneva Agreements of 1962. And if now you propose that we no longer debate who is responsible for what, we can sign an agreement to stop the debate here now.

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[12] This and the next paragraph were highlighted in red.

Mr. Kissinger: I don't want to stop the debate. I want to stop what is going on. An interesting fact, as I said the last time, is that most of the Pathet Lao we meet speak Vietnamese very well.

Le Duc Tho: I think if you stop your aggression in Laos, the Pathet Lao will stop fighting.

Xuan Thuy: I would like to add one sentence to close this chapter. I agree we should not talk of the Laotian problem in our talks here.

As to the whole problem of Laos, since I was one of the negotiators on Laos, I am fully aware of the problem. If I now speak of Laos, I must speak of the beginnings—how the U.S. intervened, how the U.S. makes aggression, etc. It would be too long.

Mr. Kissinger: I do not wish to prolong the debate on Laos. We are prepared to maintain the Accords. We are prepared to discuss concrete steps to preserve the Accords. We have no intention of having Laos as a base in Southeast Asia or directed against North Vietnam. We cannot accept having the 1962 Agreement overthrown, which would have serious consequences on our discussions here. This is not a debating point, it is a fact. I want to state it as precisely as possible.[13]

One final point, we have no desire to take away territory from the forces which now occupy it on the Communist side.

Le Duc Tho: I firmly believe that if you stop your aggression and really respect the Geneva Agreement of 1962, then the matter can be easily solved.

Xuan Thuy: May I add one sentence, then shift to another? Not only do we respect the 1962 Agreement, we support the five points put forward by the Neo Lao Hak Xat.[14] Now we should continue: Have you any other problems to raise?

Mr. Kissinger: Yes. I would like to raise a few points about what Mr. Special Adviser has said. We have made no effort to get Cambodia to abandon its policy of neutrality. Until a few months ago we did not even have diplomatic relations. Even today, we do not have full diplomatic representation there. And *we* do not have forces on Cambodian soil.[15] Therefore, we have no problem respecting the neutrality of Cambodia. As you saw from what I said at Minister Xuan Thuy's request, that is all we want from Cambodia.

It is also incorrect to interpret what President Nixon says as meaning that we *want* Asians to fight Asians. I don't think it is useful to discuss the Nixon Doctrine at this point though I could do so at some point.

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[13] This and the next two paragraphs were highlighted in red.

[14] The NLHZ 5 points were broadcast by Hanoi on March 6; see Document 197.

[15] The paragraph until this point was highlighted in red.

Le Duc Tho: All right.

Mr. Kissinger: We are interested in peace in Southeast Asia and the independence and sovereignty of the countries concerned. And I am enough of an historian to believe that the day may come when Hanoi perhaps will believe that this is a policy which can benefit it.

But I don't think we should debate historic causes. Our participation is worthwhile only if we discuss solutions. These exchanges of who did what in 1962 are not appropriate at our level.

As for your comments on the specific proposal I made today, I would not expect experienced diplomats like Minister Xuan Thuy and experienced advisers like Special Adviser Le Duc Tho not to challenge whatever we said to see what I will say next.

Le Duc Tho: Because your proposal is still an argument of beginning, it has not gone into substance. You have put forward a high price.

Mr. Kissinger: On what you said about driblets, when one withdraws close to 500,000 men over whatever period, it is not driblets. Especially when it is a continuing process and the numbers increase each month.

Le Duc Tho: But the entry of your troops was very rapid.

Mr. Kissinger: It just seemed that way to you.

Le Duc Tho: It is a fact.

Mr. Kissinger: No, it took over two years.

Let me demonstrate my inexperience as a diplomat by making the following statement to Minister Xuan Thuy and Special Adviser Le Duc Tho: If we come to an understanding about the other issues in the negotiations, the question of timing will not be the one on which the negotiations will fail—although we will not reach the exuberant optimism of Madame Binh. Let me therefore say that in our future discussions, we should concentrate on solutions and not on placing blame.[16]

Now let me turn to the essential points Minister Xuan Thuy and Special Adviser Le Duc Tho made. As I understand the proposition, it is this: the 10 points advanced by your side and the various proposals advanced by ours resolve themselves essentially into two issues. There are military issues and there are political questions. You believe these two issues are closely related. We are willing to discuss these two points together.

As I understand it, there should be flexibility in switching from one set to another, so if progress is made in one area it can be used to reinforce progress in another. And if there is deadlock in one, we can try to reduce it by progress in another.

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[16] This and the next four paragraphs were highlighted in red.

Le Duc Tho: Right.

Mr. Kissinger: We are prepared to proceed on this basis. It must be clear that this particular forum can only be maintained if there is real progress and not just general discussions. I don't believe the President would agree to continuing these meetings if they are only for an exchange of views.

On this basis, perhaps the best procedure is to stop talking about good will, and to begin to practice it.

Xuan Thuy: To sum up, today we have agreed. We raised the 10 points, you the 8 points, and others. We shall concentrate the discussion on military and political questions. You have agreed that we will switch from one to the other. You have agreed on this manner of discussion.

As to your proposals on military problems, I agree with Mr. Le Duc Tho that we will study them and speak out our views later.

As to the military and political problems we have raised, we would like to hear from you next time.

Mr. Kissinger: We have spoken on military questions.

Xuan Thuy: Next time you will speak on political questions and we will speak on military questions.[17]

Mr. Kissinger: Mr. Minister I admire your skill but . . .

Le Duc Tho: We agreed in principle.

Mr. Kissinger: To maintain symmetry, and so that I do not develop a complete inferiority complex, I suggest that you speak on political questions, and we will be prepared to comment, and you give us your views, and you make your proposals, in a framework different from that we have already discussed.

Le Duc Tho: We would like to propose that you should speak on both problems, military and political, and then we will speak on both. It is not a question of inferiority complexes. It is negotiations. You expose your views on military and political questions and we will comment and make known our views.

And actually we have spoken on political questions, of coalition government with three elements. You only said that a solution must reflect the balance of political forces. We have spoken about the principles of how to solve the political problem.

Mr. Kissinger: I still believe that we cannot have negotiations if we are put in the position of students being examined by you on our understanding of your position on the 10 points.

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[17] This and the next four paragraphs were highlighted in red.

Le Duc Tho: This is not true. These are negotiations between us. We have expressed our views. We would like to hear your views on the whole position. Then we will speak.

Mr. Kissinger: But there is no law of nature which insists that it is always our side which should make propositions. What concerns me is that I am always in the position of being a student of Mr. Le Duc Tho.

Xuan Thuy: Just as Special Adviser Kissinger said, our negotiations are aimed at coming to a real settlement. It is an exchange of views. The more rapidly this is done the better. That is why we like to listen to you on both of these crucial questions, so that it is easier for us to express our views. As to our positions, on the main, the principal questions, we have stated our positions.

Mr. Kissinger: So have we. If both sides state their points of view, there is no point in these meetings. Let me make one thing clear. You must not think that I have come here only to accept your propositions. I have come here to find an honorable compromise. If you believe that I have come here to accept your proposals, then we should stop these negotiations now.[18]

Le Duc Tho: But I have told you that we are here in negotiations, to come to an agreement. Neither side forces the other to accept its position. Neither side puts pressure to force the other to accept its position. We expound our point of view.

Mr. Kissinger: We will then both come to the next meeting prepared to be specific, and prepared to state our positions, not simply to comment on the other's position.

Le Duc Tho: This is quite right and clear. Please comment on our position.

Mr. Kissinger: You must say something first.

Le Duc Tho: We will speak on our position.

Mr. Kissinger: I have some technical questions. When do you want to meet next?

Xuan Thuy: It is up to you to decide. We are busy from now to the end of March. It is up to you to decide after the beginning of April.

Mr. Kissinger: First, let me ask another question. Must it be in Paris?

Le Duc Tho: Where should we go?

Mr. Kissinger: I have no specific idea. The problem is that it is extremely difficult for me to move without being observed. For example, I have to be in Switzerland in mid-April for a conference. But I do not insist on this.

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[18] This and the next four paragraphs were highlighted in red.

Xuan Thuy: Because you can come only on a weekend, we should meet on April 4th. You have easy transport means.

Mr. Kissinger: I would be happy to send a plane to bring Mr. Le Duc Tho to the United States. We could have a meeting of special advisers and ignore the other ministers and advisers.

Xuan Thuy: It is hard for us to go to other countries. And the French Government sends someone to accompany us.

Mr. Kissinger: I invite you all to the United States.

Le Duc Tho: After a settlement of the problem.

Mr. Kissinger: I could probably come on the 5th of April, if that is convenient.

Xuan Thuy: We are willing to sacrifice our Sunday.

Mr. Kissinger: If Minister Xuan Thuy goes to church, I must revise all my opinions of him. 10:00 a.m.?

Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho: All right.

Mr. Kissinger: It may have to be on the sixth.

Le Duc Tho: 9:30 would be better.

Mr. Kissinger: All right.

(The meeting ended at approximately 1:20 p.m.)

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202. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 17, 1970.

SUBJECT

MACV Cambodia Assessment

I attach at Tab A a well thought-out assessment of the Cambodia situation done by General Abrams' staff.[2] The assessment makes the following points:

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information.

[2] Tab A was telegram MAC 2439 from Abrams to Wheeler, February 24, attached but not printed. Haig summarized it for Kissinger in a February 24 memorandum. Kissinger instructed that it be made into a memorandum for the President. (Ibid.) Grant revised it as a memorandum to Nixon and noted that he had "added some comments to bring the assessment up to date (as of March 13)." (Ibid.)

Cambodia's economy is in trouble, principally because rice exports have dropped to zero as a result of Sihanouk's policy of nationalizing the commercial sector. One reason for his decision to reopen relations with us may have been his need for foreign investment and aid. (Incidentally, State took a negative position on aid for Cambodia, in response to your recent request for its views. My staff is working up a set of proposals as to limited things we could do, for your consideration in case you do not agree with State's conclusions.)[3]

For the first time in years, Sihanouk faces concerted resistance to his domestic policies. He permitted the formation of the Lon Nol/Sirik Matak government last August so as to permit others to attempt to straighten out the economic mess without involving his own prestige.

Cambodia's attitude toward operations of VC/NVA forces on Cambodian soil has been hardening for several reasons:

—The Communists do not seem to be winning.

—Under U.S./GVN pressure, the Communists are establishing more or less permanent enclaves of de facto control in Cambodia.

—The Communists are helping Cambodian insurgents, who are an increasing nuisance.

—Political pressures within Cambodia are building up to do something about the VC/NVA presence.

—As Vietnamization progresses, the Cambodians face the prospect of fighting on Cambodian soil between the two Vietnamese camps, without the American presence to insure that the Vietnamese will not stay permanently.

The first shift in RKG policy in arms supply to the VC/NVA came in May, 1969, following the failure of the Communist spring offensive and the evidence that you planned to stay in Vietnam as necessary. Some supply may have been resumed in the autumn and Sihanouk's statements suggest that during his trip to Hanoi for the Ho Chi-Minh funeral he negotiated a quid pro quo with Pham Van Dong, in which the latter made some promises of withdrawals. Sihanouk seems to be less than happy with Vietnamese performance on that deal. We do not know whether arms are coming through Cambodia at the present time, but the rate of flow is certainly less than in the past.

Aside from domestic reasons for absenting himself (having lost a test with Sirik Matak in parliament in late December), Sihanouk may have decided on his sudden trip to France to avoid a scheduled visit by Pham Van Dong until he could see how the situation was developing.

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[3] Nixon highlighted the last sentences in this paragraph and wrote "Let's aid *new* group." Lon Nol and Sirik Matak overthrew Sihanouk on the afternoon of March 18, Cambodian time, which is 12 hours ahead of Washington time, but the President did not necessarily read this on the day it was drafted.

The study was written before the recent demonstrations against the Communist embassies in Phnom Penh.[4] It is worth noting that the demonstrations followed reports that Sirik Matak had ordered the VC/NVA to remove their troops from Cambodia, and that he concurrently ordered the Cambodian army to drive the Communists out (an impossible task, given Cambodian military resources).

Lon Nol and Sirik Matak were probably reflecting strong nationalistic feelings in Cambodia, but it is still moot whether they cleared their actions with Sihanouk. Given the sharp competition between Sirik Matak and Sihanouk, it is possible that Sirik wanted to present Sihanouk with a fait accompli, or to challenge him to a test on grounds where Sirik Matak's position would be popular. On the other hand, nobody has challenged Sihanouk so directly in years, and it is quite possible that this is an elaborate maneuver, to permit Sihanouk to call for Soviet and Chinese cooperation in urging the VC/NVA to leave, on the grounds that he will fall and be replaced by a "rightist" leader if the VC/NVA stay in Cambodia.

The recent behavior of Sihanouk and the RKG would fit either thesis—i.e., that this is a collusive gambit; or that Sihanouk in fact faces a challenge from Sirik Matak and Lon Nol.

—Sihanouk has publicly claimed that the attacks on Vietnamese installations were "organized by pro-American plotters" and has expressed fears about a "right wing coup."

—He has announced that he will return home via Moscow and Peking, and that he will seek support in those capitals to urge the Vietnamese "to stop interfering in Cambodian affairs and avoid giving the rightists a pretext for seizing power." (He is to arrive in Phnom Penh without formal welcoming ceremonies on Wednesday.)

—He is quoted as calling for a referendum to learn whether the people support him or his challengers.

—The Government in Phnom Penh has called publicly for the withdrawal of VC/NVA troops. It has justified the demonstrators' action, but has called for order.

—Lon Nol has published a message to Sihanouk, justifying the demonstrations, denying any intent to align with SEATO, and calling

[4] A CIA intelligence report distributed on March 18, but based on information obtained from an Asian merchant with good contacts within the Cambodia military on March 11–12, stated that the demonstrations and attack on the Provisional Revolutionary Government's embassy in Phnom Penh were planned by Sirik Matak with the support of Lon Nol. They were to be a showdown with Sihanouk and a prelude to his overthrow. The source also indicated that operating from Paris Sihanouk planned to replace Sirik Matak and Lon Nol, but both officials were aware of Sihanouk's plan. (Central Intelligence Agency Field Report, TDCS–314/03036–70, March 18; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box CL 105, Geopolitical File, Cambodia, Chronology, March 1970–June 1973)

for Sihanouk's support for a 10,000 man increase[5] in the army. (Sihanouk made negative noises but avoided a direct reply when asked by newsmen if he concurred in the increase.)

Whatever the truth as to domestic power relationships, Cambodian feelings are being stirred up about the Communist presence, and no Cambodian Government will be likely in the future to take so casual a view of it as has been the case in the past.

[5] Nixon underlined this phrase and wrote: "Let's get a plan to aid the new group on this goal."

203. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, March 19, 1970, 10:08–11:55 a.m.

SUBJECT

Laos and Cambodia

PARTICIPANTS

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Jonathan Moore
Marshall Green

Defense
G. Warren Nutter
Dennis Doolin

CIA
Thomas H. Karamessines
[*name not declassified*] (for briefing only)
[*name not declassified*] (for briefing only)

JCS
Vice Admiral Nels C. Johnson

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Colonel Behr sent this record and the minutes of the next six WSAG meetings on Laos and Cambodia to Kissinger on March 31. A note on Behr's transmittal memorandum reads: "HAK has seen. 4/6" The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

NSC Staff
John H. Holdridge
Col. Robert M. Behr
Keith Guthrie

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

In the context of the President's desire to have hard and soft options formulated, the WSAG discussed possible actions (including use of Thai troops and B–52 raids) which might be taken in Laos. It was agreed that an in-place cease-fire proposal might be included among the alternatives although it was recognized that a cease-fire could have serious disadvantages. Ambassador Godley is to be requested to submit to Washington his plans for evacuating the Thai Sierra Romeo unit from Long Tieng.[2] Mr. Kissinger will discuss with the President the type of response to be made to Ambassador Godley's message urging use of additional Thai troops at Long Tieng.[3] State will provide by the afternoon of March 19 scenarios for possible diplomatic actions in connection with developments in Laos and Cambodia.[4]

Mr. [*name not declassified*] briefed on Laos. Friendly troops in the Long Tieng area included the recently deployed Sierra Romeo IX Thai artillery battalion. Three special guerrilla units from southern Laos were being moved in as reinforcements. Continued control of the air strip was essential if an effective defense was to be maintained. The North Vietnamese were moving but did not yet have enough strength to make the friendly position in Long Tieng untenable. If the friendly forces could hold for a couple of days, Vang Pao might be able to regroup and make a good defense, particularly if the weather improved and some air support were possible. The North Vietnamese were unlikely to go beyond Long Tieng in the immediate future. They had no supply caches in the area and would need perhaps a month to consolidate their position and eliminate isolated outposts in the vicinity.

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[2] Not found.

[3] See footnote 2, Document 207.

[4] Eliot submitted the possible scenarios for Cambodia and Laos to Kissinger on March 19. For Cambodia, State suggested continuing to support Cambodian neutrality and territorial integrity and "not trying to force Cambodia into our camp." If Cambodia asked for military assistance or U.S. troops, the United States should react cautiously and "avoid getting sucked into a major role." The United States should agree to take Cambodian requests for economic assistance under sympathetic consideration, should encourage regional support for Cambodia, reactivation of the ICC, possible French support, and an international conference on Cambodian neutrality. As for Laos, the possible scenario included rebutting the Soviet Union's rejection of Souvanna's call for consultations under Article IV of the Geneva Agreement of 1962, encouraging India to call for a cease-fire, reconvening the Geneva Conference, direct cease-fire negotiations between the RLG and Pathet Lao, and collective action by Asian nations. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS)

Dr. Kissinger asked what the practical impact of the fall of Long Tieng would be. If it were merely a question of Vang Pao's morale, nothing had changed in the situation in northern Laos. Pointing out that Vang Pao's morale was an important factor, Mr. Karamessines said that if the Meos retreated across the Mekong to Sayaboury province, Souvanna's government would lose its only effective fighting force, and Souvanna would be in a less advantageous position in dealing with Souphanouvong. Mr. [*name not declassified*] pointed out that the North Vietnamese would be in a position to threaten some of the provincial capitals, and this might lead to a Lao attempt to appease them through some gesture such as requesting the US to halt bombing. In response to Mr. Kissinger's question, Mr. [*name not declassified*] said that Souvanna might request a bombing halt in northern Laos but would probably not seek a halt in the Panhandle area for fear of alienating US support for his regime.

Admiral Johnson raised the question of Long Tieng's location with regard to the 1962 line. Mr. Johnson observed that if the North Vietnamese intended to advance beyond the 1962 line, the route would not be through Long Tieng but along Route 7/13 toward northwest Laos. Mr. Karamessines pointed out that the North Vietnamese needed to eliminate Long Tieng because it was a threat to their flank, and Mr. [*name not declassified*] noted that once Long Tieng were neutralized there would be nothing to stop the North Vietnamese from moving northwest or south.

Mr. Moore asked when the rains would begin and what was likely to happen then. Mr. [*name not declassified*] replied that there were about two months of rain left. Mr. Green noted that various factors—supply problems, unfamiliar terrain, bad weather, and US bombing—might lead the North Vietnamese to pull back later on.

Mr. Kissinger asked why Thai units were being moved to Long Thieng at the same time the CIA station was being evacuated. He wondered about the consequences if any of the Thai were captured. Mr. Karamessines said [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], but that there certainly might be problems if some of them were captured. Evacuation could be difficult, since it depended on control of the airstrip and would require the use of "Sky Crane" type helicopters to move the artillery pieces. The Thai units would be useful in order to provide some show of resistance to the North Vietnamese.

Mr. [*name not declassified*] briefed on Cambodia and reported that the situation remained quiet with no evidence of dissidence among the regular army commanders. In answer to Mr. Kissinger's questions, he said that it seemed unlikely Sihanouk would be permitted to return.

Mr. Kissinger asked if a Communist insurgency similar to that in Laos might develop in Cambodia. Mr. Karamessines thought this possible but not probable because of the strength of nationalist sentiment

against the Communists. Admiral Johnson suggested the North Vietnamese would not want to get involved in a war on two fronts in the south. Mr. Karamessines observed that the North Vietnamese would have no reason to mount an insurgency since they could continue to use Cambodia territory. Even if the Cambodians stopped cooperating with the Communists, the latter would find it difficult to retaliate because the Cambodians might enlist South Vietnamese assistance in suppressing Communist insurgents.

Mr. Moore asked about the new government's announcement that it would continue Cambodia's policy of neutrality. Mr. [*name not declassified*] said this indicated the new regime does not want a confrontation with the Communists right away. Mr. Moore observed that the Cambodians might put some restrictions on the Vietcong but would probably not go all the way. Mr. Green pointed out that the coup reflected basic underlying discontent in Cambodia. Though this was partly due to nationalist sentiment and concern about the Communists, it was also related to economic problems and Sihanouk's interference in the government process.

With the conclusion of the briefings, Mr. Kissinger opened discussion of US options in Laos. He said that the President wished to look at both hard and soft options. One course of action would be acquiescence in the present situation. We would see if the Communist advance loses momentum and would make general diplomatic efforts to stabilize the situation. We would continue our present support for the RLG but would not seek to increase Thai involvement, employ B–52's, or raise the Laotian question in Paris.

Mr. Johnson and Mr. Karamessines asked how the United States position would be affected if the North Vietnamese broke across the 1962 line. Mr. Kissinger said that the issue was not the line. Even if the North Vietnamese stop, they have upset the balance established in the Geneva accords. Mr. Green replied that this might not be true in absolute terms. The Meo have demonstrated their capacity to survive in the past and might re-emerge as a fighting force. In response to Mr. Kissinger's question, Mr. Karamessines agreed that if the Meos retreated to Sayaboury, they would be out of the war.

Mr. Moore said that was not the only option. The Meos could be relocated at other sites. Mr. Kissinger asked where the Meos were going now. Mr. Johnson replied they were moving south and southwest and none had reached Sayaboury.

Mr. Johnson said that because Vang Pao has suffered reverses, we are faced with the issue of letting him fall back from Long Tieng and trying to salvage as much as possible or trying to take a stand there. What can be salvaged from retreat is difficult to ascertain because it depends largely on psychological factors.

Mr. Kissinger asked if we had much that we could put into a defense of Long Tieng. Mr. Johnson mentioned the Thai regimental combat team (RCT) advocated by Ambassador Godley.[5] However, he noted that Ambassador Unger was bearish on using the RCT in Laos,[6] and neither the Thai nor the Lao Government had approached us about this although we had a second-hand report that Souvanna was interested. Mr. Green pointed out that the RCT involved is the one designated in the Taksin Plan,[7] and its employment might raise the question of US action under the Plan. He noted that Ambassador Unger thought the RCT would not be suitable for anti-guerrilla operations.

Mr. Kissinger said the situation in Laos posed three problems. The first was the military balance and whether the United States had any interest in this aspect by itself. The second was the impact on Hanoi. The President's threat to take necessary steps has something to do with North Vietnamese restraint in South Vietnam. Letting the Communists kick over the Geneva accords in Laos could have an opposite effect. Thirdly, there is the impact on Thailand and Cambodia. Mr. Johnson commented that reaction depends on how much we build Long Tieng up as a prestige factor.

Mr. Kissinger asked Mr. Karamessines if the Meos would in fact disintegrate. Mr. Karamessines replied that Vang Pao will do his utmost to hold the fragments of his forces together and to keep fighting while falling back so long as he feels he has backing, not just from the United States but also from Souvanna. Mr. Kissinger asked about the prospects for support from Souvanna, and Mr. Karamessines pointed out that in the last few days Souvanna had been providing some. Anything that the United States could do would also help. In answer to Admiral Johnson's question, Mr. Karamessines said that assurance of support was more important to Vang Pao than holding Long Tieng.

Mr. Moore raised the question of what would happen after the North Vietnamese take Long Tieng and added, in answer to Mr. Kissinger's question, that the fall of Long Tieng seemed certain. Mr. Moore noted that the Lao Ambassador had said that the North Vietnamese objective in seizing Long Tieng was to retaliate for the occupation of the Plaine des Jarres last year and that having reached Long

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[5] See footnote 3 above.

[6] Unger discussed the problems and consequences of deployment of Thai forces into Laos in telegrams 3207 and 3219 from Bangkok, March 18. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 567, Country Files, Far East, Thailand, Thai Involvement in Laos)

[7] The Taksin Plan (formerly known as Project 22) was a contingency plan for U.S.-Thai military response to North Vietnam overrunning Laos. A summary and history are attached to a March 22 memorandum from Holdridge to Kissinger. (Ibid., NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–072, WSAG Meeting, 3/24/70, Laos and Cambodia)

Tieng, they would not continue military pressure but would limit themselves to political pressure. Mr. Johnson said that capture of Long Tieng would permit the North Vietnamese to consolidate their position on the Plaine des Jarres. Mr. Kissinger commented that we have always thought the North Vietnamese could take over northern Laos but have tried to maximize the psychological inhibitions against their doing so. Mr. Green added that while the North Vietnamese have the military capacity to go beyond Long Tieng, they will undermine their political position by doing so.

Mr. Kissinger asked if anyone favored using Thai troops. Admiral Johnson said the JCS thought this possibility should be explored. In addition to the 13th RCT the Thai unit now in South Vietnam might be considered. The Thai forces could be placed on the ridge around Vientiane.

Mr. Green noted that the North Vietnamese have already demonstrated their ability to retaliate against the Thais by attacks along the border and might take action if the Thais become deeply involved in Laos. Mr. Moore said the political price to the United States could be high, since Thanom would like to get the United States more committed. Mr. Green said the question had both short and long-range aspects; the former involved only the use of the 13th RCT and its effect on the present situation while the latter had to do with the general question of the desirability of greater Thai involvement in the defense of Laos.

Mr. Kissinger asked if the introduction of Thai troops at this time would restrain the North Vietnamese. Mr. Green replied that on the contrary the North Vietnamese would very much like to give the Thais a beating, and Mr. Karamessines agreed.

Admiral Johnson circulated a draft cable prepared by the JCS calling for the transfer of the 13th RCT and the Thai unit in South Vietnam to Laos.[8] Mr. Green objected that the Thai unit in South Vietnam was made up of volunteers who were entitled to discharge if withdrawn from Vietnam. Admiral Johnson replied that if the Thai Government made a top-level decision to use its troops in Laos, any deficiencies and restrictions on the Thai forces could be taken care of.

Mr. Kissinger asked if Thai troops would not provide an incentive to the North Vietnamese to keep advancing, particularly if a Thai withdrawal from South Vietnam were involved. Mr. Green added that it was highly important to maintain the multinational character provided by TCC units in South Vietnam. Admiral Johnson said that even if Thai units could not be withdrawn from South Vietnam, the JCS thought it would be useful to send the 13th RCT to Laos. Mr. Kissinger concluded

[8] Not further identified.

by saying that any Thai pullout from South Vietnam would have to be discussed with the President.

Mr. Kissinger said that it appeared to be the consensus that no additional Thai troops should be sent to Long Tieng but that we should consider how we might make use of Thai troops if the North Vietnamese continued to advance toward Vientiane and the provincial capitals.

At this point a newly received cable from Ambassador Godley urging use of Thai troops at Long Tieng was distributed to the WSAG members.[9] Mr. Karamessines suggested that it was desirable to reexamine the WSAG's view on Thai troops in the light of this latest message.

Mr. Kissinger asked if the arguments in favor of regrouping Vang Pao's forces south of Long Tieng did not also apply to using Thai troops. Mr. Johnson agreed that they did.

Mr. Kissinger noted that Ambassador Godley believed the Thais would have a desirable psychological impact that would make up for the loss of Long Tieng. Mr. Green countered that as Ambassador Godley recognized in his message, this was looking at the situation purely as seen from Vientiane. Mr. Moore added that Ambassador Godley did not address the questions of the military effectiveness of using Thais and the consequences of a possible Thai defeat.

Mr. Kissinger asked why, if Vang Pao might be able to hold, the Thais might not also be able to make a stand. Mr. Green said that we did not want to tempt the North Vietnamese to advance further. The presence of Thais might draw the Communists on; if the Thais were defeated, the loss to the United States would be all the more serious.

Admiral Johnson asked how we could say no if the Thais wanted to send troops to Laos. Mr. Green replied that so far the Thais have not asked to get involved. Mr. Kissinger asked how we would go about getting the Thais involved, and Mr. Johnson responded that we would have to induce Souvanna to request Thai assistance.

Mr. Green commented that Souvanna was searching for a diplomatic solution to the present difficulties. Mr. Kissinger asked how it was possible to pursue a successful diplomatic course unless we had power to back up our proposals. Mr. Johnson said that we did have

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[9] In telegram 1950 from Vientiane, March 19, received in the White House Situation Room at 11:45 a.m., Godley stated that "fresh troops on the ground, if introduced quickly enough, might still salvage situation" and "even undermanned, underequipped Thai units, which by comparison to those available to RLG look great, can make significant psychological as well as military contribution to the defense of Long Tieng." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 567, Country Files, Far East, Thailand, Thai Involvement in Laos)

power—the possibility of making a strong defense at a fallback position, the use of the special guerrilla units from southern Laos, and our air capabilities once the weather improved. In answer to Mr. Kissinger's question, Admiral Johnson said the weather would not be better until May. Mr. Kissinger commented that by then the Communists might hold three-fourths of Laos.

Mr. Johnson mentioned that a possibility for action on the diplomatic front was offered by an Indian proposal to call for a cease-fire in northern Laos (specifically excluding the Panhandle) and observation by the ICC. He read portions of a draft note prepared by the Indians.[10] He suggested that we take no public position on the proposal but that we welcome and encourage the Indian initiative, which could do no harm. Mr. Kissinger agreed that the proposal seemed harmless, and Mr. Green suggested that the Indians might get the ICC to issue the cease-fire proposal. Mr. Green added that Souvanna gave indications of being well disposed to the proposal if the ICC operated in all parts of Laos. He cautioned that we would not want to state that we were in favor, since this might cause the other side to back off. He said that the proposal had the advantage, if successful, of toning down the war and bringing about a balance of Laos. It might also bring pressure to stop bombing. Mr. Green noted that an in-place cease-fire in Laos might appear to set a precedent for South Vietnam, and that the North Vietnamese might therefore be reluctant to accept it. Mr. Kissinger said the Indian cease-fire proposal should be included in WSAG planning as a possible alternative.

Mr. Green called attention to the scheduled meeting between Souvanna and an envoy from Souphanouvong. He thought that Souphanouvong's position would likely be that no negotiations could be held until the bombing is halted. Souphanouvong might also make an unacceptable proposal on a dividing line.

Mr. Johnson suggested that we encourage the Indian initiative, which seemed the only realistic alternative open. Mr. Kissinger pointed out that a cease-fire would mean that the enemy would halt in place and not have to retreat during the rainy season. In effect, this might hand Laos to the Communists next year. Mr. Green admitted there was a 50-50 chance of this. In answer to Mr. Karamessines' question, Mr. Green said he believed the North Vietnamese would accept ICC observation. Mr. Kissinger noted that Mr. Green had stated his opinion that the enemy would probably stop after taking Long Tieng. We knew that they were worried by pressure from Vang Pao and bombing during the rainy season. A cease-fire would remove this pressure. What

[10] Not found.

would the enemy give up in return? If the North Vietnamese were not likely to advance further, perhaps we should acquiesce as quietly as possible in the fall of Long Tieng and not buy into a cease-fire. Mr. Johnson admitted there were dangers involved in a cease-fire but said that we should not oppose it. Mr. Green added that a cease-fire had advantages too, although we would not want to take the lead in proposing it.

Mr. Green suggested that we might also keep up our diplomatic activity. We should keep accenting consultations under Article 4 of the Geneva Agreement and should dispatch notes to the Geneva signatories. We should release the President's exchange of letters with Kosygin and Wilson, and, in general, keep the focus on international efforts to deal with the problem. Mr. Kissinger pointed out that the President wanted a more active diplomatic scenario.

Mr. Kissinger raised the subject of B–52 bombing and confirmed with Admiral Johnson that there were no targets available at present.[11] Mr. Karamessines said that if targets existed and the situation was deteriorating on other fronts, we should bomb. Mr. Nutter said that this was about the only action open to us in the way of a hard option.

Mr. Kissinger asked if Congressional opposition to bombing was really important. We were faced with a Communist offensive, and our tactical air could not operate. What objection could there be to B–52 raids? Mr. Green said we could not disregard Congressional opposition. The enemy knows that this is a soft spot and will put out propaganda blaming us for escalation. Mr. Kissinger asked if we could ever hope to appease Congressional opponents. The President's November 3 speech indicated a strong stand was more effective in dealing with them. Mr. Green said we should hold B–52's in reserve until we have a clearer idea of enemy intentions. If the North Vietnamese head for Vientiane, we could reconsider.

Mr. Kissinger said that the President wanted to have both hard and soft options. From a military standpoint it would be difficult to

[11] On March 19 Haig sent Kissinger a memorandum enclosing a message from Abrams to Wheeler in which MACV stated: "The situation in northern Laos has, according to information available to us, not stabilized. There is no adequate intelligence on which to select B–52 targets. If targets could be developed there is no assurance that Ambassador Godley could clear them because of the lack of knowledge of friendly troop dispositions." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 102, Vietnam Country Files, B–52 Strikes in Northern Laos)

put together a hard option.[12] The use of Thai troops and B–52 raids might be considered.

Mr. Johnson raised the question of briefing Congress about the Sierra Romeo operation. Mr. Kissinger said this should not be done yet.

Mr. Kissinger asked about progress in moving special guerrilla units (SGU's) to Long Tieng from southern Laos. Mr. Karamessines said it would not be until "late tonight" that there could be enough SGU's in Long Tieng to offer a chance of making a defense. It was agreed that the WSAG would meet on the morning of March 20 to review the situation at Long Tieng.

Mr. Kissinger cautioned that we did not want a Thai debacle in Long Tieng. Mr. Moore said that Ambassador Godley assured us he had plans for removing the Sierra Romeo unit if necessary. Mr. Kissinger said Ambassador Godley should be directed to provide these plans to Washington.

Mr. Kissinger said that he would discuss the use of additional Thai forces with the President. Mr. Johnson suggested that a telegram on this question responding to Ambassador Godley's message be prepared for Kissinger's approval. Admiral Johnson said that the JCS had such a draft cable in preparation.

Mr. Green and Mr. Johnson said that diplomatic scenarios on Laos and Cambodia would be submitted the same afternoon (March 19).

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[12] After the WSAG meeting, at 12:30 p.m., Kissinger telephoned U. Alexis Johnson to inform him that the President called him to ask what the WSAG had "come up with." Kissinger replied, "there wasn't much we could do militarily." The President "went through the roof" and said he wanted a "hard option." Johnson told Kissinger, "We have got the hard option but everyone was against it." Kissinger asked Johnson to write up a "hard option" before 2:45 p.m., noting "can't have any discussion of whether desirable or not; just write it up." (Ibid., RG 59, U. Alexis Johnson Files: Lot 96 D 695, Telcons, March–April, 1970) Johnson immediately called Green and asked him to get something down for meeting at the White House at 1 p.m. (Ibid.) For the meeting at 1 p.m., see Document 204.

204. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, March 19, 1970, 1–2:20 p.m.

SUBJECT

Hard Options on Laos

PARTICIPATION

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Marshall Green

Defense
G. Warren Nutter

CIA
Richard Helms
Thomas H. Karamessines

JCS
General Earle Wheeler

NSC Staff
John Holdridge

Dr. Kissinger opened the discussion by asking if there were any B–52 targets in Laos which were presently identified. General Wheeler said that there were two known target areas North and East of the general Sam Thong–Long Tieng area containing troop concentrations, but nothing in the immediate vicinity or near Site 272. Mr. Helms suggested going back to the North Vietnamese lines of communication, and General Wheeler agreed that this could be done if reconnaissance was possible under the bad weather conditions now prevailing.

Dr. Kissinger asked if there were chokepoints which could be hit, noting that the North Vietnamese were complaining about the condition of the road. Ambassador Johnson picked this up by wondering whether the area of the passes into Laos offered tactical or B–52 targets. General Wheeler said in response that there were targets on both sides of the Barthelmy Pass which were suitable for tacair strikes if the weather permitted. He mentioned SAM and AAA sites.

Ambassador Green raised the question of strikes against Sam Neua, which was a politically sensitive area long exempt from aerial attack. General Wheeler stated that such attacks could be easily laid

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

on. Dr. Kissinger asked if this was a populated area; if so, we should not attack it. On B–52's, Dr. Kissinger wondered if we could give authority to Ambassador Godley and MACV to order B–52 strikes if targets were identified. Mr. Helms felt that this was the best way to go about ordering such strikes, and Ambassador Johnson agreed, saying that if we were going to take this action, the strikes should be made when targets were actually present. Ambassador Green suggested that as a preceding step, Ambassador Godley might be asked if lucrative targets were actually present. There was a wide area to consider, including chokepoints, roads, etc., and we in Washington would want to know if the targets might appear marginal. When asked how this procedure would differ from our present practice, Ambassador Johnson explained that Ambassador Godley and MACV presently come in to recommend a target, which is then approved or disapproved by Washington. Ambassador Green pointed out that Ambassador Godley has not yet suggested just what he has in mind. Dr. Kissinger expressed the belief that there ought, in fact, to be some restrictions in B–52 operations, e.g., the ground rules should rule out attacks on populated areas. He asked what General Wheeler thought about procedures. General Wheeler felt that Ambassador Godley and MACV should be given authority to go ahead. He did not believe that any specific time-period should be imposed on this authority, since prior reconnaissance and target scope photography would be required, which would take a minimum of 24-hours.

Ambassador Johnson said he was not necessarily recommending B–52 operations in bringing this option up, but rather cataloguing what we might do. He suggested that the paper on military options which had been prepared last year for the WSAG provided a useful catalogue in itself.[2]

Mr. Helms interjected with the thought that AC–130s from South Laos might be helpful if diverted northward. General Wheeler agreed that such might be the case. He would ask his Air Force people.

Returning to the catalogue, Ambassador Johnson listed the possibility of increased use of tacair in Northern Laos. However, he took it that the system was already saturated, and there was no real room for any increase. Mr. Helms again suggested the use of gunships. These could be set up easily if General Wheeler were to give the order.

Again picking up the catalogue, Ambassador Johnson listed striking politically sensitive targets in North Laos such as Sam Neua and strikes along the North Vietnamese border within 10 nautical miles of it. Ambassador Green pointed out that we were already striking up to

[2] A summary of this paper is in Document 138.

4 kilometers of the border, and that this option was about what we were doing now with the exception of attacking Sam Neua. Dr. Kissinger asked for a report on targets around Sam Neua which could be hit without civilian casualties by gunships or other types of aircraft.

The next catalogue item listed by Ambassador Johnson was increased Thai support, which included artillery support (already underway) and employment of the Thai air force. He mentioned that Thai pilots had previously been used to fly Lao T–28s, but that this new option included overt air assistance. Dr. Kissinger questioned this latter step, since as he understood it we were already giving about as much tactical air support in Laos as could be effectively used.

The next item listed by Ambassador Johnson was an improved US advisory system in Laos, which he thought would not be helpful at this time. Continuing, he mentioned the staging of ground attacks on Sam Neua, which was not feasible at this time because there was no capability. Ambassador Green observed that this option involved following up prior bombing attacks with ground operations. Ambassador Johnson described Sam Neua as a key central control point for both the North Vietnamese forces in Laos and the Pathet Lao, but reiterated that we did not now have the capability of striking it on the ground. Another catalogue item listed by Ambassador Johnson was mortar and rocket attacks against North Vietnamese supply points. This, he said, would require a long lead time, with problematical results.

Turning to political as opposed to military measures, Ambassador Johnson listed the possibility of an RLG appeal to the Geneva co-chairmen and to the members of the ICC. This move was in effect already under consideration. He then listed admitting US air operations openly, presumably as a signal to North Vietnam. Digressing for a moment, he reported that there was a ticker item in from Vientiane saying that there was already talk in the town about "mercenaries" being moved into the Long Tieng area. This item reported a figure of 300 mercenaries moving in, and stated that while there was no immediate identification of their origin, added that Thai officers had been working with Vang Pao. The Vientiane ticker item raised the question of what we should tell people on the Hill about the Thai role. Mr. Helms recalled that all the Symington Subcommittee had been told was that a Thai battalion had been in Laos last year, but had later been withdrawn. Ambassador Johnson felt that something should be said about the Sierra Romeo IX battery, but he was not sure as to who should be told or what should be said.

The next item on Ambassador Johnson's list was introducing Thai ground forces. From this, the discussion focussed upon the pros and cons of sending the Thai RCT to Long Tieng. Dr. Kissinger declared that he could see disadvantages in putting Thai forces into the combat

area but wondered whether there might be some merit in moving Thai forces to the border. He asked what would be involved in getting Thai forces into Laos. Ambassador Johnson explained that the process would involve going through the Lao and having Souvanna ask the Thai for help. Souvanna would probably be very slow in responding, as he would be reluctant to have Thai forces cross the river just to be there—he would want them to be involved militarily, if used at all. Dr. Kissinger questioned the cost to us if the Thai were to become involved. What would they want as a quid pro quo? Would they really need to be paid in some way to defend their own country? There was general agreement among the others present that the Thai at the minimum would want the US to pick up the support costs of any Thai forces involved, whether simply moving to the Thai border or going into Laos.

In Ambassador Green's opinion one of the things which the Thai would ask us would be whether we had activated the Taksin Plan.[3] They would also want to know what role we ourselves intended to play. Ambassador Johnson agreed, adding that in any move to the border or across the river the Thai would ask us if this meant activation of the Taksin Plan. However, there was no other feasible plan which he could see, and hence any action by the Thai would place us in an impossible dilemma and cause questions to arise as to whether the Taksin Plan was dead. Dr. Kissinger asked if we couldn't say they were doing it for deterrent purposes, and asked, too, if the deterrence were to fail, wouldn't the Thai ask us to activate the Taksin Plan anyway?

Ambassador Green brought up the possibility of sending the crack Thai forces now in South Vietnam. However, we would want to ask here whether we wanted these forces taken out of South Vietnam. Mr. Helms thought that Lao SGUs would probably be better than Thai forces in the immediate situation and Mr. Karamessines confirmed that three SGU battalions plus two companies of guerrillas were being moved into Long Tieng. Ambassador Johnson affirmed that this was the heart of the problem—the willingness and the capability of the Lao to defend their own country. There are a lot of Lao forces elsewhere in the country which were not engaged at all. Dr. Kissinger emphasized that the President wanted to demonstrate to the North Vietnamese that they would not be able to get a free show in Laos. Mr. Helms endorsed this view, observing that the North Vietnamese had violated the understanding under which the bombing halt had been undertaken in Vietnam, and that we could pass the word to the North Vietnamese that if they didn't stop now, we would strike in North Vietnam. We could easily hit the many supply depots in the southern part of North

[3] See footnote 7, Document 203.

Vietnam without hitting Hanoi. Ambassador Johnson said that we could also bomb both sides of the Barthelmy Pass. According to General Wheeler this could easily be done. Barthelmy Pass was not a chokepoint, but contained good targets. To a suggestion from Ambassador Johnson that if we were to act in this way we should not say anything, Mr. Helms said that it would be good to give a warning that we intended to follow through. Hanoi had been calling our hand again and again since March 1968, and we should take firm action. Ambassador Johnson asked if all this had not been in the context of Vietnam, to which Mr. Helms replied that he felt the message should be passed which would put the situation in its total context.

Ambassador Johnson reverted to his catalogue and listed the limited introduction of US ground forces into Laos in the Panhandle. General Wheeler remarked that we had already put small teams into the Panhandle—this was the Prairie Fire operation which had not created much of an effect.

Other catalogue items listed by Ambassador Johnson, which appeared overly drastic at this time, included a resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam, unlimited air and naval bombardment of North Vietnam without restraints, SEATO intervention, reconvening the Geneva Conference, repudiation of the Geneva Agreement and breaking off the Paris talks. From these Dr. Kissinger suggested that political measures might be considered, and wondered if Admiral McCain might not be asked to visit Bangkok. General Wheeler said that Admiral McCain was presently in Saigon, where he had attended the just-concluded SEACOORDS meeting, and could be easily sent to Bangkok. Dr. Kissinger raised the question of possibly sending Admiral McCain to Vientiane. Was there anything against such a move? Ambassador Green responded to the effect that this depended on what came out of the meeting in Vientiane between Admiral McCain and Ambassador Godley. The short-term effect could be to get the North Vietnamese to stay their hand, but over the long term the effect could be negative. He thought that the tactic of attempting to give signals through meetings of this sort was not too effective, since the Communists were on to it. They had possibly held off in earlier days, but might not do so now. A brief discussion followed of the advantages of having a meeting between Admiral McCain and Ambassadors Godley and Unger in Vientiane or somewhere else in the area, such as Udorn. Mr. Helms thought that Udorn would be a new twist, but Ambassador Green felt that we would not want the Communists to pick up the challenge which Admiral McCain's presence in the area would pose. Mr. Helms felt that this was a valid point, but on the other hand, we had no surcease from North Vietnamese pressures. How could we get any worse off?

Ambassador Johnson thought we would be certainly worse off if the North Vietnamese were to push all along the line, to which Mr.

Helms asked what they were doing now? Ambassador Johnson suggested that the North Vietnamese might now be operating within previously claimed territory, and would not go beyond it. He asked what Mr. Helms thought the North Vietnamese presently intended, and how far we should go to resist. Mr. Helms countered by pointing out that the Meo were the only effective fighting force in Laos; if they were eliminated, what then?

Dr. Kissinger asked if we would be much worse off if Admiral McCain went to Vientiane. Ambassador Green said that we would be worse off, because the other side would call our bluff. We had succeeded in bluffing them before, e.g. in 1962 when we sent in the Marines to Thailand, but couldn't do so now. Continuing, Ambassador Green noted the possibility of Congressional resolutions cutting off our funds in Vietnam, Laos and everywhere else, and said that the fundamental issue which we faced was how much of our prestige we were laying on the line. We would need, also, to consider the relationship of Cambodia to what was going on, and it seemed likely that the North Vietnamese estimate of our involvement in Cambodia was very high. Their situation was probably more difficult than it seemed to us at the moment. They were having difficulty moving up supplies, had been hurt by tactical air, and now would definitely be worried about the course of events in Cambodia.

Dr. Kissinger asked that a list be made of what could be done now. Ambassador Green said that the proposal to bring in gunships, and the other moves which had been mentioned in the morning meeting such as moving in SGUs, falling back from Long Tieng, and B–52 strikes, were feasible and made sense. Dr. Kissinger agreed that we could count on the gunships. Mr. Helms suggested in addition that helicopter gunships—Cobras—be brought in from South Vietnam. The question of US pilots for the Cobras was then discussed, and it was agreed that this posed no problem. The Cobras would be based in Udorn, where we were in a better position anyway to provide support, and there was no difference between helicopter pilots over Laos and the other US pilots who were in action. There was not much difference between Vientiane and Udorn in proximity to the battlefield. It was also accepted that there would be some losses.

Dr. Kissinger again requested views on political moves. Ambassador Green explained that State's thinking was focussing upon the Indian cease-fire plan. The visible side of this from the US standpoint would be letters from the President to the Geneva signatories, and also to the Soviet Union citing its reply to the President's earlier letter and telling the Soviets that it was their duty to support the Geneva Agreement. Dr. Kissinger called upon Ambassador Green to get a tough letter or reply to the Soviets over to the White House by March 20, so that

this part of the exercise could be accomplished before the weekend. He suggested that the letter make plain that we would not accept the Soviets' contention that they had no responsibility and add, too, that their reaction would have a significant effect on US–USSR relationships. He would like to deliver this letter to Dobrynin March 20, or March 21 at the latest.[4] Ambassador Green noted that the letters to the other Geneva signatories would be specifically tailored to fit the circumstances of our relationship with each, i.e. what we said to the French would not be the same as what we said to the Chinese.[5]

General Wheeler went down a checklist of actions which he proposed to take on the basis of the present discussion. These included the use of C–130 gunships over the Plain of Jars; seeing if suitable targets could be found in the Sam Neua area; seeking out B–52 targets (Defense was already trying to locate such now, but needed reconnaissance to the southwest of Sam Thong and Long Tieng); striking supplies, SAM sites and AAA sites on both sides of the Barthelmy Pass; locating chokepoints for air strikes; and moving Cobras and gunships to Laos from Vietnam. Mr. Helms suggested that this list be augmented by the movement of ARDF assets to Laos from Vietnam.

Ambassador Johnson stated that there would be no problems from State on the Cobras and the gunships. However, with respect to B–52 strikes and bombing both sides of the Barthelmy Pass, State would appreciate an opportunity to comment. Dr. Kissinger assured Ambassador Johnson that this opportunity would be provided.

Dr. Kissinger asked for the views of those present on arranging a meeting between Admiral McCain and Ambassadors Godley and Unger. General Wheeler said that if such a meeting were not followed up, it would be counterproductive. On the other hand, if it were followed up with actions such as B–52 strikes and attacks on both sides

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[4] On March 21 Nixon sent Kosygin a letter stating that he did not share the Soviet leader's view, expressed in a letter of March 13 to Nixon, that consultation on Laos by the Geneva signatories was "unrealistic and would not be helpful." Nixon suggested that the Soviet position was "illogical and unconvincing" and asked Kosygin to reconsider it. The letter did not state that broader U.S.-Soviet relations could be affected by the Laos issue, but did confirm the "desire to base our relations on the principle of negotiation rather than confrontation." (Both letters are in the National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS)

[5] The letters to the signatories of the Geneva Convention of 1962 other than the Co-Chairmen, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, were eventually sent on April 7. Nixon expressed concern with the situation in Laos and called for consultations of the signatories under Article IV of the Declaration of Neutrality of Laos. Nixon informed the head of state of each signatory nation that the British were prepared to consult, but the Soviet Union was not. Nixon asked that each signatory support his call for consultations. (Letter from Nixon to Lon Nol, April 7; ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 749, Presidential Correspondence, Cambodia, Lon Nol, Prime Minister (1970)) Other similar letters are ibid. under respective head of state folders.

of the Barthelmy Pass, it would be a useful step. Ambassador Green agreed, suggesting that Udorn be the meeting place and that it be followed up by air strikes using Cobras and C–130s. General Wheeler wondered if the visibility in Udorn would be adequate, to which Ambassador Green said this could be arranged. It depended on how we handled the press. Mr. Helms supported this position, saying that it made a good mix and that a meeting in Udorn was almost as good as one in Vientiane.

Mr. Nutter raised the question of whether the diversion of gunships to northern Laos would have an effect on the Panhandle. General Wheeler said that it would, but the main question was what issue was most important at any one time. Dr. Kissinger said he assumed that the diversion would not last for more than two weeks.

Dr. Kissinger said that he hoped to be able to tell General Wheeler by 3 o'clock or what moves would be approved. The McCain–Godley–Unger meeting should be arranged fairly quickly. B–52 reconnaissance could be carried out immediately, and would be picked up by the North Vietnamese. As to targets in Sam Neua, General Wheeler stated that he would need to look into what target data was on hand. Reconnaissance might be needed, since this had been an exempt area for years.

Dr. Kissinger asked if there were any other moves besides the letters from the President to Kosygin and the other Geneva signatories which we should consider. Ambassador Johnson responded that we could tell the Indians that we have no objections to their going ahead on the cease-fire move. Mr. Helms had not heard of this ploy, and after it was explained to him declared that the Panhandle was excluded from any cease-fire. General Wheeler took the same position. Ambassador Johnson said that such would be the case, as the Indians had already made plain. Nobody was under any illusions that we would accept limitations on our freedom of action in the Panhandle. Dr. Kissinger asked Mr. Helms if he saw any problem in the fact that under a cease-fire the North Vietnamese could stay on in the area now occupied during the rainy season. Mr. Helms replied in effect that since we had no assets anyway to drive the North Vietnamese away, and in fact had no assets to hold them south of Long Tieng if they wanted to go this way, he saw no practical grounds on which to object. To a remark by Dr. Kissinger that he had thought from the morning session that it might be possible to hold a line south of Long Tieng, Mr. Karamessines explained that a fall-back to Site 272 was possible, but that the area could not be held if a major effort were launched. The question was whether the enemy would want to go south, in view of his lack of familiarity with the ground and his supply difficulties. To this Dr. Kissinger asked if it thus could be concluded that the enemy had already effectively overthrown the military balance in Laos. Mr. Helms replied affirmatively, adding that the Meo were pretty well fin-

ished off for the present, and that our problem would be how to help stabilize the situation. General Wheeler agreed, commenting that he had no faith in the other Laotian troops at all. Ambassador Johnson had no argument, either. Dr. Kissinger wondered if anyone was worried about the junction of routes 7 and 13. Was there a threat to Vang Pao from this direction? Ambassador Johnson replied that he did not see a threat now, since the North Vietnamese lines would be greatly extended. Ambassador Green hoped that we could make them pay a price if they came from this direction.

Dr. Kissinger stated that he agreed with Mr. Helms on the score of the North Vietnamese challenging us on every possible occasion. Until we stopped backing away we would not get a settlement in either Laos or Vietnam. What we were attempting to do here was to show that we were meeting the challenge. He asked General Wheeler to provide B–52 targets quickly and to undertake reconnaissance immediately. He went on to support the McCain–Godley meeting, the move of C–130s and Cobras to cover North Laos, and the drafting of the two types of letters. All of these actions could be considered approved, and there was no need to wait for a further meeting.[6]

[6] Kissinger outlined these actions in a March 19 memorandum to Nixon, who initialed it. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–072, WSAG Meeting, 3/19/70, p.m.) Kissinger then sent Rogers and Laird a March 19 memorandum directing them to take the actions Nixon approved. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS)

205. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 19, 1970.

SUBJECT

The Coup in Cambodia

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970. Secret. Sent for information. On the bottom of the first page Nixon wrote: "I want Helms to develop & implement a plan for maximum assistance to pro U.S. elements in Cambodia—*Don't* put this out to 303 or the Bureaucracy. Handle like our air strikes." Kissinger wrote at the top of the page: "I want to discuss with Helms Monday am." Holdridge sent the draft of this memorandum to Kissinger on March 18, suggesting that he send it to the President. (Ibid.)

Herewith our preliminary estimate as to what has happened in Cambodia:[2]

What Has Happened. The National Assembly "unanimously agreed to withdraw confidence from Prince Norodom Sihanouk. . . Prince Sihanouk shall cease his function as Chief of State. . . Mr. Cheng Heng, Chairman of the National Assembly, is entrusted with the function until the next election of a true Chief of State. . . ." Aside from its doubtful Constitutionality, this declaration is fuzzy as to what has been changed (Cheng Heng has been Acting Chief of State since Sihanouk's January departure from Cambodia), and there are various Constitutional processes for deciding who will be Chief of State. The only clear point is that there has been a no-confidence motion against Sihanouk.

Sihanouk is flying from Moscow to Peking, and has said that he will return. However, the airport in Phnom Penh has been closed, probably to forestall such a move.

The Nature of Power in Cambodia. The National Assembly itself has heretofore been a cipher, although it is elective (and a new election is scheduled this year). The same may be said of the interim Chief of State. The power elements in Cambodia have been

—Sihanouk, with his royal title, popularity, and tactical brilliance.
—Prime Minister Lon Nol, normally thought Sihanouk's heir-apparent, with the Army backing him, and with control of much of the lucrative smuggling trade with the Communists.
—Sirik Matak, Deputy Prime Minister, a forceful personality without much organizational backing.

There are few other sources or organized political power. The Prince's political party, the *Sangkum,* is not disciplined and will probably respond to whoever is in power, or disintegrate.

The Nature of the Challenge. Lon Nol and Sirik Matak have long struggled with Sihanouk for the right to administer the Government free of his personal and whimsical interventions. They have been in and out of office for years, having been put in most recently (by Sihanouk) last August to clean up the economic mess which was developing out of his inept handling of economic problems. He made a desultory challenge to their administration in December, but was overruled.

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[2] On March 18 the Department of State sent the White House its preliminary analysis of the situation in Cambodia. Holdridge sent it to Kissinger and noted that it was "substantially in line" with this memorandum to the President, "although it is heavier on description and lighter on speculation as to possible outcomes and implications." Holdridge also summarized Japanese analysis, which held that the Lon Nol/Sirik Matak Government would be stable because of Lon Nol's control over the Army and Sirik Matak's new control over the police and bureaucracy. (Ibid.)

Lon Nol and Sirik Matak have not differed with Sihanouk on the broad outlines of policy, although they probably favor a freer economic climate and more positive efforts to deal with Cambodia's economic and bureaucratic problems. As the new Communiqué proclaims, they stand for Sihanouk's neutral policy.

Lon Nol has heretofore been content to be Number Two, but this appears to be a straight power challenge. In popular anger against Vietnamese Communist incursions, he has found a good issue to challenge Sihanouk (and the Army fanned up that anger), but Lon Nol's dealings with the Communists do not suggest that he is a fervent anti-Communist or anti-Vietnamese patriot.

Future Choices. This situation will probably move in one of three ways:

—A Lon Nol/Sirik Matak-dominated new Government supported by the Army, with little popular support and forced to buy popularity with anti-Vietnamese slogans and economic progress.

—A shaky compromise akin to the barons' truce with King John in 1215, permitting Sihanouk to come back as Chief of State but with much limited powers. This would be an unstable situation, as Sihanouk maneuvered, probably successfully, to outflank and eliminate his challengers.

—A Sihanouk victory, by turning the Army against Lon Nol.

The Implications for Foreign Policy and for Us.[3] Khmer nationalism has been aroused against the Vietnamese Communist occupation. Any future Government will probably have to be more circumspect and covert about its cooperation with the Vietnamese. Lon Nol has chosen this issue, and he will need to be able to demonstrate publicly that he is taking action against the Vietnamese occupation. Similarly, Sihanouk will not for some time open himself to the charge of being "soft on the Vietnamese."

This will create serious problems for the VC/NVA, which will have considerable reason to take a more hostile line toward Cambodia.

Lon Nol will have to keep his followers happy. Therefore, if he wins, we should not expect a sudden termination of smuggling to the Communists.

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[3] On March 18 at noon, Kissinger and Rogers discussed the overthrow of Sihanouk. Rogers suggested, "I think we should be very careful not to say anything until we know more about it." Kissinger responded, "All we are saying is that we respect their neutrality and not another word." Rogers stated that, "Mansfield said we are not involved in anyway. That's a good line to follow but I think it's unwise to say whether or not we have agents there." Rogers also thought the development could "be fortunate in some ways. If SVN and Cambodia can work together." Kissinger noted that, "It may compensate for Laos." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Telephone Conversations, Chronological Record)

Sihanouk could turn to the Vietnamese Communists for military support to neutralize Lon Nol's military strength, but he is probably too clever a politician to do so in any open way and thus invite the label of "Quisling."

A Lon Nol victory could result in a more pro-US and pro-Thai policy. Lon Nol would want US economic aid, and he would be less inclined to trust his ability to manipulate the Communists, which would encourage him to develop his relations with the more reliable Thai neighbors.

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206. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 20, 1970.

SUBJECT

Recognition of the New Government in Cambodia

You raised a question over the telephone this afternoon as to the status of our recognition of Cambodia.

We have taken the line that the U.S. Government has not taken any action to alter the status of its diplomatic relations with Phnom Penh. We have not explicitly recognized the new regime contrary to some recent erroneous press reports. They claim to be the continuing legal Government of Cambodia, and we have simply not challenged that claim.

The Premier is of course the one appointed by Sihanouk last summer (Lon Nol), and the acting Chief of State (Cheng Heng) has been acting in that capacity since Sihanouk's departure for France in January.

If asked whether Sihanouk does not claim to be still the Chief of State, I suggest you say simply that this is a question which we assume the Cambodians will be working out, and that we have not taken a position on it.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970. Limited Official Use. Drafted by Kissinger, Haig, and Grant on March 20. A note on the memorandum indicates it went to the President on March 20.

207. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, March 23, 1970, 11:08 a.m.–12:37 p.m.

SUBJECT

Laos

PARTICIPANTS

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Jonathan Moore
Marshall Green

Defense
David Packard
G. Warren Nutter
Lt Col. Gerald H. Britten

CIA
Richard Helms
Thomas H. Karamessines
[*name not declassified*] (for briefing only)

JCS
General Earle G. Wheeler

NSC Staff
B/Gen. Alexander M. Haig
John Holdridge
Keith Guthrie

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It was the consensus that the introduction of additional Thai troops would provide no assurance that Long Tieng could be held by friendly forces. CIA and the JCS generally favored the use of Thai troops as offering the only hope of avoiding enemy capture of Long Tieng and the destruction of the Meo as a fighting force. State Department and OSD were opposed because of the political consequences of Thai involvement and a possible Thai defeat. There was general agreement that the assembly of a Thai regimental combat team within Thailand would be useful, although the State Department was cautious about pressing the Thais to take such action.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Colonel Behr sent this record and the minutes of the next six WSAG meetings on Laos and Cambodia to Kissinger on March 31. A note on Behr's transmittal memorandum reads: "HAK has seen. 4/6." The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

The Defense Department will provide Mr. Kissinger briefing material on bombing targets in the vicinity of Barthelmy Pass. The State Department will submit to Dr. Kissinger by the afternoon of March 23 a draft reply to Thanat's letter.[2] Ambassadors Unger and Godley will be informed through the appropriate CIA station chiefs of recent developments with regard to Laos, including the Thanat–Kissinger letter. The President's second letter to Kosygin will be shown to Souvanna.[3]

Mr. [*name not declassified*] briefed on the military situation near Long Tieng, which he described as "up for grabs". The enemy was urgently moving troops toward the area. There were about 1,000 North Vietnamese troops in the immediate vicinity of Long Tieng, with 5,000 to 6,000 in the surrounding hills and many more further back. The North Vietnamese seemed to be hoping to forestall a successful defensive action by recently arrived RLG reinforcements, of which there were now about 2,000. It was not possible to estimate how well the reinforcements would fight. Enemy rocket attacks were not yet effective against the airstrip, but this might be only a matter of time.

Mr. Kissinger asked why the Meos were not being pulled in from the outposts, where they might get picked off. Mr. Karamessines said this was essentially a tactical judgment by Vang Pao, who thought that as guerrilla forces they could be more usefully deployed so as to harass the enemy.

Mr. Kissinger asked about artillery deployments. Mr. Karamessines said that latest information indicated four 155s and one 105 were in place. There was a brief discussion of an unconfirmed report that a 155 had been withdrawn either for maintenance or because its position was threatened. Mr. Kissinger asked if a rapid collapse were likely. Mr. Karamessines said that this was so and that in such event it was probable the 155 would be lost although present plans were to move it out by air if there was a remote chance of doing so.

Mr. [*name not declassified*] said Vang Pao wants to bring in Thai troops. He would then use the Meos to hit enemy supply lines from behind in the vicinity of Ban Ban and the Plaine des Jarres.

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[2] In a March 22 letter to Kissinger, Thanat informed him that the Lao Government had asked for combat units and Thailand was prepared to dispatch immediately to Long Tieng one infantry battalion (777 men) to be followed, if needed, by two additional battalions. Thailand was prepared to do this if the U.S. Government provided the necessary material and logistical support. (Letter attached to a memorandum from Kissinger to Packard and U. Alexis Johnson, March 23; ibid., NSC Files, Box 567, Country Files, Far East, Thailand, Thai Involvement in Laos) On the afternoon of March 22 Kissinger sent Thanat an interim reply stating that the United States had made three B–52 strikes in support of Long Tieng, was studying Thanat's proposal, and would respond "in the immediate future." (Ibid., Box 101, Vietnam Subject Files, Sensitive/Souvanna Phouma/Long Tieng)

[3] See footnote 4, Document 204.

Mr. [*name not declassified*] added that the North Vietnamese have logistic problems. They have no supplies in the area, their supply routes have bogged down at certain places, and they are concerned about possible B–52 strikes and moves to cut their supply lines. Mr. Kissinger asked about the desirability of hitting the points where the enemy supply lines were clogged. General Wheeler replied that they were being hit; 100 tacair sorties were flown "yesterday".

Mr. Johnson asked how Vang Pao proposed to move his troops for the attacks on the supply lines. Mr. [*name not declassified*] said this would be done with helicopters as was customary.

Mr. Green asked if the recent heavy rains had not brought an improvement in the weather situation from our standpoint. Mr. [*name not declassified*] said that this was so, since visibility was better and it was more difficult for the North Vietnamese to get their supplies over the roads. General Wheeler said the clearer skies would greatly improve tacair effectiveness.

Mr. [*name not declassified*] concluded by noting that the enemy was apparently trying to eliminate all friendly posts within striking distance of the Plaine des Jarres and, in answer to Dr. Kissinger's question, said that he thought they would certainly succeed in doing so.

Mr. Packard displayed a map showing the 1962 cease-fire line and the successive yearly lines of the North Vietnamese advance since. He pointed out that the map showed that the North Vietnamese had not come much further this year than in every preceding year. Mr. Kissinger observed that the difference this year was that they were present in greater force.

Mr. Kissinger asked for a review on what had been done to carry out the decisions made last week. Mr. Packard said that C–130 gunships have been moved to Laos. However, Cobra (helicopter) gunships have not, since they would require establishing ground support forces in Laos. In answer to Mr. Johnson's question, General Wheeler said that General Abrams thought that Cobras would have to be located at Vientiane or perhaps beyond. General Abrams had deep reservations about their use in Laos because of the lack of a sophisticated command and control system. General Wheeler added that three C–130s had now been operating several days and could continue until April 6 without degrading our capability to take action against the Ho Chi Minh Trail. He said that ARDF (to locate enemy radio terminals) was continuing at the rate of six operations per day. General Wheeler concluded by saying that there was no truth to Vang Pao's claims that air support had been decreased to 20 sorties per day. The recent tacair rate was 87 per day, and most times it was in excess of 100 which was about all the system would accept. Mr. Packard added that sorties during February totalled 1518 and that this rate could continue and perhaps be somewhat increased.

Mr. Kissinger asked if the North Vietnamese could launch an attack on Long Tieng at any time, and if so, could they capture it. General Wheeler said the answer to both questions was yes, assuming the enemy wished to pay the price in losses. The friendly forces in Long Tieng could make its capture expensive.

Mr. Kissinger asked about the composition and will to fight of the friendly forces. General Wheeler said that the principal forces were the special guerrilla forces brought from the South and that they would fight. Mr. Karamessines described the units in more detail and explained that they were organized in an inner and an outer defense perimeter.

Mr. Kissinger asked if the addition of three Thai battalions would affect the outcome. General Wheeler said this was a possibility but noted that Admiral McCain, Ambassador Unger, and Ambassador Godley were by no means confident about this when they met at Udorn.[4] Mr. Helms said that the most the introduction of Thai units would do would be to permit a holding action until the rains began in about two months. He added that there was really no other option except to try to delay. Mr. Packard said it might be a good idea to bring in the Thai if this would release Vang Pao to attack enemy supply lines. Mr. Helms said that even if this were done, our basic tactic would remain the same—trying to hold off the enemy for 60 more days.

Mr. Kissinger asked if the introduction of Thai forces would enable us to buy the necessary 60 days. Both Mr. Helms and General Wheeler stated that they did not know.

Mr. Johnson asked about the effectiveness of the Thai forces. General Wheeler said the Thai 13th Regimental Combat Team had a number of deficiencies—including lack of experience in battalion-size operations—but that it would be tenacious in a defensive operation. However, the Thai units were not assault troops like the North Vietnamese.

General Wheeler said Thai troops posed more than a purely military problem. The larger issue was whether to provide support for Thai operations in Laos in the face of the political furor this would raise in the United States, including allegations that Plan Taksin was being involved. If we were willing to face the political problem, we should

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[4] In telegram 3366 from Bangkok, March 21, Unger reported that he, Godley, and McCain concluded after meeting on March 20 in Udorn that even if two Thai battalions arrived immediately, they would "provide no guarantee that Long Tieng can be held through the next seventy day critical period until the rains are expected to ease the pressure, but it is our judgment that they improve the chances enough to justify the effort." The three men also agreed that "it seems entirely unrealistic to contemplate keeping such a deployment covert." (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, DEF 19 THAI–LAOS)

urge the Thais at least to move their forces forward within Thailand and should continue maximum possible bombing. We could alternatively go a step further by having the Thais move to Long Tieng and gambling that they would be able to hold the position there until the rains began. General Wheeler said he could not guarantee that the Thais could hold Long Tieng.

Mr. Johnson said the implication of the messages received from the field was that the use of Thai forces could be kept secret. This was simply not possible. Mr. Packard and Mr. Karamessines agreed.

Mr. Kissinger said there were both military and political problems. The military problem was where best to make a stand. Should the Thai troops be moved to Long Tieng, to some less advanced point in Laos (Site 272), or to the border?

General Wheeler said that it was difficult to judge at this distance from the scene whether the North Vietnamese would overrun Long Tieng before the Thais got there. The minimum time to get the first battalion combat team there was 72 hours, and 96 hours might be a more realistic estimate.

Mr. Kissinger asked if the North Vietnamese would go on to Vientiane after taking Long Tieng. General Wheeler said that because of the extremely rough terrain below Long Tieng, it was more likely they would proceed west along Route 7, then down Route 13 to Vientiane. Mr. Kissinger asked if it were not our judgment that the North Vietnamese would stop after taking Long Tieng. General Wheeler said that we really did not know, and Mr. Johnson added that it was more accurate to say that if they moved further, they would probably proceed along Route 7.

Mr. Kissinger asked about the possibility of making a stand at Site 272. General Wheeler said it might make a good defensive position, but there was no reason to put more troops there if there was no need to defend it. Mr. Kissinger concluded that Site 272 was therefore not really a fallback position. It was hard to get into and hard to get out of. General Wheeler said the JCS was not attracted by Site 272.

Mr. Packard suggested it would be better to use Thai troops to block an enemy advance along Route 13. Mr. Johnson agreed and said that we could defer a decision on Thai troops to see if a threat developed on Route 13.

Mr. Kissinger described the political problems posed by Thai troops. Their use would raise the question of whether we were triggering Plan Taksin. In addition, we would have to consider whether we might be stimulating a North Vietnamese attack by precipitate action to introduce Thai troops. The time had come to ask whether by gradually introducing Thai units and stepping up B–52 attacks, we were starting down the slippery slope. The President had said this morning

that he leaned toward introducing Thai troops. Mr. Kissinger concluded that we must have a broader concept of where our actions in Laos are leading us. We should not follow a course of taking a move, getting clobbered, taking another move, getting clobbered, and so on. Could we not develop three or four scenarios?

Mr. Johnson sketched one possibility. Introduction of Thai troops would cause the North Vietnamese to bring more force to bear. We would then have to decide whether to reinforce Long Tieng and introduce more Thais. At some point Long Tieng would take on the aspect of a Dienbienphu. Having taken one step, we would find ourselves under heavy pressure to take others. Another possibility was that if we introduced Thai troops and then pulled out, we would suffer a great psychological and political setback.

Mr. Kissinger asked about the implications for Thailand if Thai troops were used in Laos. Mr. Green said there were several aspects to be considered. The Thais wanted to draw us into the ground defense of Thailand by having us support Thai forces in Laos. Use of Thai troops in Laos might affect the Thai contribution in South Vietnam. Also, the Communists might try to stir up insurgencies in Thailand, as they have the capability to do.

Mr. Green asked about the Lao King's position on Thai troops. Mr. Karamessines said the best information indicates he is opposed. He also pointed out that there were a number of new intelligence items which indicated that a coup, [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] might be in the offing in Vientiane. Mr. Green and Mr. Johnson both commented on the possible adverse consequences in the United States and Thailand if the North Vietnamese were to inflict a humiliating defeat on Thai troops.

Mr. Kissinger said that every year the balance in Laos surges back and forth. The North Vietnamese probably hesitate to attempt a complete takeover because they fear the political and military consequences if they go too far. What reason will they have to worry in the future if we say we will not put forces in Laos and do not bring in Thai forces?

Mr. Packard suggested that we might have the Thais move forces to the border. Mr. Johnson said this would not get around the Taksin problem.[5] Mr. Kissinger pointed out that it was the Thais who had taken the initiative to raise the matter with us. Mr. Green said that the key point was whether the Thais would undertake this on their own. They wanted to involve us. If they took action by themselves, there would be no objection. Mr. Johnson agreed.

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[5] See footnote 7, Document 203.

Mr. Kissinger asked if it were not also true that if we refused to respond to the Thai request, they would conclude the United States was not committed to the defense of Thailand. Mr. Johnson said that Ambassador Unger had reported nothing that would indicate this. Mr. Kissinger asked how we should interpret the message from Thanat. Mr. Johnson responded that it did not seem to him to mean that the Thais would take a refusal as an indication of lack of US support for Thai defense. Mr. Kissinger asked what we should say to Thanat if we turned him down. Mr. Johnson suggested we base our refusal on military grounds and state that we thought the idea of moving Thai troops to Long Tieng was not militarily sound.

Mr. Helms said that short of committing more troops, we would not find it possible to hold Long Tieng until the onset of the rains. If Long Tieng falls, most of the adverse consequences already discussed will come to pass. The Thais will be worried; there will be turmoil in Vientiane. He did not know about the implications for Plan Taksin. Mr. Kissinger observed that one result of Taksin was that we could not take even a small action without worrying about triggering the Plan.

Mr. Packard said that a key issue was whether the loss of Long Tieng opened the road to the capital. Mr. Johnson said that in the narrow sense it did not. Mr. Kissinger agreed that it did not open a direct route to Vientiane. However, in a broad sense, by opening the way via Route 7/13 and destroying the Meo as an effective fighting force, it would remove all the obstacles to a North Vietnamese takeover.

Mr. Johnson said he agreed that over the years uncertainty about US intentions had restrained the communists. We had given signals—such as Taksin, B–52 bombing, and the landing of Marines in 1962. If we could get the Thais to move without ourselves getting involved, Thai action could be useful.

Mr. Kissinger asked if we could reply to Thanat that some movement seemed indicated but that the Thai forces should be held south of the Mekong. Mr. Johnson thought this might be feasible. Mr. Green cautioned that having Thai troops across the river from Vientiane might lend credence to rumors of Thai involvement in coup plotting. He wondered if we might tell Thanat that we were uncertain about Long Tieng and would not wish to put the Thais in a dangerous position. However, it would be up to them if they wished to make a move on their own.

Mr. Kissinger said that the Thais could not move troops without our help. Mr. Johnson countered that the Thais had some air transport capability, and General Wheeler agreed.

Mr. Helms said there seemed little point in just moving troops to the river. This would have no effect on the course of the war. Mr. Moore pointed out that it would have an effect on our involvement with the Thais.

Mr. Kissinger asked what would be left to Souvanna after the fall of Long Tieng and the destruction of the Meos. Our air support would be of little use if there was no opposition to the communists on the ground. Mr. Green interjected that Vang Pao's mood was always fluctuating and that he had often shown a capability to bounce back after a defeat.

General Wheeler reiterated that Thai battalions gave no assurance of holding Long Tieng. Unless we felt willing to meet the political costs, use of Thai troops constituted a chance hardly worth taking. If the Thais lost, we would have to commit more troops. Laos could not be defended from Laos. The only successful defense would be one which attacked the problem at its source in North Vietnam.

General Wheeler said there might be some value to assembling the scattered elements of one of the Thai RCT's for training purposes. This would have some military benefits, if, for instance, we decide later to make a defense of the Vientiane plain. Mr. Johnson asked about the cost to the Thai counterinsurgency program. General Wheeler and Mr. Packard said there would be some cost but not much. Mr. Johnson said he thought we should encourage the Thais to assemble a force.

Mr. Helms said that if the enemy believed we might bomb North Vietnam, something might be achieved. Mr. Kissinger asked how this message could be conveyed to North Vietnam. General Wheeler said it would be clear if we actually did some bombing. Mr. Johnson asked about bombing Barthelmy Pass. General Wheeler said that the Pass would not serve as a choke point, but that nearby supply facilities offered profitable targets. Mr. Packard said that Defense could provide briefing material on what was located at the Pass, and Mr. Kissinger asked him to do so. Mr. Johnson said he agreed that if we were going to bomb in North Vietnam, we should do so without any advance message. General Wheeler said we should also bomb Mu Gia and Na Pe Passes. Mr. Green asked if it would be better to bomb now or to wait until after the fall of Long Tieng. General Wheeler said we had already waited five years.

Mr. Kissinger pointed out that the North Vietnamese were cautious as long as Vang Pao was on their flank. With the Meo destroyed there was no force to keep the communists away from Vientiane. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Green said this had been true for many years.

Mr. Kissinger asked about the prospects for Vang Pao. Mr. Karamessines said it would be a miracle if a cohesive force was left after the fall of Long Tieng. We should consider whether we wanted our position in Laos to rest on this small chance. Mr. Johnson countered that the adverse effect would be even worse if the Thais were involved in a defeat at Long Tieng.

Mr. Helms said that if the State Department was against introducing Thai troops, how did it propose to play out the situation in

Laos. Mr. Johnson said we should do what we can to maintain the Meo forces but not make Long Tieng a Dienbienphu. Mr. Kissinger asked what happened if the Meos collapsed, and Mr. Johnson responded that we would then be faced with a decision on whether to urge the Thais on or implement Taksin. Mr. Kissinger asked about the impact on South Vietnam. General Wheeler wondered what would happen in Cambodia. Mr. Nutter asked what we would lose by bombing the Barthelmy Pass. Mr. Johnson responded that there still seemed to be a better than 50–50 chance that the communists would make no further move after taking Long Tieng. Mr. Kissinger said we must consider that the ball game might be over if Long Tieng were lost.

Mr. Helms pointed out that in previous years there had been no Vietnamization program in progress. If the communists succeeded in neutralizing Laos, they could undermine Vietnamization.

Mr. Green said that if we got involved in Laos, the communists would want to step up their attacks. The public furor that would be aroused in the United States would encourage them to go further.

Mr. Nutter asked what the Congressional reaction would be if we lost Laos. Mr. Johnson said we should handle the problem so that it is not *our* loss.

Mr. Kissinger said he agreed with Mr. Helms that the communists seemed to be trying to back us into a corner. They know that after a Vietnam settlement, they could take Laos for free.

Mr. Green asked if our estimate was that the communists wanted to seize all of Laos. Mr. Karamessines and Mr. Helms said we had no estimate.

Mr. Kissinger said that one could argue that Vietnamization worked because of our threat to retaliate against North Vietnam. He asked if in previous years there had always been some friendly force left in Laos at the end of the communist advance. Mr. Johnson said that there had, since Vang Pao always retreated into the hills. Mr. Kissinger observed that the mistake this year was to let the Meo stand and fight.

Mr. Packard said that if the communists took Laos, we would have to move in and implement the Nixon Doctrine in Thailand. He asked if there were no other steps we could take in Laos. General Wheeler said that with good troops and air support, an enemy advance along Route 7/13 could be impeded. Mr. Johnson said that if Thais were used, they should be used there.

Mr. Kissinger said that the principals must be given a chance to consider any proposal that Thai troops be moved. He said it was also essential to have an answer ready for Thanat by the end of the day.

Mr. Kissinger summarized the views on use of Thai troops at Long Tieng. CIA believed we would be no worse off with the Thais than without. The Joint Chiefs had the same view. The State Department

was opposed. Mr. Packard said that on balance he was against introducing Thai troops.

Mr. Kissinger asked about assembling a Thai regiment at Udorn. Mr. Packard said this was the least we could do. Mr. Helms had no strong views. Mr. Johnson suggested not pushing the Thais but letting them take the responsibility.

Mr. Kissinger raised the question of the impact of events in Laos on the Thais. Would they not believe that what was happening in Laos would happen to them next year? How should we explain the situation to them? Mr. Johnson and Mr. Packard said we should tell them that Long Tieng is not the place to put their forces. Mr. Kissinger asked Mr. Johnson to draft a reply to Thanat's letter.

Mr. Karamessines asked if the President's latest letter to Kosygin could be shown to Souvanna, and it was agreed this could be done. Mr. Johnson asked about bringing Ambassadors Godley and Unger up to date on recent developments including the Thanat-Kissinger letter. Mr. Kissinger cautioned that his channel to Thanat must be protected, since it was based on an assurance given Thanat by the President in Bangkok that he should feel free to communicate directly through Dr. Kissinger. It was agreed that briefing of the Ambassadors could best be handled through the appropriate CIA station chiefs.

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208. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, March 23, 1970.

SUBJECT

Proposals to Sustain the Present Regime in Cambodia

1. On 22 March 1970, General Haig forwarded your request for a plan to sustain the present regime in Cambodia.[2] We have outlined below a series of recommendations which we believe would assist in this

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970. Secret; Eyes Only.

[2] See footnote 1, Document 205.

objective. These are necessarily somewhat tentative in nature as our intelligence on the internal situation in Cambodia is not solid enough as yet to permit us firm judgments. We also make several suggestions for action by the Department of State since we understand your query has not been addressed to any other agency.

2. In essence we believe the core of any strategy devised to maintain the present government in power should consist of two elements:

a. Overtly, to the greatest extent possible, the present Cambodian Government should attempt to maintain a stance of neutrality. This is a course along which the present leadership is already embarked and is one to gain the maximum of international sympathy.

b. Covertly, we should work to support and sustain the present Cambodian Government by supporting its military effort against the Viet Cong in Cambodia and shoring up its position by the provision of covert economic and political support.

This course, if it could be successfully pursued, seems to us the most likely to preserve the present regime against what will almost surely be a determined effort by the North Vietnamese backed by Communist China and the USSR to unseat it.

3. We have some covert channels to the present government [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] which could be used to develop detailed plans for clandestine assistance. [Omitted here is discussion of CIA intelligence sources in Cambodia.] [*2½ lines of source text not declassified*]

4. Our current information on the exact balance of forces in Cambodia—information which would be essential to formulating realistic plans—is thin. We have in the past concentrated on attempting to detail North Vietnamese use of Cambodia as a channel for shipment of arms and other supplies to the Viet Cong. Considerable progress has been made in this collection effort particularly over the past year, but as a result we have not tasked our agents with reporting in depth on the Cambodian political scene.

5. As initial steps in determining the best way to support the current regime, we believe we should send a senior CIA official on a discreet trip to Cambodia to make clandestine contact with our better placed agents. This would yield not only immediate intelligence on the situation there but would also reassure the leaders of the present government that the U. S. intends to provide them with discreet assistance. We think at the same time, we should move forward with all speed to re-establish [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] reliable communications by means of which on a timely fashion, we can report intelligence and convey messages to our agents and the Cambodian Government.

6. The most immediate pressing need of the Cambodian Government will almost certainly be military assistance. We assume that the

Chinese and Soviets will suspend military aid until the present government makes drastic concessions or is overthrown by one more friendly to the Communists. In these circumstances the Cambodian leadership will need desperately an alternative supply of military weapons. There are Cambodian airfields to which deliveries could be made clandestinely by aircraft flying out of Thailand and South Vietnam. They will also almost certainly need some sort of economic assistance and some quiet political help. All three of these aspects could be explored with our contacts.

7. In summary, we recommend the following steps:

a. We send an experienced Agency officer as soon as possible to Phnom Penh on a trip to make contact with [*1½ lines of source text not declassified*] controlled agents within the Cambodian Government. This officer would collect information on the current situation and could convey such assurances as you wish to the new leadership.[3]

b. Establish [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] rapid and secure radio communications to replace the present commercial channels used by the Embassy.

c. Issue a United States Government statement supporting independence and neutrality of Cambodia and expressing sympathy with the Cambodian efforts to remove North Vietnamese intruding troops from their soil.

d. Develop a worldwide clandestine propaganda effort to support the present government and call attention to the flagrant violation of Cambodian territory by the North Vietnamese. Also seek to discredit Sihanouk's effort to create a government in exile.[4]

8. Providing Cambodia's response to our effort is positive, we recommend the following additional steps:

a. Develop a clandestine airlift to supply the Cambodian Army with necessary weapons.

b. Develop a clandestine combat control center to coordinate Cambodian military activities with the allied military effort.

c. Provide financial assistance to the new government.

d. Through diplomatic means stimulate international support for the new regime. Encourage Thailand to re-establish diplomatic relations with Cambodia. Persuade South Vietnam to issue a declaration recognizing Cambodia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Persuade governments which have not yet recognized the new regime to do so.

9. The above is a quick response to your request. If you believe these suggestions have merit we can flesh them out in more detail.

Dick

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[3] There is a check next to this paragraph.

[4] There is a check next to this paragraph.

209. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, March 24, 1970, 2:35–3:20 p.m.

SUBJECT

Laos and Cambodia

PARTICIPANTS

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Jonathan Moore
Marshall Green

Defense
G. Warren Nutter
Lt. Col. Gerald H. Britten

CIA
Richard Helms
Thomas H. Karamessines
[*name not declassified*] (for briefing only)

JCS
Vice Admiral Nels C. Johnson

NSC Staff
Brig. Gen. A. M. Haig
Col. Richard Kennedy
Col. Robert M. Behr
John Holdridge
Keith Guthrie

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

A WSAG Working Group will be established under the chairmanship of Col. Richard Kennedy of the NSC Staff and with representation from all WSAG members.[2] The WSAG Working Group will develop an integrated plan setting forth alternative courses of action in case Long Tieng falls and the North Vietnamese continue their advance in Laos. This plan should consider minimum and higher options.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Colonel Behr sent this record and the minutes of six other WSAG meetings on Laos and Cambodia to Kissinger on March 31. A note on Behr's transmittal memorandum reads: "HAK has seen. 4/6." The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] Haig made this proposal in a March 24 memorandum to Kissinger. (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 101, Vietnam Subject Files, Sensitive/Souvanna Phouma/Long Tieng)

(A minimum option to be considered is the occupation of enclaves in Laos along the border with Thailand.) The plan should primarily focus on possible military actions and should specifically deal with whether, when, and where Thai troops should be employed in the defense of Laos.

The existing Laos Working Group will prepare a series of contingency plans for Laos and Cambodia. Col. Kennedy of NSC Staff will coordinate closely with the Laos Working Group. Plans to be prepared by the Laos Working Group are:

a) An overall plan covering alternative courses of action in the event of a Communist takeover in Laos which the United States decides to accept.

b) Plans dealing with internal contingencies in Laos, for example:

1) Rightists stage a coup against Souvanna.

2) Souvanna capitulates to the Communists and requests the United States to halt all bombing in Laos.

c) Plans covering possible problems in Cambodia, for example:

1) Sihanouk, with North Vietnamese and Viet Cong support, attacks the Lon Nol/Matak Government.

2) Lon Nol and Matak request U.S. assistance against subversion by Sihanouk and the Communists.

3) How to obtain the release of the *Columbia Eagle*.[3]

CIA and DOD are to obtain and submit to Dr. Kissinger by the morning of March 25 accurate information on road conditions along the route from Long Tieng through Site 272 to Vientiane.[4] This should include information on any AID roadbuilding activity in the area.

It was the consensus of the WSAG that our reply to Souvanna's request for support for use of three Thai battalions in the defense of

[3] On March 14 two armed men hijacked the SS *Columbia Eagle*, a Military Sea Transport System ship of U.S. registry traveling from Manila to Sattahip, Thailand, with a cargo of ammunition comprising 500–750 lbs. bombs, fuses, and igniters. The hijackers forced the captain to take the ship onto an island 5 miles from Sihanoukville well within Cambodian territorial waters. Twenty-four crew members left the *Columbia Eagle* in life boats because of a reported "bomb scare" and were picked up by another MSTS ship; fifteen remained on board. (Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, March 15; ibid., Box 583, Cambodian Operations, Hijack and Detention of Columbia Eagle (Cambodia))

[4] This was done in a memorandum from Karamessines to Kissinger, et al., March 25. (Ibid., Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970)

Long Tieng[5] should be along the lines of Dr. Kissinger's reply[6] to a similar request from Thanat.[7] Dr. Kissinger will submit to the President for approval the draft reply to Souvanna already prepared by the State Department.[8]

[Omitted here are the minutes of the meeting.]

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[5] Souvanna requested that the United States provide logistical support for three Thai battalions. The text of the request, with Godley's strong endorsement, is in telegram 2080 from Vientiane, March 24. (Attached to a memorandum from Haig to Kissinger, March 24; ibid., NSC Files, Box 567, Country Files, Far East, Thailand, Thai Involvement in Laos)

[6] Kissinger's March 23 reply to Thanat stated: "we are not convinced that the proposed deployment of Thai troops additional to those now serving in Laos with Sierra Romeo artillery battery would be effective at this time. It is our current assessment that the fate of Long Tieng is not likely to be decided by the introduction of such additional ground troops." Kissinger suggested that Thanat send a regimental combat team to an advanced base, possibly Udorn, for future contingencies. (Letter from Kissinger to Thanat, March 23, attached to a March 25 memorandum from Haig to Kissinger; ibid., Box 546, Laos, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970)

[7] See footnote 2, Document 207.

[8] This draft letter informed Souvanna that, "It does not seem to me, however, that at this time the introduction of Thai ground forces to Long Tieng would best serve to counter North Vietnamese attack and lead to stabilization of the situation in Laos." The draft offered "airlift" of Thai troops should Laos and Thailand make their own arrangements, but warned it would not be possible to keep such a deployment secret. The draft suggested that a regimental combat team be positioned at an advanced base in Thailand ready for deployment. (Draft letter attached to a memorandum from Haig to Kissinger, March 24; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 567, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Thai Involvement in Laos) The draft letter was approved by Nixon and sent to Souvanna minus the caveat about publicity in telegram 43329 to Vientiane, March 25. Godley delivered it on March 25 to Souvanna who was "visibly disappointed." (Telegram 2092 from Vientiane, March 25, attached to a March 25 memorandum from Haig to Kissinger; ibid., Box 546, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970) The letter as sent to Souvanna on March 25 is ibid.

210. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 24, 1970.

SUBJECT

Chinese Road Construction in Laos

A MACV assessment of Chinese Communist road construction in northern Laos makes the following key points:

—Peking is using a 1961 agreement with Souvanna Phouma to justify its present road construction. By the end of the current dry season in mid-May, a motorable road connecting southern China and Thailand should be completed via two routes: one completely by-passing North Vietnam and the other transiting North Vietnam.

—The Laos government has never exercised effective control over the areas through which either of the routes pass.

—There is evidence that the Chinese are consolidating their position along the road network and are determined to protect and expand their road system. While it is not yet clear if the Chinese and Pathet Lao are formally cooperating in the venture, it is certain that the Pathet Lao are trying to bring the road building area under Communist control.

—Chinese objectives appear to be both tactical and strategic in nature: in the short term, to demonstrate support for North Vietnam's war effort in Laos; and over the long haul, counter US and Soviet influence in Laos.

—In summation, the road construction represents a determined Chinese effort to consolidate and extend her influence in a traditional area of Chinese interest. (See map at Tab A)[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; [*code word not declassified*]. On March 19 Kissinger sent Rogers and Laird a memorandum informing them that plans to use Lao guerrilla units, Lao T–28 aircraft, and U.S. tactical aircraft as necessary to disrupt and forestall Chinese road construction south of Muong Houn should be "held in abeyance" and the two cabinet officers should notify the President when they believed conditions had changed so as to justify taking such action. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS) In an undated memorandum to the President, which was not sent, Kissinger justified the decision on the grounds that the Lao Government seemed less concerned about the threat, Chinese road construction was not progressing rapidly, airlift resources were needed for the defense and possible evacuation of Long Tieng, and the public was much more aware of events in Laos. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970)

[2] Attached but not reproduced here.

211. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, March 25, 1970, 6:30–7:30 p.m.

SUBJECT

Thai Troops in Laos

PARTICIPATION

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Marshall Green

Defense
David Packard

CIA
General Cushman
Thomas Karamessines
William Nelson

JCS
General Earle Wheeler

NSC Staff
John Holdridge
Richard Kennedy

Dr. Kissinger said he had again been with the President,[2] who wasn't inclined to let Laos go down the drain and let the record show he had disregarded the appeals of the King of Laos, Souvanna and

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Colonel Behr sent this record and the minutes of six other WSAG meetings on Laos and Cambodia to Kissinger on March 31. A note on Behr's transmittal memorandum reads: "HAK has seen. 4/6." The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] Kissinger met with the President and Helms from 12:30 to 1:04 p.m., with the President and Haldeman from 1:05 to 1:31 p.m., and alone with the President from 4:23 to 4:29 p.m. on March 25. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, Daily Diary) In his meeting with the President and Kissinger, Helms stressed the need for Thai troops at Long Tieng, and covered the military situation, Souvanna's state of mind, the possibility of a rightist coup if Long Tieng fell, and warned that Thai battalions could only delay the fall. Helms continued: "Apologizing for my vulgarity, I told the President that I realized this was a 'shitty' decision to ask a President of the United States to make but in light of all the factors it seemed a desirable thing to do at this juncture. He [Nixon] commented that it had been necessary to do a number of unpleasant things recently and that this was one more that could be taken on as well." (Memorandum for the record by Helms, March 25; Central Intelligence Agency Files, DCI (Helms) Files, Job 80–B01285A, Helms Chron, 1 Jan–30 June 1970) Records of the other meetings have not been found.

Thanat.[3] Mr. Johnson noted that the group had just been discussing the alternatives and outlined them for Dr. Kissinger. First, acceding to the original Thai and Lao request, [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]; second, agreeing to move the Thai battalion in and providing pay and allowances, but as openly declared Thai forces in Thai uniforms (Mr. Packard remarked that this would make little difference in terms of US public opinion); third, making a firm commitment to induce the Thai RCT under certain conditions, namely, that they be declared as Thai in the same way as the Thai forces in Vietnam, and if Long Tieng is lost and the North Vietnam forces advance; fifth [fourth], stopping short of a firm commitment by assembling the RCT and beefing it up; and sixth [fifth], reaffirming the previous position we have taken in response to the Thai and Lao requests. In the last two alternatives, we would lay every emphasis on what we were doing in the air by way of showing that we were not standing idly by.

Dr. Kissinger asked what advantage there would be in declaring the Thai presence. Mr. Johnson replied that there would be an advantage in the U.S. showing that we were not continuing to fight a secret war, but rather that the Thais felt strongly enough to take a clear stand. To a question from Dr. Kissinger as to whether the Thai would be willing to declare their forces, Mr. Johnson said that this remained to be seen. With respect to Long Tieng, they were reluctant, but if the RCT crossed the border, he didn't see how they could be expected to act in any other way. However, they had not discussed this matter in connection with the RCT. General Wheeler noted that this raised the question of our SEATO commitments. The only excuse we could use to justify putting Thai troops into Laos was that they considered a threat existed to Thailand. Mr. Johnson added that the question would apply more realistically to the Taksin Plan. An important element in the RCT idea was that we could say we were not making a commitment of US ground forces. He hoped though that we could finesse the Taksin Plan being implemented.

Dr. Kissinger stated that he was interested in General Wheeler's question, and wondered if it were not important for the Thai forces to receive sheep-dipping. If they were to go in as regular forces, it would be difficult to avoid involving SEATO. On the other hand, we could claim that SEATO did not apply, and use this justification to handle Senatorial criticism.

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[3] The King of Laos told Godley that he "ardently hoped we (the U.S. Government) would be able to assist the Thais in assisting the Lao in a most discreet manner." (Backchannel message from Godley, enclosed in a memorandum from Karamessines to Kissinger, March 25; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970) Regarding Souvanna's request, see footnote 5, Document 214; for Thanat's request, see footnote 2, Document 207.

Mr. Green observed that the more covert the operation, the more suspect it would be, and the more press criticism would arise. He thought that if the operation were limited, we could get away with it, but if it were larger it wouldn't jell.

Dr. Kissinger asked how large a force was involved. Mr. Green spoke of a regimental sized unit; Mr. Karamessines explained that the total force would involve 770 infantry plus 100 support troops.

Dr. Kissinger noted that the SEATO commitment would be more severe if we waited until Long Tieng fell and the North Vietnamese started to advance afterwards. A brief discussion ensued on the state of the road (Route 52) between Long Tieng and Route 13, in which it was agreed that the road did not go all the way through. Dr. Kissinger hoped that AID had stopped construction on the road, and Mr. Green declared that Ambassador Godley could see to this point.

Reverting to the question of US public opinion, Mr. Johnson thought that we could get away with one Thai battalion in Long Tieng, but nothing more. General Wheeler agreed, saying that this was something under 1,000 men, but if additional battalions were to cross the river we couldn't get away with it. There was some talk about moving in two BCTs from the Black Panthers in Vietnam, which would bring headlines in every paper in the country.

Dr. Kissinger called for a discussion of the Long Tieng situation, and asked General Wheeler for a military judgment on what effect there would be if, for example, a Thai battalion were put in as of 9:00 A.M. the next day. General Wheeler replied that even with another 1,000 men he could not guarantee Long Tieng could be held against the forces which the North Vietnamese had available. These forces had been ordered to take the position. They had seized an outpost yesterday which Vang Pao had retaken. There was another North Vietnamese division along Route 7, the 312th Division, which had not been brought in at all. If Hanoi were willing to pay the price, the additional Thai men would be no guarantee. They would, however, add to the chances that Long Tieng could be held.

Dr. Kissinger wondered how long Long Tieng could be held, and how long it would take to move the 312th Division into the area. General Wheeler estimated that if the unit could be brought in within four days, they would be doing well. Mr. Nelson thought that four days would be very rapid and Mr. Karamessines estimated that a week would be more likely. The distance it would need to cover was about 40 miles.

Mr. Johnson asked General Wheeler if the North Vietnamese had the ability to close the airport. General Wheeler replied affirmatively. If the enemy seized the high ground, he could make it very unpleasant. General Cushman referred to the 122 mm rockets in the enemy's

possession. According to Mr. Johnson, this would make it difficult to move in supplies and evacuate personnel.

Dr. Kissinger asked if 1,000 men would be enough to stand up against what the enemy has near Long Tieng now less the additional Division. General Wheeler set the North Vietnamese forces at 2,000 to 2,400 men, to which Dr. Kissinger speculated whether the introduction of 1,000 men before the enemy could increase his forces would add up to a fair chance that the position could be held. Mr. Nelson set the Lao forces in the immediate vicinity of Long Tieng at 1,700 men in the inner perimeter, with another 1,800 in the outskirts.

Dr. Kissinger questioned whether we would know of the movement of the other North Vietnamese Division sufficiently far in advance so as to have time for an orderly retreat. General Cushman replied that for this we would need more ARDF. General Wheeler stated that the North Vietnamese were putting in a land line between the Plain of Jars and the Sam Thong/Long Tieng area, hence we might or might not know. Presumably the forces in Vang Pao's small outposts might be able to give us some warning.

Dr. Kissinger declared that there were two arguments in favor of moving the Thai forces: (1) we might be able to hold Long Tieng, and (2) we might prevent the disintegration of Vang Pao's army and give him a chance for an orderly retreat. By preventing a rout, we would keep his forces in the field. He wondered to what extent the Thai battalion would contribute. General Wheeler referred to the "shrill appeals" which we had received from virtually everyone in the field. The introduction of the Thai forces would serve as a considerable morale factor for Vang Pao and his troops. The arrival of Sierra Romeo IX had exerted a very favorable effect on the defenders. Putting 1,000 men in would not guarantee holding Long Tieng, but would have a value in terms of the morale factor which could allow Vang Pao to hang on longer. From a morale point of view, he was inclined to take the chance. This would raise the cost to the enemy. This was not the military decision, though, but a political one involving US public opinion and the heat which the President would face. Dr. Kissinger observed that it would be nothing like the heat we would face if we were to lose Vietnam.

Mr. Packard said that Secretary Laird was against the move. There was a chance that we would be able to get over the immediate problem posed by the Church Amendment satisfactorily,[4] but there might be restrictions on what we might do in other parts of the world.

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[4] The Senate voted on December 16 (73–17) to prohibit committing U.S. ground forces to Laos or Thailand in an amendment by Senator Frank Church (D-Idaho) to the Defense Appropriations bill. It was included in the final bill as passed by the House and Senate on December 18 and approved by the President as an "endorsement" of his Asian policy. (*Congressional Quarterly Almanac,* Vol. XXV, 1969, pp. 454, 462–463, 998–999)

General Cushman supported putting the Thai battalion into Long Tieng, adding that he would be happier if we could send in 2,000 men. Vang Pao's forces needed a shot to their morale. If they didn't get it, they might fold up and not stop their retreat until they reached Sayaboury. He agreed with General Wheeler that the decision was essentially political and that militarily speaking the addition of one or two thousand men would not guarantee a defense if the other North Vietnamese Division came in. A lot depended on the weather, and the air sortie rate we could maintain. He anticipated that we could get an intelligence picture of the other division from our ARDF resources.

Dr. Kissinger asked how quickly the attack could come. General Cushman said that the enemy was probing now in a very methodical way, and had three months' time until the rains came.

Dr. Kissinger asked for Mr. Johnson's views. Mr. Johnson indicated that his previous objections still stood. On the military side, if the enemy got into a position where he could close the air field, we might face a real disaster there. Would the more people we brought in invite a bigger disaster? General Cushman acknowledged that the enemy could close the air field but said that we could use our air support against the enemy gun positions—the situation was not like that at Khesanh.

Mr. Nelson said that air drops could be affected.

Dr. Kissinger asked if gun ships had been brought in, and General Wheeler spoke of the addition of three AC–130 gun ships and 13 extra hours of ARDF.

Mr. Johnson said that he was still bearish about putting a battalion into Long Tieng but recognized the situation in both Thailand and Laos in the light of the new Souvanna appeal. He, therefore, proposed beefing up what we had said about putting the RCT in, and doing what was necessary to make it an effective force as quickly as possible. It was now scattered, and needed training. Rather than commiting Thai troops now, he would rather see an effective Thai force built up.

Dr. Kissinger summed up the Long Tieng case, saying that if 1,000 men were moved in before the North Vietnamese launched a full-scale attack, this would increase the probability that it could be held. The result might be that the enemy would need to move in another Division, which would create delay. The Meo morale would also be stiffened, and to the extent that we attach importance to maintaining the Meo, would increase the chances of an organized retreat. Against, we might move into a Dienbienphu, with an enormous political headache which might multiply the political restrictions on our movements. Mr. Packard said that he wanted to amplify Dr. Kissinger's last statement to apply it to Vietnam. We would be restricted from doing things in South Vietnam. We were doing well there but needed more time; if we

lost this time we would lose the whole ball game. Dr. Kissinger said that there was a contrary argument—how was Hanoi going to interpret events if it launched an attack contrary to the 1962 Accords and we pulled out our troops in April as scheduled. Was there a psychological ball game? The President was weighing this, and the implications if the Vietnamization process were to get kicked over. Mr. Packard argued that until Long Tieng fell we had other responses. We could hit North Vietnam, and if we wanted to send a message this would be more direct than introducing a few Thai troops. Dr. Kissinger said that in talking to the President he would try to reflect the discussions here.

Mr. Green wanted to bring up some additional cons. If the Thai put in 1,300 men, this would be a big commitment; if they were defeated and retreated, there would be a serious effect on Thai morale. As a related matter, the enemy was bringing up reserves, and would be tempted to give a good blow against the Thai to rile up the US scene. If the Thai forces retreated to Site 272 the North Vietnamese would be tempted to follow. Unger had reported in an earlier message that the RCT was not accustomed to functioning as a unit and would need two months to be upgraded.[5] Dr. Kissinger asked if Unger's position hadn't been reversed. It was his impression that in the Udorn meeting there was a unanimous recommendation that the battalion should go in.[6] Mr. Green acknowledged that there might have been a reversal. However, the message had not come from Unger but from Admiral McCain and reflected the consensus.[7] Dr. Kissinger requested the State representatives to query Unger as to his personal views and get a response by the following morning.[8] He was interested in how Unger would weigh the demoralizing factor of turning down two requests from the Thai and Lao against the other considerations.

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[5] Not found.

[6] See footnote 4, Document 207.

[7] Regarding Unger's message, see footnote 6 above; McCain's consensus message has not been found. The Station Chief in Vientiane also attended the Udorn meeting. He reported that McCain, Rosson, Godley, Unger, and he and their staffs reached the conclusion at Udorn on March 20 that "only ground troops supported by heavy TACAIR and ARCLIGHT strikes could hold Long Tieng." A negative decision "would take the last bit of fight out" of Vang Pao. The fall of Long Tieng would cause Souvanna to negotiate from weakness in the projected talks with the Pathet Lao. (Text of a backchannel message from Vientiane, March 24, enclosed in a memorandum from Karamessines to Kissinger, March 25; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970)

[8] Unger sent Johnson a long backchannel message at 12:42Z, March 26, in which he answered a series of questions posed by Johnson. In summarizing the message for Kissinger, Haig stated, "I draw the conclusion that Unger favors the introduction of the Thai battalion if the situation on the ground so dictates it. He has politely cut through some of the specious Johnson arguments while not confronting them head on." (Memorandum from Haig to Kissinger, March 26, with backchannel message from Unger; ibid.)

Mr. Nelson submitted one additional pro—the coup problem in Laos, i.e. if there were a serious defeat, what the rightists might do against Souvanna for not having pulled it off. Dr. Kissinger proposed to leave this particular issue aside for the moment, and raised the problem of how to implement a move should the President decide to take action. General Wheeler and Mr. Karamessines agreed that airlift was on hand, and that the troops could be moved as ready. Dr. Kissinger asked if we needed to go to Souvanna and Thanat with a plan. Mr. Johnson replied that no detailed plan was needed, and that JUSMAG and the Thai could work out the operation on the ground. He did not know the time factor though, and would need a judgment from Bangkok. Dr. Kissinger asked for a detailed plan by 8:30 AM March 26.[9] He wondered also if a diplomatic scenario was required, and Mr. Johnson replied negatively since we had already talked to the Thai and the Lao.

Dr. Kissinger wondered what the next step would be if the decision was not to go in now. General Wheeler advocated assembling the Thai RCT in Udorn to get ready to move at a later time. His information on the RCT was that it needed a shake-down period to get supplied and for the troops to get used to one another. This would be doing something positive. Mr. Johnson agreed, spoke again on the possibility the Thai might want to pull the Black Panthers from Vietnam, and raised the question of the Thai asking us for more equipment now. General Wheeler stated that JUSMAG and the Thai could provide equipment from stocks now on hand.

Ambassador Johnson thought that for our commitment to have meaning, we would need to support the Thai forces in Laos on the same basis as their forces in Vietnam. If Long Tieng fell, and the North Vietnamese advanced, this would give substance to our commitment.

Dr. Kissinger wondered, as a practical matter, whether the North Vietnamese could get as far as Vientiane before the rains. Mr. Johnson thought not. They have the problems of extended LOCs, and Cambodia. This would be a contingency which we would not need to implement. General Wheeler demurred, saying that U.S. troops could get

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Haig also informed Kissinger that Sullivan prepared a memorandum on March 26 that Johnson sent to Kissinger in which Sullivan argued that the war in Military Region II had never been about territory. The Meo (Hmong) "have traditionally fought to keep their tribe alive, rather than to retain their real estate. They are essentially nomadic." Sullivan noted that the lowland Lao were far more interested in territory as a buffer against North Vietnam, and that Souvanna's plea was not new and the "lowland Lao military officers put him up to it." (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS)

[9] On March 26 an unattributed paper outlined an operational plan to move the Thai battalion from Udorn to Long Tieng. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 101, Vietnam Subject Files, Sensitive/Souvanna Phouma/Long Tieng)

from Long Tieng to Vientiane before the rains. Mr. Packard said that the question was not so much as whether they could get to Vientiane but whether they would. General Cushman referred to the possibility of putting the one battalion in, and pulling the rest of the RCT together.

Dr. Kissinger raised the proposition of telling Souvanna that we had considered his request, made an analysis, and concluded that the most useful role for the Thai troops would be to assemble them as a RCT, offer support. We were also prepared to agree to immediate consultations with him and the Thai; after the fall of Long Tieng, we would move the troops to an agreed place, and support them on the same basis as in Vietnam. Was this rational? Mr. Packard said it was rational, but on political grounds was serious. Mr. Johnson agreed that this was a serious commitment, and hoped that we would not be called on to implement it. Mr. Kissinger noted that it was hard to play "chicken" if we were not prepared to play the game. Mr. Packard said that if Long Tieng fell, then the President had a better test of whether Laos was going to fall. Dr. Kissinger noted that the President had already rejected the lesser options which had been proposed.

The group discussed briefly the time required to move the battalion from Udorn into Laos. Dr. Kissinger suggested that General Cushman work this out together with Defense. General Cushman agreed. Mr. Johnson reaffirmed that he would get Unger's assessment. Dr. Kissinger promised to get the pros and cons together by 8:30 AM March 26 and see where we stood. Dr. Kissinger said he recognized that participation of the Thai might increase the North Vietnamese intention to attack, but this might decrease if it got us involved. He outlined the pros and cons of the second case: *Pro*—It would avoid a Dienbienphu, keep the Thai from being overrun, show Thanat and Souvanna that we were responsive, deal with the domestic situation by showing that we had waited until enemy intentions were unambiguous and had exercised enormous restraint in the face of strong pleas. Moreover there was the chance we might not have to act. *Con*—The danger was that the action would not be enough to keep Souvanna from stampeding, and it would be harder to avoid involving SEATO and the Taksin Plan because it would bring the threat closer to the Thai border and our commitment would be larger. Was this a fair assessment?

A discussion ensued on the consequences of a Thai disaster at Long Tieng, as opposed to whether a worse one might ensue at Vang Vien two weeks from now if no attempt were made to defend Long Tieng. Also, would the injection of the Thai give the Meo an opportunity for an orderly retreat to Site 272?

The meeting concluded with a remark by General Wheeler that Laos could not be defended from Laos and that other actions were needed if our positions were to be held.

212. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, March 26, 1970, 8:53–9:22 a.m.

SUBJECT

Laos

PARTICIPANTS

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Marshall Green

Defense
David Packard

CIA
General Cushman
Thomas H. Karamessines
William Nelson

JCS
General Earle Wheeler

NSC Staff
B/Gen. Haig
Col. Richard Kennedy
Col. Robert M. Behr
John H. Holdridge
Keith Guthrie

Summary of Conclusions

State and OSD were opposed to moving a Thai battalion to Long Tieng. JCS considered that the movement was justified for military reasons, but that the issue involved questions that were primarily political. CIA favored the movement.

Kissinger: I want to go over the two options again and to list pros and cons as I see them. First, however, does anyone have any additional thoughts?

Wheeler: We could move a TSQ 96 radar control facility to Udorn. This has an effective range of 150 miles and would make possible accuracies of 600 feet with B–52 strikes.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Colonel Behr sent this record and the minutes of six other WSAG meetings on Laos and Cambodia to Kissinger on March 31. A note on Behr's transmittal memorandum reads: "HAK has seen. 4/6." The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

Johnson: By doing this, we would be able to tell Souvanna we were taking steps to improve air capabilities.

Kissinger: Have we heard from Unger?

Johnson: Not yet. I have a phone call in to him.

Kissinger: Did anyone have any second thoughts during the night?

Packard: We would prefer not to put Thai troops into Laos now.

Kissinger: Are we in a position to make a commitment to move Thai troops?

Cushman: We can move 24 hours after a commitment is made. The troops would be in place 36 hours after approval is received.

Kissinger: Option 1 is to airlift a Thai battalion of 600 men to Long Tieng. From what was just said here, I understand this can be done in less than 48 hours, as opposed to earlier estimates of 72 to 96 hours. The advantages would be:

1) If it is in position before an all-out North Vietnamese attack takes place, it would increase the possibility of holding Long Tieng against the enemy forces now deployed. But the Thai battalion would not give us assurance that Long Tieng could be held.
2) It would delay the fall of Long Tieng for the time required for the enemy to bring forward the division now held in reserve.

Wheeler: Let's not call it a division. It would be better described as "elements."

Packard: We can't be sure the Thai battalion would hold against presently deployed enemy forces.

Wheeler: We said it would "increase the possibility of"—not that it would assure holding Long Tieng.

Kissinger: To continue with the advantages:

3) It would permit stabilizing for the time being the situation with regard to friendly forces at Long Tieng.
4) It would improve the chances for an organized retreat from Long Tieng and, therefore, of preserving the Meo as a fighting force.
5) It would be a signal to the North Vietnamese that we did not intend to let a threat to Laotian sovereignty go unchallenged.
6) It would strengthen Souvanna against coup-minded rightist elements.

The disadvantages would be:

1) Long Tieng might fall anyway. The debacle would be more serious than if we had not introduced Thais.
2) It would raise a strong outcry in this country. This would increase inhibitions on US operations in the area, including air operations in Laos.
3) If the Thais were involved in a defeat, it would be a severe blow to their morale.

Is there anything else to add?

Johnson: The Dienbienphu factor, that is, building up Long Tieng as a turning point of the struggle in Laos.

Kissinger: The President's preference [for putting Thai troops in Laos][2] has not abated.

Cushman: I doubt the Lao, Meo, and Thai could fight a Dienbienphu-type battle.

Kissinger: The President wants to know whether, if we move in a Thai battalion, the enemy could then isolate it.

Wheeler: Sure they could but it would be a difficult operation. I don't think the Meo and Thai would sit in Long Tieng for a long siege. They would just fade into the bush.

Johnson: I am still worried about building Long Tieng up as the key battle for control of Laos.

Kissinger: The President also has to weigh the deterrent effect of the Thai forces against the possibility that their presence will stimulate a North Vietnamese attack.

Green: That is a real possibility.

Wheeler: But just a possibility.

Green: Our Lao specialists feel it is an important consideration.

Kissinger: Option 2 would be to tell Souvanna and Thanat we are willing to prepare a full RCT of three battalions for introduction into Laos at a later date. We would give a firm commitment for this. We would propose arrangements for consulting on when and where to use the Thai troops.

The arguments in favor are:

1) It would avoid the danger of a disaster involving substantial Thai forces at Long Tieng (although there are [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] Thais there now).
2) It would permit a favorable response to Souvanna and Thanat.
3) Our domestic position would be better. We would not be taking action until North Vietnamese intentions became unambiguous. We would have shown restraint in the face of earlier earnest appeals.
4) Since it is not certain the North Vietnamese intend to go beyond Long Tieng, we might not have to move the Thais at all.

The arguments against are:

1) It would give Souvanna less than he has asked for. He might be led to seek a deal with the North Vietnamese.
2) If we wait, we may find ourselves in a worse position later. The North Vietnamese would have moved closer to the Thai border,

[2] Brackets in the source text.

effectiveness of the Lao forces would be less and our commitment would be greater. Our commitment would then be greater.

3) It would be difficult to avoid linkage to SEATO and Plan Taksin.

Johnson: The importance of some of those latter points against would be affected by whether or not we hold Long Tieng.

Kissinger: If Long Tieng falls, [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], we could still have another look about whether to make a formal commitment of Thai forces. Option 2 would commit us to the introduction of regular Thai units. If, under those circumstances, the Thais are overrun, we would face a real problem. One of the important policy decisions would be at what point to remove the Thais. Having [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] Thais in Long Tieng would be different from a formal commitment to move in a Thai regiment with U.S. assistance on the Vietnam model. If that were to fail, the Thais would really be dealt a blow. 800 [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] Thais, on the other hand, could be considered merely an extension of Sierra Romeo.

Green: There will still be a problem.

Kissinger: We have to consider whether to face it under existing conditions or with a formal commitment.

Packard: It would be better under existing conditions.

Kissinger: Option 2 gets us out of a decision on Long Tieng, but it gets us involved in a commitment.

Packard: We could avoid a firm commitment by telling Souvanna and Thanat we would "consult on appropriate steps".

Johnson: My draft is along these lines. It says that commitment of Thai troops is subject to agreement of the three governments. The message to Souvanna says: "Should the North Vietnamese army advance beyond Long Tieng, the United States is prepared to support the introduction of Thai forces into Laos at a time and under conditions agreed by the three governments".[3]

Kissinger: How naive is Souvanna?

Wheeler: Not particularly, according to our reports.

Johnson: Souvanna goes up and down. He has often cried wolf.

Kissinger: Since the other two governments already agree, we are the missing element. What we would be saying is "we will support if we will support".

Green: It will be interesting to have Unger's comments. The Thais are mortally afraid of making their involvement public. They fear what

[3] A copy of the draft has not been found; for text of the message as sent to Souvanna, see Document 214.

will happen if Thai troops are defeated under such circumstances. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]

Kissinger: If [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] forces are used, the Thais' need for our support may not eventuate.

Green: The Thais want to involve us. They consider that U.S. involvement is tantamount to victory.

Cushman: There already is a battalion of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] Thai artillery at Long Tieng.

Kissinger: (to Johnson) Your idea is that the North Vietnamese won't go beyond Long Tieng and that the Thais won't accept open involvement of their forces?

Johnson: Generally that is not a bad statement.

Green: Our caveats will go down hard with the Thais.

Johnson: We have asked Unger's views on a whole range of questions concerned with Thai involvement. (Reads sections of outgoing cable to Bangkok.)[4]

Kissinger: As put in that cable, I can tell what Unger's answer will be. What we want is his assessment of the overall political impact in Thailand of our refusal to support introduction of Thai troops.

Johnson: That was the first question in the cable.

Kissinger: The President has asked why we should acknowledge publicly moving Thai troops if we do so. Why not say that we are continuing Sierra Romeo?

Packard: It would be better not to move Thai troops.

Kissinger: This suggests that Thai involvement would have to be public. This terrifies the Thais.

Johnson: I cabled Unger that it would be virtually impossible to cover up Thai involvement.

Kissinger: We can't go much further without hearing from Unger.

Johnson: (to Kissinger) I'd like you to look at the drafts of responses we prepared.

Kissinger: Let me review individual positions [on sending a Thai battalion to Long Tieng].[5] Defense is against primarily for domestic political reasons. (Packard agrees.) State is against for reasons we have discussed.

Wheeler: On purely military grounds we are more for than against. However, we think it is not primarily a military problem; it is a political problem.

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[4] For the response to this cable, see footnote 8, Document 211. The outgoing message to Unger has not been found.

[5] These and the remaining brackets are in the source text.

Cushman: We consider that since some Thais are already there, the problems posed by Thai involvement already exist to some degree.

Kissinger: The President wants to make a decision by noon. He is leaning toward doing it [introducing a Thai battalion at Long Tieng].

Cushman: Can we go ahead with our plan [for movement of Thai unit to Long Tieng]?

Kissinger: I am not going to be a field marshal. I am assuming that you know how to move a Thai battalion from Udorn to Long Tieng. Given the time differential, we probably can't start moving till late this afternoon. I will be in touch with you. (to Johnson) I will read to you over the telephone the statement of pros and cons.

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213. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, March 26, 1970, 2:34–3:06 p.m.

SUBJECT

Laos

PARTICIPATION

Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger

State
Alexis Johnson
Marshall Green

CIA
Lt. Gen. Robert E. Cushman, Jr.
Thomas H. Karamessines
William Nelson

Defense
G. Warren Nutter
Lt. Col. Gerald H. Britten

JCS
Gen. Earle G. Wheeler

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Colonel Behr sent this record and the minutes of six other WSAG meetings on Laos and Cambodia to Kissinger on March 31. A note on Behr's transmittal memorandum reads: "HAK has seen. 4/6." The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

NSC Staff
Gen. Haig
Col. Kennedy
Col. Behr
Mr. Holdridge
Mr. Guthrie

Summary of Conclusions

1. The WSAG was informed of the President's decision to move a Thai battalion, on an unacknowledged basis, to Long Tieng as soon as possible in response to the requests received from Thanat and Souvanna.[2]

2. CIA will have responsibility for making arrangements to move the Thai battalion to Long Tieng. In carrying out the operation, it should be understood clearly that an orderly retreat from Long Tieng, if necessary, is considered preferable to encirclement.

3. The State Department will prepare and submit to Dr. Kissinger draft messages to Thanat and Souvanna informing them of the President's decision.[3]

a. The message to Thanat will take the form of a letter from Mr. Kissinger and will be delivered to Thanat by Ambassador Unger. The letter should include a statement to the effect that we consider it would be a prudent measure that a regimental combat team be assembled. We will not make any U.S. commitment to provide support for this regimental combat team or for its employment.

b. The message to Souvanna will take the form of a letter from the President. It will note the need for Souvanna to make a formal request to the Thai Government for the battalion. However, preparations to move the battalion will not be delayed awaiting confirmation that a Lao request has been transmitted to the Thais.

4. Our public position, on an if-asked basis, will be the same as that already taken on Sierra Romeo, namely, that reports of movement of Thai troops to Laos are exaggerated and that the question is one for the Thai and Lao Governments, to whom inquiries should be directed. We will ask the Thai and Lao Governments to adopt a position of no comment in response to inquiries. We will urge the Thai and Lao Governments not to deny that additional Thai troops have been sent to Laos.

5. It was the consensus of the WSAG that the Administration should take the initiative in informing the Senate Foreign Relations

[2] On March 28, 800 Thai troops were airlifted from Udorn to Long Tieng and took up positions in the Long Tieng defensive perimeter. (Memorandum from Karamessines to Kissinger, March 28; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 101, Vietnam Subject Files, Sensitive, Souvanna Phouma/Long Tieng)

[3] See Document 214 and footnote 6 thereto.

Committee of the movement of the Thai battalion to Laos. The WSAG recommended that the Committee be told that in response to requests from the Governments of Thailand and Laos, we are assisting with the movement of a few hundred more Thai troops to Laos. The new movement should be explained as an extension of the Sierra Romeo program about which the Committee has already been informed. Mr. Kissinger will seek the views of Bryce Harlow and will ask the President's approval of the WSAG proposal.

6. All operational communications involving the movement of the Thai battalion are to be handled through CIA channels. Other communications are to be transmitted through the most secure channels. Knowledge of the movement is to be restricted within each agency.

7. The letters which the President has already approved to signatories of the Geneva Convention other than Great Britain and the Soviet Union are to be dispatched.[4]

8. The WSAG and Laos Working Groups will revise their contingency plans to take into account the President's decision to move a Thai battalion to Laos.[5]

[Omitted here are the minutes of the meeting.]

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[4] See footnote 5, Document 204.

[5] Kissinger talked on the telephone with Nixon who was in Key Biscayne, Florida, at 5:10 p.m. on March 26. The portion of the conversation dealing with Laos follows: "P: And the Thai battalion, are we going to get them in there? K: That's done also. P: And there's going to be no announcement. We are just going to do it. We don't have to explain it. The Thais are defending their own country. Hell, I would do that, wouldn't you Henry? K: I had a long talk with Alex Johnson and he feels the same way. P: He's a nice guy." (Memorandum of telephone conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, March 26; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1007, Haig Special File, Vietnam Files, Vol. V [2 of 2])

214. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Thailand[1]

Washington, March 27, 1970, 0013Z.

044847. Eyes Only for Ambassador. Ref: State 44787.[2]

Following is text of letter for immediate delivery by Ambassador to Foreign Minister:

"Mr. Foreign Minister:

"I refer to my letter of March 23[3] in response to yours of March 22[4] concerning the proposal that Thai infantry forces be dispatched to Laos to assist in the defense of Long Tieng. Meanwhile President Nixon has received a second letter from Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma[5] urging this course of action and I assume that he has addressed a similar request to your Prime Minister.

"The President, after careful consideration, has decided to meet the request, it being understood that the Thai infantry forces involved will be a battalion of Thai troops, some 700 or 800 strong, now in Udorn.[6] It

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, DEF 19 THAI–LAOS. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Drafted and cleared by Johnson and approved by Eliot and Kissinger. In a private letter on March 26 Kissinger informed Thanat that as a "one time exception and because of the need to initiate coordination and local action promptly," he was responding to the Thai offer of troops through Ambassador Unger. (Text of special channel message to Thanat, March 26; enclosed in a memorandum from Haig to Karamessines, March 26; ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 101, Vietnam Subject Files, Sensitive, Souvanna Phouma/Long Tieng)

[2] See footnote 6 below.

[3] See footnote 6, Document 209.

[4] See footnote 2, Document 207.

[5] Telegram 2130 from Vientiane, March 25, contained the text of a second letter, also dated March 25 to Nixon. In it Souvanna wrote: "Without any doubt the movement of Thai troops towards northern Thailand might, to a certain extent, aid us, but I fear that it would be too late to stop the enemy offensive which is becoming more and more powerful. In my opinion and that of my immediate advisers, our defensive base at Long Tieng is the key to the defense of all central Laos. If this base were to fall it would have a disastrous psychological effect and would open to the enemy a way to Vang Vieng and Vientiane. It is for the foregoing reasons, Mr. President, that I ask you to reconsider your decision in the light of current circumstances." Godley commented that the Embassy had been discouraging talk of a rightist coup in Laos, but if Long Tieng fell, Souvanna would be in a "most difficult position." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 546, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. IV, 1 February 1970–31 March 1970)

[6] Telegram 44787 to Vientiane, March 27, transmitted the text of a letter from Nixon to Souvanna informing him that the United States would support the airlift of a Thai battalion into Long Tieng. (Ibid., Box 101, Vietnam Subject Files, Sensitive, Souvanna Phouma/Long Tieng) In telegram 2179 from Vientiane, March 27, Godley reported he gave the President's letter to Souvanna at 11 a.m. local time that day and Souvanna's "face burst into a smile and he was obviously most relieved." (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, DEF 19 THAI–LAOS)

is further understood that these forces will be moved as soon as possible to Long Tieng to assist in its defense and that the United States will provide material and logistic support for these Thai forces on generally the same basis and through the same channels as it does for the Sierra Romeo IX unit now at Long Tieng. I also want you to know that we are taking immediate steps to improve the effectiveness of our air operations in support of your forces.

"You will recall that in my letter of March 23 I said that perhaps the best move that could be made at this time would be for you to assemble a RCT at an advance base like Udorn and that it be trained and readied against the contingency of further moves the North Vietnamese may make. I still believe this would be a prudent course although one battalion will now be moved to Long Tieng.

"The President trusts that our two Governments and that of Laos will maintain the closest contacts and cooperative relationships in the defense of Long Tieng and the President is hopeful that these measures can help to hold this important position.

"Ambassador Unger will be in close touch with you in regard to any questions you may have or issues that may arise.[7]

"With warm regards, Henry A. Kissinger."

Rogers

[7] In telegram 3639 from Bangkok, March 27, Unger reported that he delivered Kissinger's letter to Thanat who would forward it to Prime Minister Thanom. (Ibid.) In a private channel message to Kissinger, March 27, Thanat wrote that Thailand wished to convey to Nixon Thailand's deep appreciation and believed the decision would strengthen the defense of Laos and Thai security. Thanat stated his government took note of the understanding stated in the message transmitted from Unger and "We shall abide by it." (Enclosed in memorandum from Karamessines to Kissinger, March 27; ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 101, Vietnam Subject Files, Sensitive, Souvanna Phouma/Long Tieng)

215. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, March 27, 1970.

SUBJECT

B–52 Operations in Cambodia

In response to your request for an examination of the usefulness of B–52 strikes against base camps used by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong in Cambodia,[2] Secretary Laird has provided a report (Tab A)[3] based on three assessments made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff since August 1969 when weekly B–52 strikes were commenced. In their evaluations the Joint Chiefs and MACV have strongly affirmed the value of the strikes and stated that B–52 raids in Cambodia:

—continue to produce extensive damage to enemy facilities and losses of enemy troops and matériel.
—have resulted in a decrease in North Vietnamese and Viet Cong activity levels in the immediate strike areas.
—are an essential and logical ingredient in the overall interdiction campaign applied against the enemy.
—have preempted and reduced enemy operations.
—have a direct bearing on the success of Vietnamization.
—may have played a significant role in the recent political changes in Cambodia.
—are sustainable in spite of operating costs and political risks.

Although mindful of some political risks involved, Secretary Laird concurs with the assessment of the Joint Chiefs and MACV that these operations are effective. He points out that during his recent trip to Vietnam both Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams told him that these raids have been "one of the most telling operations in the entire war."

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 104, Vietnam Subject Files, Menu Strikes, November. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only. Sent for information.

[2] On a February 18 routine briefing memorandum on results of B–52 strikes in Cambodia from Kissinger, Nixon wrote: "Do we need to examine the usefulness of continued strikes?" On March 3 Kissinger asked Laird for an analysis of the menu bombing and whether it should continue. (Both ibid.)

[3] Tab A, a March 24 memorandum from Laird to the President, is attached but not printed.

Secretary Laird expects to have a more detailed report in the not-too-distant future.[4]

[4] On March 27 Kissinger sent the President a report that COSVN reportedly had issued orders to place military forces on alert and evacuate ordnance, food, and medicine to Vietnam to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Cambodian military. Units were to remain stationary and avoid clashes with Cambodian troops. Also included was the fact that there was no evidence of wholesale movement of units from Cambodian sanctuaries into South Vietnam. In fact, the border area remained quiet. Nixon wrote the following note: "K. Step up menu series immediately (no appeal)." There is a note in an unknown handwriting that this was "Done." (National Archives,Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 104, Vietnam Subject Files, Menu Strikes, November)

216. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 1, 1970.

SUBJECT

Hanoi's Current Options in Cambodia

Recent North Vietnamese statements and actions on Cambodia still do not clearly indicate exactly how Hanoi now plans to proceed there. Hanoi has not yet closed any of its options and is apparently still attempting to assess developments before committing itself irrevocably to any course of action.

The North Vietnamese government has made one official statement on the Cambodian situation. That statement endorsed Prince Sihanouk's call for resistance to the new government, and it accused the new government of being a "servant of the United States." It also, however, contained elements of caution. Although it said that "the Vietnamese people wholeheartedly support the Khmer people in this just struggle until final victory," it repeatedly indicated that Hanoi saw this

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 145, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, April 1, 1970. Secret; Nodis; Sensitive. Sent for information. Haig signed for Kissinger. A note on the memorandum indicates that the President saw it on April 3. This memorandum was based on an analysis prepared by Holdridge on March 26 entitled, "What Hanoi Might Now Do About Cambodia." Kissinger wrote the following note on it: "Excellent job. HK." On March 31 Holdridge sent Kissinger this memorandum to the President with the recommendation that Kissinger sign it. (Ibid.)

primarily as a Cambodian struggle. It thus suggested that there were limits on Hanoi's overt involvement in the struggle, if not on its covert support.

Hanoi Objectives: Hanoi's ultimate objective in Cambodia is to have that country controlled by a government subservient or at least friendly to Hanoi. Its current short-run objective is more limited: to use Cambodia as a sanctuary and supply area for Communist forces in South Vietnam, either with the cooperation of the Phnom Penh government or in defiance of it.

Now Complicated: Prince Sihanouk's attitude while he was in power served short-run North Vietnamese purposes because it permitted them to use Cambodia as a sanctuary. Premier Lon Nol's call on the Communist forces to leave obviously complicates Hanoi's prospects in South Vietnam. Hanoi cannot win the war in South Vietnam under its current strategy without making use of Cambodia. Since Hanoi is still thoroughly committed to taking over South Vietnam, it must do something either to change the Cambodian government or its position.

May See Opportunity: Although Hanoi is probably unhappy about the course of events in Phnom Penh, which have complicated its ability to use the Cambodian sanctuary, it may also hope to use these events to advance its position, not only to safeguard the sanctuaries but also to accelerate the development of a Communist or pro-Communist government in Phnom Penh. (We do not know what Communist role in Cambodia was agreed in Peking between Prince Sihanouk and Hanoi Premier Pham Van Dong.)

Hanoi Options: To regain its sanctuaries as well as supply lines and perhaps to bring about a favorable change of government in Phnom Penh, Hanoi now has the following options:

Option A: Rapid use of Communist military forces against Phnom Penh, reinstalling Sihanouk or some other government favorable to the Communists.

Advantages: Such a course has a number of advantages. It could give Hanoi control of Cambodia, provide a secure rear for the war in South Vietnam, and forestall the Cambodian government's effort to consolidate its control.

Disadvantages: However, such an overt action might trigger a U.S. response in Cambodia or perhaps even against North Vietnam, and it might also trigger South Vietnamese military operations against Communist forces and bases in Cambodia. There has also been little preparatory political work for such a move, and Hanoi usually precedes its military moves by political efforts.

Option B: Use of Communist forces and cadres to foment dissension and insurrection, leading to a "people's war" and providing a front for Communist military moves. Perhaps split Cambodia, as Laos is split.

Advantages: This course preserves some advantage of speed, even if not quite as much as Option A. Unlike Option A, it provides a native screen for the Communist forces and makes it harder for the U.S. and the GVN to become involved.

Disadvantages: By relying on Cambodian political forces and native support, Hanoi delays gaining control of Phnom Penh and may give the government time to consolidate itself. Moreover, such a course places greater reliance on Sihanouk's backing, since his support is essential to its success, and he is a mercurial friend. It would probably not give Hanoi early access to the port of Sihanoukville.

Option C: Classical "people's war," developing a Communist political infrastructure, developing contacts with local dissidents, forming a "liberation front" or "government in exile," and proceeding to win popular and military support.

Advantages: This is the doctrinally proper course, which is important. It is least likely to provoke a U.S. and GVN reaction. It also gives the Communists more time to develop a complete infrastructure, leaving them in a stronger position later.

Disadvantages: This course takes a long time. It opens another front when Hanoi already has its hands full, and it does nothing to improve Communist fighting conditions in South Vietnam quickly. Moreover, it involves having Sihanouk for an ally over a long time, a prospect which Hanoi would not relish.

Option D: To attempt to work with the present Cambodian government, pressing it to let the sanctuaries remain and to continue the flow of supplies.

Advantages: This keeps the bulk of Communist resources concentrated on Vietnam, where they belong, and it does not materially increase the cost of the conflict. It also runs the least risk of provoking any reaction.

Disadvantages: It puts the Communists at the mercy of the Lon Nol government. It also has a number of internal contradictions.

Current Tactics: Recent Communist actions suggest that Hanoi is now following Option B, using its forces and supporters to move as fast as possible against the new government without actually pushing North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces openly into battle against Cambodians. Hanoi is probably not yet certain whether these tactics will work. Much depends on the degree to which it can de-stabilize the government without incurring too much Cambodian reaction.

Other Options Still Open: Even while Hanoi is following these tactics, it appears to be weighing the situation carefully to see whether they will work or whether something else is needed. If Hanoi decides that it must follow Option A, using its own forces more overtly, and that it can do so without great risk of U.S./GVN retaliation, it still might choose that option. On the other hand, if it determines that the Cambodian government is now too strong and that the state of Communist political preparation and Sihanouk's popular support is inadequate, it

can still go back to Option C and settle down to another long "people's war." We also believe that Hanoi has not yet closed off all chances of dealing with Lon Nol and that at least one objective of its current pressure against the new government is to persuade Phnom Penh to agree to the re-establishment of the Communist supply lines and sanctuaries on favorable terms.[2]

[2] On April 1 Holdridge sent Kissinger a memorandum outlining possible U.S. moves in Cambodia and suggesting U.S.–GVN contingency planning if the North Vietnamese moved on Phnom Penh. Holdridge wrote: "This contingency plan of course raises all the problems of escalation and U.S. involvement. On the other side, however, is the spectre of a Communist-dominated Sihanouk government providing a secure sanctuary and logistics base for the VC/NVA." (Ibid., Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970) Kissinger cites Holdridge's second sentence quoted above as "our nightmare" in *White House Years*, p. 470. On April 2 Winston Lord prepared at Kissinger's request a long paper on U.S. policy options in regard to sanctuaries in Cambodia. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 145, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, April 1, 1970)

217. Memorandum From the Senior Military Assistant (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 1, 1970.

SUBJECT

Meeting with Secretary of Defense Laird and the President, 3/31/70

Secretary Laird informed the President that the main purpose of his request to see him was to discuss the situation in Cambodia. However, before doing so he wished to report that enemy rocket attacks had been conducted against five U.S. military installations. He pointed out that these attacks had been predicted by CIA and our intelligence

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 224, Agency Files, Department of Defense, Vol. VI, February 1, 1970–April 20, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Kissinger was on vacation on March 31. Nixon met with Laird and Haig from 3:01 to 4:05 p.m. that day. (Ibid., White House Central Files, Daily Diary) Kissinger wrote the following note on the memorandum: "Al, Laird's communications with Rogers are getting troublesome. We should discuss. HK." Kissinger's comments relating to specific portions of this memorandum are footnoted below. Haig prepared an extensive briefing paper for the President's meeting with Laird. (Ibid., Box 1009, Haig Special Files, Haig's Vietnam File, Vol. V, [1 of 2])

in the field[2] and stated that they had nothing to do with our action against the SAM sites in North Vietnam[3] but rather had been planned for some period. He also estimated that there would be more attacks in III and IV Corps areas within the next day or two.

The Secretary then turned to the Cambodian problem. He informed the President he was somewhat concerned by State's message to Bunker last weekend instructing Bunker to ask the GVN to turn off border operations against enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia.[4] He then recounted that he had personally set up these operations with Bunker, Thieu and Abrams when he had visited Vietnam in February and that our calling them off now was a discouragement to the ARVN rangers who he was attempting to Vietnamize through these operations. The President stated that the decision had been made before the Cambodian coup and that he wanted to watch the situation in Cambodia a little more carefully before proceeding. Secretary Laird then said that these were very low-level operations done in coordination with the Cambodians and that there have in fact been 15 of them since his visit in February. The President then stated that he did not think it was worth waiting much longer and authorized Secretary Laird to start the operations up again very quietly, providing they were purely ARVN and could be portrayed as protective reaction.[5]

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[2] In TDCS–314/033444–70, March 31, the Station in Saigon predicted: "A surge of enemy activity is likely to begin in portions of all four Corps on the night of March 31/April 1. This surge, probably to be characterized by attacks by fire and limited ground probes, is probably a belated attempt to carry out plans delayed since February." (Ibid., Box 144, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, March 1970)

[3] On March 21 Nixon authorized U.S. retaliatory air strikes in the event U.S. aircraft in Laos or North Vietnam were engaged by North Vietnamese SAM/AAA sites. (Memorandum from Nixon to Laird, March 21; ibid., Box 99, Vietnam Subject Files, Operating Authorities Over North Vietnam)

[4] Telegram 45730 to Saigon, March 27. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB) In telegram 4725 from Saigon, March 30, Bunker reported that Thieu agreed to suspend ARVN cross-border operations. (Ibid.) Haig also sent Bunker a backchannel message alerting him to telegram 45730 and suggesting that short-term benefits from cross-border operations would be outweighed by the risk posed to U.S. domestic support for Vietnam policy. (Telegram from Haig to Bunker, WHS0011, March 27; ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 410, Backchannel Messages, Southeast Asia, 1970)

[5] On March 31 Haig sent Bunker backchannel message WH0012 informing him that the President had lifted the temporary moratorium on ARVN cross-border operations, but they had to be coordinated with Cambodian Armed Forces, should remain at previous levels, and be portrayed as ARVN operations taken under protective reactions criteria. Only Laird, McCain, and Abrams were also aware of this decision. (Ibid., Box 410, Backchannel Messages, Southeast Asia, 1970) In backchannel message 806 from Saigon, April 1, Bunker reported that he had informed Thieu of the decision; Thieu agreed. (Ibid.) Kissinger wrote the following note apparently referring to this issue: "When the hell did all this happen. Can we get report?"

The President then asked Secretary Laird where the larger plans for ARVN or U.S. and ARVN operations into the sanctuaries stood.[6] Secretary Laird said that the plans had arrived and they were reviewing them now. The U.S. military felt that the ARVN alone could conduct operations against Base Areas 704, 706 and 709,[7] but he felt that we should not go into the other base areas which had been worked over so heavily by our B–52's. The President confirmed that he might order these plans executed if Hanoi goes all out against the Cambodians. The President also stated that he wanted the Menu operations continued at a high level.

Secretary Laird remarked that he felt we could do more with respect to Cambodia and had sent Secretary Rogers a memorandum (Tab A)[8] suggesting a number of steps, including asking the Australians, who have good relations with the Cambodians, to do more. Secretary Laird then complained about the poor communications between Phnom Penh and Washington and noted that there was no CIA facility in Phnom Penh. The President directed General Haig to move immediately to upgrade our communications facilities in Phnom Penh, to do this as discreetly as possible, and to take the tack that these communications were needed to protect U.S. citizens. General Haig pointed out that State had already taken some measures to improve communications there by extending the operating hours of the station and doubling the capacity of the lines. The President stated that he still wished to have an improved capability there and that we should have CIA in there, although they would be under cover.

The President then turned to the air operations over North Vietnam and commented that he would like to consider further operations next Monday.[9] Secretary Laird stated that they had not completed the job on at least one of the SAM sites and should probably do so. The President said that such an operation is approved for next Monday if you do not hear differently before that time. The President instructed Secretary Laird in the meantime not to go looking for trouble but to react if the North Vietnamese attack any U.S. reconnaissance aircraft.

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[6] Kissinger wrote the following referring to this statement: "I think U.S. forces should participate if only to get out again. ARVN will never leave."

[7] Kissinger wrote the following referring to this statement: "I don't believe it."

[8] Tab A was a March 31 letter from Laird to Rogers in which Laird also suggested that South Vietnam should relinquish its claim to $25 million in a blocked account in Paris in favor of Cambodia, initiate discussions on border and off-shore differences with Cambodia, and offer a general pledge to support Cambodia's sovereignty of territory. Laird also suggested Thailand should reduce its troops on the Cambodian border. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 15 CAMB) Rogers responded affirmatively to Laird's suggestions in an April 2 letter to him. (Ibid.)

[9] April 6.

The President then asked Secretary Laird why some of our casualties had been up in the past two weeks. The Secretary replied that our casualties would be down again this week and that they had generally been very small except for a lot of accidents. Then the President said, "you should never report an accident as a battle death," to which Laird responded, "we don't."

The President then stated that he had noted a lot of chatter in the newspapers about the next withdrawal announcement and suggested that next Thursday[10] the President, Mr. Kissinger and a small close-hold group should look at the next increment. Secretary Laird stated that General Abrams wanted to hold up for 90 days and the JCS for about 60 days. The JCS would propose about 35,000 for August. Secretary Laird added that these divergent views did not create a problem and could be easily straightened out.[11] The President stated that prior to a decision he wanted absolutely no speculation on this issue.

The Secretary then turned to the problem of funding for Southeast Asia. He stated that the Senate was probably going to add to the prohibition against ground operations in Laos by including air operations. The President asked whether or not this meant they would put a limit on the use of our aircraft outside of Vietnam through the use of funds. Secretary Laird confirmed this. The President stated we would fight such a limitation to the death.

Secretary Laird then stated he also has the problem of having funded for a projected strength of 260,000 by July 1, 1971. This meant that between April 15 and July 1 he would have to get another $150 million if there was any delay in the next withdrawal increment and would have to take it from some other activities of the services. The President stated he would spend all of next year's money rather than lose in Vietnam. Secretary Laird then pointed out that the pay increase of 6% which the President might approve for federal employees, in conjunction with the postal strike settlement, would cost $850 million for the military portion and that this would cause an additional problem in a budget that is already stretched too tight. The Secretary added that the Defense Department's budget allocation was already way out of phase with the domestic side and the President nodded assent. Secretary Laird also stated that if the bombing continues after June 30 at the current level, he will need another billion dollars in the FY 71 Defense budget. The President responded that this means you must go all out now, that we cannot afford to let the dust settle, and added that

[10] April 9.

[11] Kissinger wrote in the margin: "What a liar."

he will not permit us to skimp on what is needed in Southeast Asia. The President also stated that he wanted Secretary Laird to:

—continue to look for B–52 targets in Northern Laos and to hit them;
—investigate the casualty lists and see if he can pick out accidental deaths from deaths actually caused by enemy action; and
—dust off the seven-day plan for attacks in North Vietnam.[12]

[Omitted here is a short discussion of the Anti-Ballistic Missile issue and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency's pamphlet comparing U.S. and Soviet Government expenditures.]

In concluding the meeting, the President congratulated Secretary Laird for the fine job the military had done with the Post Office strike and reiterated that he wanted the plan by Monday to hit the SAM sites, a continuation at a high-level of the Menu series, and also wished to find some targets for the B–52s in Northern Laos.

[12] The President asked General Haig if the strikes on dikes in North Vietnam would cause civilian casualties. General Haig stated that when the dikes were full there would be some flooding and possibly loss of civilian lives, but well into the dry season this would not be a problem. [Footnote in the source text.]

218. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Meeting with the North Vietnamese on April 4

Where We Are

The North Vietnamese behavior in the last two meetings has been consistent with a serious desire to negotiate a settlement. It has also, however, been consistent with a fishing expedition.

If they are on a fishing expedition, they are not getting much. They are not gaining time. They have not succeeded in putting pressure on us or in gaining greater U.S. restraint.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. IV. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. The memorandum is undated, but it was sent to Nixon before Kissinger left for Paris on April 3.

Moreover, they are not in a position to make propaganda on the basis of our meetings. In fact, if the record were released the propaganda advantage would be on our side. It would be clear from the statements that it was we who had pressed for progress. We have given them a specific withdrawal calendar and reaffirmed our acceptance of the principle of total withdrawal, which they had said would lead to progress. Although the schedule we gave them actually covers a longer period of time than the period we have mentioned in the meetings at the Majestic, the significant facts on the record would be that we were specific for the first time and stated we were flexible on details. Although they have conceded more than we in this channel, their concessions have been more subtle and thus less susceptible to use for propaganda.

Although subtle, their concessions have been very real. In effect, they have scrapped the ten points, abandoned their refusal to discuss their own withdrawal—although they have not yet accepted reciprocity, and have agreed to discuss our proposals as well as theirs.

What We Should Hope to Accomplish

As I said in my memorandum reporting on our last meeting,[2] the next two meetings should tell the story with regard to their intentions. We have now reached the point where each side has made clear its position on procedures, and has stated the necessity for going into substance. We have already gone into substance in making our proposal on withdrawals.

At this next meeting, therefore, we should concentrate on seeking to clarify their intentions. We can accomplish this in two ways:

—First, I should insist that they speak first. This is largely cosmetic, but it has important implications with regard to their intent.

—I should also insist that they respond substantively to our proposal on withdrawals at the last meeting, and indicate agreement to the principle of reciprocity. This is vital on substantive grounds, and it also would be an essential indication of their intent to negotiate seriously.

If their actions at this meeting indicate serious intent, I should try to draw them out further on their ideas regarding withdrawal and should also make a general political statement designed to draw them out on this second basic issue.

What I Propose to Do at this Meeting

With these objectives in mind, I would propose to do the following:

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[2] Document 200.

—In my opening statement (Tab A)[3] I would firmly say that it is now time for them to speak first and to speak on substance, indicating that this is important if we are to make progress. We went into substance at the last meeting; now it is their turn. I would press them for a response to our withdrawal proposal.

—If they refuse to speak first, or if they say nothing new on their own withdrawal, I would make a statement to break off the meeting (Tab B).[3] I would tell them that we continue to desire progress in this channel, but that we do not believe that repetition of standard positions and failure to meet new proposals with counter-proposals justify continuing our discussions. I would say that I would hope to hear from them when they had something new to tell us.

—If they speak first, and say something new and interesting about their withdrawal, I would make a statement indicating that we will study their proposal, and would try to draw them out further with questions about what they have said (Tab C).[3]

—If they make a statement containing something new about withdrawals, I would then propose to make a statement about political issues. This would be appropriate because we cannot expect them to say something new about withdrawals and lead off with a new political statement at the same meeting.

—My statement on political issues (Tab D)[3] would be of a general and philosophical character, framing the issues as attractively as possible without giving anything away, in order to draw them out to the limit of their instructions on this subject and to encourage future proposals.

I would first state our understanding of the complexity and difficulties involved in finding a political process which fairly registers the relationship of political forces. I would then state a few basic principles. In summary, these are:

—We cannot accept their demand for the overthrow of the leaders of the GVN as part of the negotiating process, although after a settlement we would expect the control of power to be determined by the agreed political process;

—We support free elections, since the political process must reflect the will of the people. But they have questions about who would run them. We are willing to listen to proposals on alternative ways of determining the popular will; for example, there are many aspects to how a mixed electoral commission might work.

[3] Attached but not printed.

—Examples of what they might wish to discuss in considering the relationship of free elections to how political power is shared might include whether elections for the executive should be direct, or indirect through elections for a parliamentary body; how electoral districts would be drawn to afford a fair and realistic expression of political forces; and how elections would affect the future safety of the political forces on both sides.

—It is possible that a way to start the process is to begin in the provinces and locally before solving problems in Saigon.

—The shape of a political outcome would be influenced by the character of military agreements, e.g. you cannot have elections in some areas without local ceasefires.

—It is proper and natural that they should take the responsibility for making specific proposals on political questions.

I would then press again for our setting some deadline for reaching agreement, particularly on political questions. I would argue that since the act of making political proposals can have political consequences, issues could be considered if there were promise of rapid settlement which could not be as a part of a longer negotiating process.

Laos and Cambodia

It may be desirable for me to say something about Laos and perhaps Cambodia, depending on developments there.[4] I doubt that they will want to talk about Laos very much, except in standard terms, but I think that we will want to make our position clear. I will seek your guidance on this at a time nearer the meeting.

Recommendation: That you approve the strategy outlined above and the statements developed in accordance with it.[5]

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[4] Nixon wrote "yes" in the margin next to this sentence.

[5] Nixon initialed the "approve" option and wrote: *"Put a time limit on it."*

219. Memorandum From the Senior Military Assistant (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 3, 1970.

SUBJECT

Ground Operations Against Base Camps in Cambodia

Attached is a memorandum from Secretary Laird forwarding a plan prepared by MACV for operations against enemy sanctuary areas in Cambodia.[2] The plan has not yet been evaluated by CINCPAC, JCS or Secretary Laird. It is presented in five parts:

Part I. General Description

Part II. Option 1—Plan for Attack on Base Area 352/353 (see map at Tab A)

Part III. Option 2—Plan for Attack on Base Areas 704 and 367/706 (see map at Tab B)

Part IV. Answers to Questions

Part V. Supplementary Information

The Plan assesses two options:

—*Option 1* is an attack (utilizing elements of the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division and the ARVN Airborne Division) into Base Areas 352/353 where large supply storage and headquarters areas are located. B–52 operations would be followed by initial ground attacks with two regiments. Three to four weeks are considered necessary to complete the operation.

—*Option 2* provides for simultaneous attacks against Base Area 704, a major storage area and transshipment point, and Base Area 367/706, an extensive logistics base and subregional headquarters area. Attacks against Base Area 704 would be accomplished by an ARVN armored brigade with U.S. riverine support and attacks on Base Area 367/706 would be conducted by three brigades of US/ARVN forces in an air mobile and ground operation. The operations would last about 14 days.

A brief summary sheet describing each option is at Tab C.[3]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Spoke; Eyes Only.

[2] The attached undated memorandum is not printed but a note on a covering memorandum from Laird reads: "(Cover for April 3, 1970 MACV message)." The MACV plan is dated March 30.

[3] Not attached.

The Base Area attacked under Option 1 is a potentially more lucrative target because of the major enemy headquarters located there. It has the significant additional advantage of a much smaller risk to noncombatants. Option 2 has the advantages of greater ARVN participation, shorter duration, more favorable terrain and the probability of fewer US/RVNAF casualties.

In describing these plans, MACV has made the following important points:

—The plan should be successful, although whether it would be sufficiently disruptive to stop an enemy attack on the Cambodian capital is highly dependent on political factors.

—Successful operations would probably:

—have a highly favorable effect on RVNAF morale and confidence which would enhance Vietnamization;

—result in destruction of enemy facilities which would significantly reduce the threat to III and IV CTZ;

—have a long-term impact which would more than offset the costs.

—Significant U.S. involvement is essential to insure success. Option 1 would require a preponderance of U.S. participation.

—A major risk of the operations is the possibility that they would trigger an all-out enemy effort against I CTZ. Because of this, U.S. troop withdrawals beyond those scheduled for April 15 should be delayed as long as execution of the Cambodian operations is considered possible.

—Military casualties would fall into the high-intensity category. Non-combatant casualties under Option 1 would be negligible but the possibility under Option 2 is high. This is one of the major risks of Option 2 and is likely to be emphasized in press coverage.

—Weather is an important factor. April is a favorable month but after that the situation deteriorates rapidly and operations would be more time-consuming and difficult.

—The concept of short duration, raid-type operations has been discarded since the impact would be limited and of doubtful remuneration.

—Because of the difficulties in concealing preparations of the operations themselves, the press should be briefed to minimize the risk of leaks just prior to the mission.

—MACV would require 72 hours from time of order to commencement of the mission.

MACV concludes that the risks involved in these operations are acceptable if U.S. force levels are not reduced beyond the level which will be reached on April 15. MACV recommends that Option 1 be ex-

ecuted as soon as possible and that further U.S. redeployments be held in abeyance over the next 75–90 days.

A number of problem areas with the plan will probably surface as the various military staffs make their assessments. Some problem areas and questions which should be raised are readily apparent:

—The plan is predicated on varying degrees of U.S. participation. It is not clear whether any successful operation could be carried out by the ARVN alone. However, the implication is that U.S. involvement is essential to the success of all of these operations. Attacks on Base Area 704 appear to require the least direct U.S. involvement. However, even in this operation, U.S. helicopter, naval and air support is considered essential.

—The predicted durations for accomplishment of the missions are partially based on the assumption that the operations must be sufficiently disruptive to cause a turnaround of enemy forces approaching Phnom Penh. Short thrusts have been discarded; however, MACV might find some value in these, at least from a purely military standpoint, if asked to re-examine such a possibility.

—A major political scenario and assessment of the political impact of these operations should be developed.

—The plan is written to beat the drum for no U.S. troop withdrawals beyond April 15 levels. Although the concern is legitimate, the problem appears to be over-played in the context of presenting this plan. Whether an all-out enemy attack on the I CTZ Area is the most likely and feasible enemy counteraction to these operations is an assumption which needs careful reappraisal.

—The plan indicates there will be little possibility of keeping these operations from the press. Therefore, the operations will pose a major public relations problem, particularly if not done in the context of a major enemy assault against the Cambodian Government.

—There does not appear to be sufficient provision for blocking forces to prevent enemy forces in the base areas from fading deeper into Cambodia if they choose not to fight. Therefore, the enemy may suffer few casualties and only yield territory temporarily, although these operations will probably have a devastating effect on the enemy supply problem as well as a number of psychological advantages.

—It would be helpful to have a casualty prediction in terms of numbers rather than the "high intensity" friendly casualty estimates.

—It should also be noted that in one place in the plan, MACV indicates a problem exists concerning the availability of sufficient air munitions.

Recommendations:[4]

A more careful assessment of the plan will be possible once the staff evaluations have been completed. In the interim, however, it would probably be advisable to:

—task MACV to develop alternate plans for attacking sanctuary areas where it is considered that an all-ARVN operation could be successful.

—Ask DOD to report on the problem raised by MACV concerning the availability of air munitions.

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[4] Kissinger initialed the approve option of both recommendations. On April 4 Kissinger and Holdridge drafted a memorandum to Laird asking MACV "to develop alternative plans for attacking sanctuary areas in Cambodia where the operations could be successfully concluded entirely by South Vietnamese armed forces." Kissinger also asked for a report on the status of levels of air munitions to support these operations. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970) The memorandum was not sent until April 16, but Kissinger raised the issue in a breakfast meeting with Laird on April 7. (Memorandum from Howe to Haig, April 6; ibid.)

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220. Editorial Note

On March 25, 1970, Secretary of State William Rogers and Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin met to discuss Laos and Cambodia at the Secretary's initiative. After discussing prospects for a coalition government in Laos, both men agreed that their countries had a mutual interest in maintaining a neutral Cambodia and preventing conflict from spreading there. Rogers assured Dobrynin that the United States had nothing to do with the overthrow of Sihanouk; Dobrynin indicated that if a right-wing group emerged in Cambodia there "would probably be trouble." (Telegram 44214 to Moscow, March 26; National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27–14 LAOS) On April 3 the Department of State instructed the Embassy in Moscow to make a formal démarche to the Soviet Government on Cambodia, stressing US–USSR mutual interest in Cambodian neutrality, reiterating that the United States was not involved in deposing Sihanouk or establishing Lon Nol, and expressing concern about North Vietnamese and Viet Cong encouragement of unrest and opposition to Cambodian control in border regions of Cambodia. (Telegram 49049 to Moscow, April 3; ibid., POL 27 CAMB) On April 8 Ambassador Jacob Beam reported that when he made these points to Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Firyubin, he received "little more than stonewalling in over one-hour conversation." (Telegram 1711 from Moscow, April 8; ibid.)

221. Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 4, 1970.

SUBJECT

Vietnam

This memorandum updates the Vietnam trip report that I submitted to you in February.[2] The following sections present an assessment of the current situation in Vietnam, the outlook there, and alternative courses of action we should consider.

In brief, the current military situation remains favorable, despite US redeployments and the current limited increases in enemy combat operations. Meanwhile, progress continues to be made in Vietnamization, although several problem areas remain. Most notable are the problems of inadequate leadership and political and economic instability. Events of the past weeks in Laos and Cambodia complicate the situation, introducing a number of imponderables but also offering the opportunity for new initiatives. I believe, on balance, we continue to make progress toward the US objective of self-determination for the South Vietnamese people.

In seeking this objective in South Vietnam, however, we should continue to do so, as you have outlined in your key messages, in a fashion which will:

- Maintain the support of the American people.
- Be within tolerable economic limits.
- Not destroy the political, economic, and social fabric of South Vietnam.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 145, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, April 1, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Haig sent this memorandum to Kissinger characterizing it as unclear of purpose and suggesting "several *very* alarming features." Haig indicated that (a) "The [Clark] Clifford thinking permeates the OSD staff," (b) Laird conceded for the "first time that Vietnamization is a farce," (c) Laird dramatized that financial impossibilities precluded continuation of the war and the only hope was a political solution, and (d) the United States "must draw down as rapidly as possible and to, above all, prevent further involvement in Southeast Asia." Haig added "I believe that it [Laird's memorandum] will cause the President to ask himself what in the hell Laird has been doing all these months." Haig also stated "the President will gag upon reading this rambling, purposeless softening effort." (Memorandum from Haig to Kissinger, April 4; ibid., Box 1009, Haig Special Files, Haig's Vietnam File, Vol. V [2 of 2]) On April 10 Lynn informed Kissinger that he prepared a memorandum for the President reviewing Laird's trip and this April 4 Laird memorandum, but it is not clear that Lynn's analysis was sent forward. (Ibid., Box 95, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, Troop Replacements, 1970)

[2] Document 187.

• Not disable us from honoring our other security and foreign policy obligations.
• Not result in the alienation of our friends and allies elsewhere in the world.
• Not precipitate a wider and even more costly conflict.

I should like to review the situation in the perspective of these criteria:

I. The Current Military Situation in Vietnam

A. Patterns of Activity

The tempo of the war continues to be relatively slow, recent enemy activity notwithstanding. Until the March 31 flare-up, enemy attacks had been at about one-half the level for similar periods last year. Their consumption of mortar, artillery, and rocket munitions had been less than half that of a year ago, 11 tons per week, compared to 24 tons per week last year. There are occasional interruptions in the pattern, but the basic trend is that of declining combat activity.

One of the most telling indicators of this decline is combat deaths. Data available now for the first quarter of 1970 reveals deaths for all combatants well below those for comparable periods during the past two years.

Combat Deaths
1st Qtr Totals

	1966	*1967*	*1968*	*1969*	*1970*
NVA/VC	13,060	22,756	72,455	44,846	26,884
SVN	3,407	3,096	10,500	5,922	3,261
US	1,224	2,126	4,869	3,184	1,108

Fortunately for the United States, combat deaths dropped during the past three months to the lowest levels in the last five years. To some extent, this results from the lower overall US troop levels and, hence, reduced exposure. The lower US casualty levels is one of the strongest reasons, in addition to your firm leadership and guidance, for continuing public support for our program.

By mid-April we will have reduced US authorized strength in Vietnam by 115,000 troops, emphasizing pacification efforts rather than offensive action. During the same time, the enemy force level has declined by at least 40,000. While US and NVA/VC forces in South Vietnam have been reduced, the South Vietnamese have been increasing their military forces, particularly the Regional and Popular Forces. As a result, the ratio of total allied forces to NVA/VC forces has improved almost 20 percent since June 1969, from 5.6 to 1 to about 6.7 to 1.

We do not know the reasons behind the lower level of NVA/VC activity. It could be a positive reaction to our own policy of troop with-

drawals. It could also reflect a policy of waiting until the situation is more favorable to them following expected additional US redeployments. General Abrams reports the enemy continues to have the capacity to increase hostile activity significantly, but not to mount a sustained offensive. The March 31–April 1 "high point" is symptomatic of this capability.

The US effort continues to be large and costly. We still have over 430,000 troops in Vietnam, together with about 40,000 men in Thailand, 30,000 offshore, and another 90,000 in the Philippines, Guam and Okinawa. The level of US tactical air support is down 30 percent from the peak levels of 1968, but it remains at a high level, about 23,000 attack sorties per month. B–52 sorties are also reduced, from a peak level of 1,800 per month to the current level of 1,400 per month. However, this is about 75 percent higher than the level the US was flying as recently as January 1968. Although the cost of the war has declined as our force levels and support are being reduced, we still spent about $17 billion for the war in 1969.

The burden of the war on the United States is reflected in more than just the lives lost and the resources expended. There is also a major "opportunity cost." By using resources valued at $10–20 billion per year during the past four years in Southeast Asia, we have foregone the opportunity to use the resources for other purposes, even in the Defense field. This has put us at a distinct, and increasingly aggravated, disadvantage vis à vis the Soviet Union. The following table tells the story:

General Impact of SEA on USSR/US
($billion in 1967 prices)

	USSR				
	1965	*1966*	*1967*	*1968*	*1969*
Mil Budget	$54.2	$57.0	$60.1	$62.5	$65.0
To NVN	0.3	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.4
Net for Other	$53.9	$56.4	$59.3	$61.9	$64.6
	US				
	1965	*1966*	*1967*	*1968*	*1969*
Mil Budget	$52.8	$63.3	$73.8	$75.9	$72.0
To NVN	2.1	10.2	17.5	20.2	17.6
Net for Other	$50.7	$53.1	$56.3	$55.7	$54.4

The data reflected above are subject to errors in detail. The Soviet budget contains unspecified space and atomic energy elements, for example. Trying to make dollar comparisons of two dissimilar economies is, in addition, hazardous at best. Furthermore, our accounting for US incremental costs of the war represents approximations. But despite such vagaries, a clear central point remains. The Soviet Union, by

avoiding direct and substantial involvement in Southeast Asia, has been able to avail itself of other defense alternatives and resource uses our war involvement makes increasingly difficult for us. The gap in the respective USSR/US opportunities is, furthermore, widening as long as (a) USSR defense budgets stay level or increase, (b) USSR aid to North Vietnam stays relatively low, (c) US defense budgets decrease, and (d) US involvement in Southeast Asia stays relatively high.

North Vietnam receives, as noted, almost all of the war material it needs from the Soviet Union—and Red China. Manpower losses for North Vietnam have been heavy, an estimated 800,000 dead or permanently disabled since 1960. However, North Vietnam has enough manpower to sustain the current rate of losses almost indefinitely and to absorb heavier casualties, such as those suffered during 1968, for many years. Since the NVA/VC have great control over the level of combat in the South, and therefore the number of casualties they sustain, they could continue the present level of the conflict almost indefinitely. Given this situation and the intolerable costs and risks posed by a broadened general conflict, military victory in South Vietnam continues to be impossible.

B. Enemy Infiltration and Logistics Flow

In February I reported that, according to our best estimates, the enemy's force accessions through infiltration were expected over the next 4–5 months to average about 4,500 men per month. That estimate still looks reasonably valid, though the data are subject to error. What is agreed is that the enemy's force accessions are now, and are expected to continue, well below the level needed to maintain even a constant force level.

We have, during the past two years, made an extensive effort to slow down the flow of men and supplies moving through Laos into South Vietnam. During the past year, the number of attack sorties against the Ho Chi Minh Trail has almost doubled, from 5,700 per month in the 1967–1968 dry season to 10,000 per month. Currently we are expending about 40,000 tons of air ordnance per month in Laos and a total of over 110,000 tons per month in all of Southeast Asia.

Despite these efforts, the flow of supplies through Laos appears to be substantially higher this year than last. Unfortunately, we do not know how many supplies the NVA/VA actually have available to them in South Vietnam or how this may compare with previous supply positions. Our lack of an estimate stems from our uncertain knowledge of (a) the supplies needed to keep the logistic system going, (b) the status of the supply flow through Cambodia, or in by sea, and (c) the total amount of supplies we have destroyed in Laos and South Vietnam.

We do not know why the flow of supplies has increased while the levels of troops and combat activity have decreased. The enemy may be replacing his stocks, which probably were depleted during the last wet season. The supplies might be intended for a new campaign, but the continued low level of troop infiltration is evidence to the contrary. It is also possible that the enemy is simply stockpiling supplies as a hedge against future needs, for example, anticipation of difficulty in moving supplies through Cambodia.

C. Security and Pacification

Security improved greatly in the rural areas last year. I am encouraged that this progress was made despite our redeployments. However, the VC infrastructure is still intact—although frequently of reduced quality—and many of the social and economic problems which create support for the insurgency are still unsolved. I do not believe that military forces can achieve much further progress in pacification. Further gains in pacification will require more effective police forces, land reform, refugee resettlement, and economic development, as well as the planned expansion in territorial forces. Training of the new territorial units continues ahead of schedule, an encouraging sign.

II. Major Problems Affecting South Vietnam

Although our Vietnamization policy has been successful so far, its future success is tied, inter alia, to two primary factors. The first is NVA/VC actions. As indicated above, they can escalate the hostilities when they wish. The second is a set of basic South Vietnamese problems which could seriously affect their ability to take over the war.

A. Political Problems

The political situation is still unstable. Although the war is becoming increasingly a political struggle, the South Vietnamese government is not well prepared to meet this challenge. While the South Vietnamese military forces are responding to the military equipment and advice we are providing, the government's programs for countering the political challenge are still weak. For example, the Phoenix program to destroy the VC infrastructure is making little progress. The upcoming election for the Senate and the 1971 elections for President could weaken the government as various factions compete for power. The government needs to increase its base of popular support. I receive persistent reports that the government does not effectively communicate its goals to the people, and that it likewise does not effectively respond to the needs of the people. While the recent Chau affair may not seriously have damaged President Thieu's popularity and effectiveness in South Vietnam, the affair is symptomatic of Thieu's insensitivity to issues that cause a bad reaction in the United States.

On the positive side, local government has been strengthened. Almost all hamlets and villages successfully carried out elections, and signs of greater local self-reliance and initiative are appearing.

B. Economic Instability

As my February trip report indicated, the Vietnamese economy is a major uncertainty and perhaps the weakest link in the Vietnamization program. Neither our mission in Saigon nor we in Washington have given the issue adequate attention.

We are facing a major test in the future. As US force levels and defense expenditures decline, strong inflationary pressures will develop in South Vietnam unless economic assistance levels—from whatever sources—are increased and South Vietnamese domestic production is increased.

After my return from Saigon, I initiated a series of steps to improve our grasp of the Vietnamese economic situation. First, I established a special defense study to review thoroughly the economic situation in Vietnam, including inflation, foreign exchange problems, development needs, and other key issues. I expect the report by the end of May. Based on the findings, I hope to be able to provide better visibility for effective Vietnamization in the economic field.

C. Leadership

I am advised the most serious problem of the South Vietnamese military forces continues to be lack of good leadership. The result is occasionally ineffective combat operations, a high desertion rate, and disciplinary problems. As I mentioned in my trip report, General Abrams believes there are about four key military positions where a change in leadership is urgently required. I stressed with President Thieu and other GVN leaders the need for positive action to appoint better men to key military positions and to devote more attention to leadership within the armed forces. President Thieu has asked General Abrams for his views and opinions. I will pursue the matter vigorously to insure that we do not let this opportunity languish.

D. Cambodia and Laos

The political climate remains obscure following the removal of Sihanouk. While the new Government has stated it intends to remain neutral, both its short and long term prospect for survival are unclear at this time.

I believe we should take a balanced approach at this time, supporting Cambodian neutrality and avoiding direct involvement. I see merit, though, in encouraging the type and level of cooperation between Cambodian and South Vietnamese units that has prevailed

over the past few weeks along the Cambodian/South Vietnamese border. I would not advocate a step-up in border operations beyond that which has seemed to work to good advantage in the past. I would also emphasize the necessity for close coordination and liaison between South Vietnamese and Cambodian units. US forces should not be involved. Guidance along these lines has been passed to General Abrams, who reported on April 4 "... this matter is well in hand at this time."

Should the Lon Nol government request US military support, we should judge the request on its merits. However, any military activities we might consider should be limited and tightly controlled to avoid widening the Southeast Asia conflict and inciting US anti-war sentiment.

There have been no major changes in the political climate within Laos, and the military situation at least has not worsened in the past week. The possibility remains that the North Vietnamese may step up their dry-season campaign in the hope of (a) forcing Souvanna to request a US bombing halt in Laos and (b) increasing anti-war sentiment in the United States. It is significant to note that the Communists have not yet regained control of all areas they claimed in 1962.

III. US Planning Alternatives

A. Redeployments

Unless the enemy significantly increases the tempo or alters the patterns of the war, I believe we should continue our redeployments. To maintain US support for Vietnamization, to provide proper incentives for the South Vietnamese to assume more responsibility for the war, and to keep the US burden within tolerable economic limits, I believe we must continue to reduce US forces in South Vietnam. For a number of military and political reasons it may be prudent to reduce our rate of redeployment temporarily from the current average of 12,500 per month. I am discussing the next redeployment increment with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and I will send you specific recommendations in a few days.

B. Financial Planning

The defense budgets for FY 70 and FY 71 have been predicated on substantial reductions in our forces in Southeast Asia. The JCS and General Abrams believe our plans should be revised to maintain in FY 71 the present levels of tactical air and B–52 support. This would cost $1.4 billion more than has been planned for in the budget. Substantial cuts in other important defense programs would have to be made to fund this additional air support. The JCS are now reconsidering their proposal and will submit their views to me on April 30.

While I believe that the budget is adequate for the planned Vietnamization program, the budget will not allow much flexibility for increasing the level of combat. I believe our chances of obtaining additional funds from Congress for Southeast Asia are small. In fact, we must expect additional cuts. We could try to obtain additional funds by cutting support for non-SEA forces and slowing modernization programs. However, we are already following this course to a considerable extent. I believe further such diversions would impact with serious effect on our overall military capabilities. Alternatively, we could reallocate funds within the defense budget by reducing our non-SEA forces, such as those in the United States or in Europe. This, of course, would be a longer-term proposition and one which could not be expected to free funds immediately.

I therefore believe that if we should have to find more resources for the war than we have planned in the budget, we could not do so without serious military, political, or economic ramifications.

C. Political Initiatives and Negotiations

With US military options constrained, Vietnamization faced with continuing problems, instability spreading throughout Indo-China, and options available to Hanoi to expand the fighting, there will be those who contend the prospects are dim for achieving our objectives in South Vietnam. I do not share that view. I believe alternatives are available to maintain the momentum towards stability and self-determination for the South Vietnamese. The alternatives lie in the political field.

During 1969, US policy was to eschew US cease-fire initiatives. NSDM–9 provided that the US not initiate a cease-fire proposal "at an early stage."[3] NSDM–24 provided that the US should not pressure the South Vietnamese on cease-fire matters[4] and NSDM–36 announced your decision not to link holiday cease-fires to a permanent negotiated cease-fire.[5] Recognizing that you expect me to look at all alternatives, I have directed that a number of possible initiatives be evaluated. I believe it is important that we, and not the North Vietnamese, take the initiative on these matters—particularly in view of indications they may be prepared to take steps toward a cease-fire. The leaders in Hanoi may be laying the ground work for a wide range of possible initiatives by North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front. We are not fully

[3] Document 51.

[4] Document 123.

[5] Document 154.

prepared, in my judgment, to meet such initiatives. The first order of business is to insure such preparation.

As a first step to becoming better prepared, we should expeditiously resolve some conflicting points of view within our own Government. I have suggested to Dr. Kissinger that we address within the NSC at an early date the basic issues involved in our present positions, delineate possible Hanoi initiatives, outline possible responses by "our side," and postulate initiatives we might take.

At Paris, one US option is to appoint a new ambassador. You have taken noteworthy steps to highlight Ambassador Habib's stature and qualifications. Others of us have tried to do the same. The other side, having made an issue of Ambassador Habib's status, will nonetheless probably not cooperate until he is replaced with someone of greater international stature. We, on the other hand, have said we will not replace him until some movement by the other side warrants such action. We might break this deadlock by appointing a new negotiator, but announcing that he will not assume his duties in Paris until there is a responsible reaction by the other side. This would give Hanoi a face-saving device to reopen private talks or make new proposals.

Another option is to propose some major new substantive initiatives to enhance our image of flexibility and to probe the intentions of the other side. As a first step, we could support the French proposal to explore the possibilities of a conference on Indo-China. Our support of the concept would serve to demonstrate to all parties concerned our interest in a political settlement and would simultaneously involve additional parties in the political process. The existence of a broader political forum could serve as a barrier to expanded military action by Hanoi.

As a lesser option, we might make a major new proposal to deal with the situation in Laos. If this is done, however, it will be necessary for us to look carefully at the provisions for bombing in the Panhandle because North Vietnam will almost certainly demand this as the price of a settlement in North Laos. A settlement could conceivably be worth this price if we can ensure that the bombing halt would not endanger our forces in South Vietnam or undercut the Vietnamization effort. It is noteworthy that Hanoi has abided, with only limited exceptions, by the basic military provisions of the November 1968 bombing halt "understandings." We reached that point by taking action on the "assumption" Hanoi would (a) stop the shelling of population centers, (b) not violate the DMZ, and (c) allow reconnaissance flights over North Vietnam. The spirit of the understanding has prevailed. Perhaps this precedent could provide a direction for further de-escalation of the war, or at a minimum, pose barriers to Hanoi's expansion of the war.

D. Troop Contributing Countries

Additional barriers to Hanoi's expansion of the military conflict could be established by continued—and expanded—participation in South Vietnam by other Asian nations. In keeping with the Nixon Doctrine, I believe that the Troop Contributing Countries (TCC), as well as other Asian countries not now making a significant contribution in Vietnam, should maintain the maximum presence there commensurate with their capabilities. The record is disappointing. Vietnam remains primarily a US effort. Other countries, if anything, are doing less rather than more.

I would hope that we could find a variety of ways in which the TCC and other Asian countries could increase their involvement with the South Vietnamese people. In all discussions and planning with the TCC and other Asian nations, we should seek ways in which their total efforts may be increased. Their contributions could be centered, if necessary, into the areas of training, logistics, and economic intercourse. The point is that the wider the front of nations involved in SVN, the more credible the barrier to expanded NVN military action.

E. Prisoners of War

It is essential to keep pressing the enemy hard on the prisoner of war issue. We have made some limited progress in getting confirmation on more names and increasing the flow of mail. More emphasis should now be placed on securing impartial inspection of camps and the release of all prisoners. As I previously informed you, President Thieu originally agreed generally with my suggestion that South Vietnam offer to release 500 or more prisoners to the North. We had been pressing the South Vietnamese to make this offer at the March 26 meeting in Paris. Unfortunately, Thieu decided to proceed only with about 323 sick and wounded prisoners, on the theory that his people would not understand releasing able-bodied prisoners who could fight again. The other side has rejected the offer, at least initially.

I believe we should press the South Vietnamese to make successively larger release offers. We might announce a schedule for releasing several thousand North Vietnamese prisoners over the next six months. We should consider making releases at least partially contingent upon enemy performance in this area. The principal goal would be to build momentum into the notion of prisoner release, so that the enemy would find it impossible to resist worldwide calls for reciprocity. Meanwhile, we should consider the need to define more precisely the relationship between the prisoner issue and US troop withdrawals. We should at the same time hit hard on impartial inspection, in the hope that the enemy might come to view release as the lesser of two evils.

IV. Summary

In brief, progress is being made towards our objectives in South Vietnam. But the situation shows few, if any, signs of decreasing in complexity. In particular:

- Vietnamization is proceeding satisfactorily.
- The US efforts, however, continue to be large and costly.
- The war is decelerating in South Vietnam, with the concomitant dividends of fewer US casualties, maintenance of US support, and more opportunities for application of our energies and resources for other foreign policy and domestic efforts.
- Serious problems confront our continuing efforts, viz,

  —Gaps in the GVN leadership, both political and military.
  —Economic instability in SVN.
  —Options available to Hanoi to reverse the military patterns in SVN and to expand the conflict in Laos and Cambodia.

- Positive alternatives are still available to the US, viz,

  —Political initiatives in Paris.
  —Prospects for other political forums, such as the French concept for an Indo-China conference.
  —Solitication of expanded efforts by other Asian nations in SVN.

I would be remiss if I did not convey to you the full support of the Defense establishment for your policies and programs in Southeast Asia. While it is our responsibility, in our view, to apprise you, as this memorandum attempts to do, of our assessments and analyses, there is complete dedication to your decisions. In particular, the military leadership, from the Chiefs and General Abrams to our other leaders in the field, are doing everything within their capabilities to accomplish their assigned tasks with maximum safety and security.

Melvin Laird

222. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Paris, April 4, 1970, 9:30 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Le Duc Tho, Adviser to the North Vietnamese Delegation
Xuan Thuy, Chief of Delegation
Mai van Bo, North Vietnamese Delegate General in Paris
North Vietnamese Interpreter
Two Other North Vietnamese Officials
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Major General Vernon Walters, Defense Attaché
W. Richard Smyser, NSC Staff
W.A.K. Lake, NSC Staff

(The meeting began with some opening pleasantries.)

Mr. Kissinger: I have one technical point, and then look forward to hearing your views. It is a minor technical point on the figures I gave you at the last meeting.[2]

The figure for the number of U.S. troops now in Vietnam is 12,000 higher than the figure I gave you, that is the total figure is 434,000, not 422,000. You should therefore change the figures I gave you last time as follows: In the fourth month, rather than 27,000 men we would withdraw 35,000. And in the fifth month we would withdraw 39,000 rather than 35,000.

These figures do not make any substantive difference, but I wanted to be exactly accurate.

And, as I have said, there are elements of flexibility in our proposal with respect to timing.

At the last meeting, Special Adviser Le Duc Tho and Minister Xuan Thuy said you would carefully study our position on military issues and make a counter-proposal. I wonder if you are ready to do so now? Of course, we recognize this question will be dependent on the settlement of political issues, which we are also willing to discuss today.

Xuan Thuy: You have finished?

Mr. Kissinger: Yes.

Xuan Thuy: We said that you have made a proposal on military questions and we shall make our remarks on this proposal and put for-

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 853, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. IV. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only. The meeting took place at the North Vietnamese Residence, 11 Rue Darthe.

[2] Document 201.

ward our own proposal. But last time I also said both sides should put forward their views on military and political questions, and you have not finished. We shall do the same, we shall put forward our position on both.

Last time you spoke only on military questions. I therefore propose you put forward your position on political problems.

Mr. Kissinger: I also pointed out two things last time. It is not admissible that we always speak first and put forward our position. You are then in the position of a critic commenting on our proposals.

There is nothing in your position which says you can't speak now on military questions, and then we speak first on political questions.

Xuan Thuy: Last time, I said who speaks first or last is not an important point. It should not be raised as a procedural question. I also said that each side should present its stand on political and military problems at one time.

Mr. Kissinger: But I am sure the Minister will agree there should not be a procedure in which one side makes a proposal and then quotes itself as truth. This is an elemental way of proceeding. All the essential elements of our proposal on military issues are not on the table.

If procedure isn't important, then the Minister should have no hesitation in commenting now.

Xuan Thuy: I wish to say this: the reason for my requesting this procedure is that previously you intended to settle only military questions. We said political and military questions are linked. Therefore if you speak only of military questions, it might make me believe you retain your original scheme of only discussing military questions.

Mr. Kissinger: I have told the Special Adviser that we will discuss military and political questions. We understand you will not agree to one without the other. We recognize that military and political questions are closely linked. I know the Special Adviser and Minister are capable of protecting your essential position, which is that military and political questions must be resolved simultaneously.

Xuan Thuy: You refuse to present your views on political problems; this is done intentionally by your side.

Mr. Kissinger: The Minister can assume that everything I do is intentional.

Xuan Thuy: However, I am prepared to express our views on military and political problems at one time.

At our last meeting on March 16 Mr. Special Adviser Le Duc Tho and myself have given preliminary remarks on the views expressed by Mr. Special Adviser Kissinger and on the schedule for troop withdrawal.

Afterwards, we have carefully studied your views and schedule for troop withdrawal.

Today, I would like to reaffirm the views we expressed the other day and would like to make ampler comments on it.

(Xuan Thuy now began to read from notes, and continued to use them throughout the remainder of this particular statement. He was occasionally corrected in a word by Le Duc Tho.)

First, we have expounded our view that the United States has insisted on demanding mutual troop withdrawal. We have also said that the U.S. has brought U.S. and other foreign troops allied to the U.S. one-half the way around the world for aggression in Vietnam. Therefore, the U.S. must completely withdraw all U.S. and allied troops from Vietnam without imposing conditions on the Vietnamese people.

As to the Vietnamese people who are fighting on their own soil, it is the legitimate self-defense right of any nation.

Therefore, the question of mutual withdrawal does not arise.

But in the views your expounded last time, you said the non-South Vietnamese forces cannot be put on the same legal, moral and historical basis as U.S. troops. It is only a technical problem.

But in practice your proposal is tantamount to a demand for mutual withdrawal. Therefore we cannot accept this principle.

Point two: As to the time period for troop withdrawal, previously the U.S. did not mention any time period. But in President Nixon's November 3, 1969,[3] speech he demanded mutual withdrawal in twelve months, and this was later repeated many times at Kleber Street.

But now at our private meetings, where we have agreed we should go directly into the heart of the central matter, and solve matters practically, you have put forward a higher price—sixteen months and not twelve as before. And for this sixteen month troop withdrawal, the greater part of U.S. forces will be withdrawn at the end of the period.

This shows that you still want to prolong your war of aggression, to prolong troop withdrawal so as not to withdraw all of your troops.

Point three: You also said that only when we came to agreement here would you appoint a new head of delegation at Kleber Street. This shows you want to prolong discussion and still want to downgrade the Paris talks on Vietnam, and want to use the appointment of a head of delegation as a condition for us.

Point four: While you have acted at the Paris Conference as I have just stated, you have also escalated the war in South Vietnam and Laos and you organized a coup d'état in Cambodia in attempting to use these two places to put pressure on the resistance fight of the Vietnamese people and to threaten the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

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[3] See Document 144.

The last time, you said we should not use military pressure on the negotiations. But in practice the U.S. has used military pressure. You want to compel the Vietnamese people to accept your terms.

All this makes us doubt your serious intent and your desire to make a settlement as has been affirmed many times by Mr. Special Adviser Kissinger.

And today you refused to expound your views on political problems following doing so on military problems. I have said many times that political problems should be linked to military problems.

But anyhow I will present our stand on military as well as political problems. As a matter of fact, we have presented the great lines of both our positions on military and political problems. Now, may I go into greater detail on both.

First, this military problem: we propose that U.S. and other troops of the U.S. camp should be withdrawn from South Vietnam in a period of six months. That expresses our support of Minister Madame Nguyen thi Binh's proposal.

In this six month period we propose that all U.S. combat troops—infantry, Marine, Air Force, Naval forces, motorized forces—should be withdrawn first, and then all remaining forces be withdrawn in the same period.

The other foreign troops of the U.S. camp should be withdrawn with U.S. troops.

At the same time with the withdrawal of U.S. troops and other troops of the U.S. camp, all U.S. bases should be dismantled or evacuated in six months.

As to the political problem, we propose that the U.S. respect the fundamental national rights of the Vietnamese people: independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, and to recognize that South Vietnam be independent and neutral.

Another point—the form of government in South Vietnam and the organization of general elections will be implemented in three steps:

The first step—the present Saigon administration we recognize as a reality. But the leaders of the present Saigon administration—that is Thieu–Ky–Khiem—they are very warlike oppressing peace and neutrality. They terrorize the opposition forces in South Vietnam who are for peace in South Vietnam. Therefore they constitute an obstacle to a peaceful solution. Therefore the leaders of the Saigon administration—Thieu–Ky–Khiem—should be changed and a new Saigon administration should be formed which really stands for peace. It should send representatives to Paris for serious negotiations.

The second step is to form the provisional coalition government in South Vietnam including three components: the representatives of

the Provisional Revolutionary Government, the representatives of the Saigon Administration without Thieu–Ky–Khiem, and the representatives of all other political forces whether in South Vietnam or abroad for political reasons. But all three components are standing for peace, independence and freedom of South Vietnam.

We think such a government is reasonable, and not the monopoly of any force.

The third step: after the withdrawal of U.S. troops and other foreign countries of the U.S. camp, then free and democratic elections will be organized in South Vietnam. Through these elections a national assembly will be established and a constitution drawn up. And then a definitive coalition government in South Vietnam will be formed.

As to the question of Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam: after agreement is reached on these military and political problems, we are prepared to discuss them.

As to the Paris conference on Vietnam, I once again request that the U.S. appoint a new chief of delegation.

These are our remarks and also our proposals.

Mr. Kissinger: I appreciate the remarks of the Minister. I would suggest we proceed as follows.

I will make comments on political questions which I have prepared and brought with me, and then make some comments on what Minister Xuan Thuy has said.

I recognize that the political issue is the most difficult problem that we face in these negotiations. It is at the heart of the problem as far as the Vietnamese are concerned. It is what the war has been about for over thirty years.

I pointed out at previous meetings that it is the view of my government that there should be created a process to register the existing relationship of political forces. This, we recognize, is not an easy matter to accomplish. It requires two things: that we agree on the existing relationship of political forces and secondly that we agree on a political process to express this relationship.

These are problems which people who operate in the same political and philosophical framework have difficulty in resolving. Given our philosophical differences, this is especially difficult.

I have had enough philosophical exchanges with Special Adviser Le Duc Tho and Minister Xuan Thuy on the meaning of Leninism to know that sharing of power is not an evident conclusion one can draw from Lenin's theories.

I know that as Leninists you will agree with the proposition that there is no such thing as a static political situation. Our challenge, therefore, is to create a process which does not foreclose any outcome and

gives every party a chance to participate and an adequate opportunity to contest the political issues.

What we are trying to do is to bring about a situation where the contest in Vietnam is political and no longer military. We are trying to separate the military from the political struggle.

Let me put it another way. We will not accept a military imposed solution. We will accept an outcome that reflects the popular will as reflected in a process that you and we have agreed on here in Paris.

I repeat: we recognize that this is difficult to do, but this is our objective. If we both could agree on this objective, we shall have taken a major step forward.

Our objection to your proposals is not their objective. But their practical result is to eliminate the possibility of a fair process. They would predetermine the political outcome by selecting those you define as peace-loving and by smashing the political forces of those who are opposed to you.

Let me make one more general observation. There is a big difference between discussing political and military issues. On military questions, we can make very precise proposals because they can make a change in the situation only if they are accepted. On the political field, however, the mere act of discussing political proposals changes political realities, as you understand better than I.

Le Duc Tho: What do you mean that the mere fact of discussing may change political realities? It is difficult to understand your philosophy, which is a little tortuous. It is different from Marxist philosophy, which is very realistic and practical. Bourgeois philosophy is very murky. I find nothing concrete.

Mr. Kissinger: When the war is over, I will invite Special Adviser Le Duc Tho to the United States to lecture on Marxist philosophy.

Le Duc Tho: If this would be good, I am prepared to do it any time.

Mr. Kissinger: I have noted that when the Secretary General of the Soviet Communist Party speaks, it is never for less than four hours. Mr. Le Duc Tho should be grateful I never speak more than one half hour.

Le Duc Tho: But since you came here for these meetings, sometimes you speak over thirty minutes, but say nothing concrete. Last time you said Harvard professors never speak more than 45 minutes.

Mr. Kissinger: Never less.

Le Duc Tho: Never more than thirty minutes.

Xuan Thuy: Please continue. If not less, take some hours.

Mr. Kissinger: It is very difficult to please my colleagues from Hanoi. When I say something general, they accuse me of not being a Leninist. When I say something specific, they don't like it.

If I may tell the Special Adviser one joke, I will then continue my remarks. Someone asked Anatole France if he had read Kant. France said no; he had read nine volumes, but the verb was in the tenth.

Le Duc Tho: I am waiting for the last part of your speech.

Mr. Kissinger: I will now respond to the Special Adviser's question. He interrupted me just as I was going to make my point.

Le Duc Tho: Please continue.

Mr. Kissinger: Let me give an example of where a political proposal could change reality: If I told you Madame Binh was an obstacle to progress and should be replaced, and you agreed, and she found out, I think you will agree that her morale would suffer. And therefore the degree of precision which is possible in making proposals depends necessarily on the imminence of a settlement at that time.

Let me therefore state a few basic general principles of our approach to the political problem, which I hope you will find concrete enough.

It is unreasonable for either side to believe it can select the personnel with which it will deal on the other side. You have demanded the replacement of certain leaders of the Government of Vietnam as a prelude to the negotiating process. We cannot accept this demand any more than we ask you to renounce the Provisional Revolutionary Government.

On the other hand, after a settlement and once there is a political process on which we have agreed, we would expect that the control of power would be determined by that process and not by outside forces—neither we nor others.

Le Duc Tho: No interference by outside forces?

Mr. Kissinger: Correct. That is an important point.

We both seem to agree that the political process must reflect the will of the people. This is why we both have free elections as part of our political proposals.

We admit that understanding Vietnamese politics involves procedures which differ from ours and involves a culture and set of traditions very different from ours.

We recognize that you have a question about elections, as you believe who organizes them affects the results. We are willing to explore with you various methods of organizing the determination of the popular will or of determining the popular will. We believe, for example, that there are many creative possibilities in the mixed electoral commission we have proposed, possibilities which go far toward meeting your reasonable requirements.

Le Duc Tho: This is not a move at all. It does not go far, this mixed commission; it stands still.

Mr. Kissinger: The Special Adviser always interrupts just before the crucial sentence.

Le Duc Tho: I am always waiting for the crucial sentence.

Mr. Kissinger: His Leninist powers of prediction fail him.

Le Duc Tho: I have powers of prediction. This is just like Kleber. Nothing new.

Mr. Kissinger: I was going to say: And we are willing to entertain other proposals to achieve these objectives.

You also should understand that we are prepared to discuss the relationship between free elections and how political power is shared. For example, the following types of questions could be discussed:

—whether elections for the executive should be direct or indirect through elections for a parliament;
—how electoral districts can be drawn to give a realistic expression to the real political forces in the country;
—the relationship between executive and legislative power and between the provinces and Saigon; and
—how elections would affect the future safety and vitality of political forces on both sides.

It may also be possible that the most realistic way to begin the process would be in the provinces and locally before resolving problems in Saigon.

Finally, the shape of an outcome will be influenced by the character of military questions. For example, you cannot have elections in some areas without local ceasefires. In any case, we recognize there is a linkage between military and political issues.

These are the general principles which I wanted to put before you today.

But let me sum up the proposals we have made.

—We have agreed, as you have requested, to the principle of total withdrawal of U.S. and allied forces.
—Second, we have given you a precise schedule for this withdrawal and have told you the timing of this schedule is flexible and will not be an obstacle to a solution.
—Third, we have told you we are not committed to the maintenance of any political force in power once a settlement is achieved.
—We have told you the methods which we think are appropriate to consult the will of the people but we have said that we are willing to entertain proposals you wish to put forward.
—We have told you we are prepared not only to discuss free elections in the abstract, but also the relation of elections to various elements of the distribution of political power.

Le Duc Tho: Please clarify this.

Mr. Kissinger: I am referring to such questions as the relationship of the executive to the legislative power, the protection of minorities, the relationship between the provinces and Saigon, etc.

—We have indicated that we are prepared to discuss the relationship of military to political issues.

—We have indicated our willingness to link military and political issues, both in general and specifically in discussing ceasefires.

—We have indicated our willingness to set a target date for our deliberations.

Le Duc Tho: What do you mean by a target date?

Mr. Kissinger: When we began our discussions, I suggested we fix a date, a deadline, by which time we would have finished our work. The Special Adviser refused.

In short, we have shown good will and serious intentions, and we will not be responsible before history for any failure of these negotiations.

Now I would like to make a few very brief remarks about what Minister Xuan Thuy said.

Many of my remarks were included in the comments I just made.

I have not found in three sessions anything new in what you said, anything which you have not already said at Avenue Kleber.

Let me make a few points on withdrawals.

The Special Adviser and the Minister are simply making debating points concerning the sixteen month deadline. I have already said that we are ready to be flexible, if we come to agreement on other points. Although the six month demand is out of the question for technical and other reasons.

Secondly, a word about Laos and Cambodia.

(NVN discuss among themselves.) I am always hoping I can get you gentlemen to argue among yourselves.

About Laos and Cambodia: I am always very frank, and can therefore never tell whether what you say is what you think or for the record.

I participate in all the highest deliberations of our government. I know we have no intention of using Laos to put pressure on you in North Vietnam.

I know that we would have been prepared to settle for the status quo in Laos. I offered on two occasions, on behalf of the President, that we would reduce our military operations in Northern Laos if you will agree to cease your offensive operations.

We are prepared today to make an arrangement with you which guarantees the neutrality of Laos and guarantees also your security from anything which might happen from Laos.

As for Cambodia, we have no intention of using Cambodia to bring pressure on Vietnam and we have not used Cambodia to bring pressure on you.

We are prepared to make arrangements to guarantee the neutrality and inviolability of the neutrality of Cambodia.

The objective consequences of our proposal on the withdrawal of forces are sufficiently clear for us not to want to create other military situations in Southeast Asia.

I told you last time it is inconsistent with the purpose of our meetings to bring additional military pressure on the other side in Vietnam or in related countries. We apply this principle to ourselves as well as you.

To us it looks as if you continued your offensive actions in Laos all during our discussions.

You started new offensive operations in South Vietnam four days before I came here to Paris to talk in good faith.

This is why I believe we should return to the principles with which we started, to try to overcome the distrust which exists between us, and to make a major effort to settle this problem. You will find us willing to meet you.

As for the question of representation, we have expressed our point of view. We are well represented for the present negotiations, and we will adjust our representation to objective reality.

I would like to say again that I have come across the ocean four times, at my initiative, to see you gentlemen. I am prepared to negotiate in good faith, and hope we can someday look back on these negotiations as a turning point.

Thank you for your patience.

Xuan Thuy: I would like to propose a break for a few minutes. Then I will state some of my thoughts.

Mr. Kissinger: One more question: You said you would discuss the withdrawal of your forces after other questions were settled. You would discuss this with whom?

Xuan Thuy: I said, when we settle both questions, military and political, then the question of Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam will be mentioned.

Mr. Kissinger: With whom?

Xuan Thuy: We shall see.

Le Duc Tho: Principles are not clear yet.

Mr. Kissinger: I think that the Minister is more difficult than I.

Xuan Thuy: Since meeting with you, I have become more difficult.

Mr. Kissinger: You were always tough. Speaking for the Nixon Administration, we inherited you as opponents—we didn't pick you. We will pick easier opponents.

(There was then a ten minute break. Tho and Xuan Thuy consulted upstairs. The meeting resumed with pleasantries during tea.)

Le Duc Tho: (to Xuan Thuy in Vietnamese): Ask.

Xuan Thuy: May I ask some questions for clarification?

Mr. Kissinger: I would rather tell stories, but please go ahead.

Xuan Thuy: It is quite right that you don't like to answer, but I am forced to ask you to answer—although sometimes your answers don't answer the questions.

Mr. Kissinger: Intentionally. I learned from reading the record of what Minister Xuan Thuy said at Kleber.

Xuan Thuy: The first question is that you spoke about general elections, when they will be organized, whether they will be organized when U.S. and allied troops are still in South Vietnam or after complete withdrawal.

Second, you spoke about organizing elections in the provinces before going upwards. What is your intention in saying this? Why do you put it this way?

Third, you spoke of the distribution of power among political forces; please clarify this. I am not clear about that.

Mr. Kissinger: With regard to the withdrawal of troops, we would do it either way. If your side prefers to defer elections until all forces are withdrawn, that would be acceptable. If the election is deferred until the withdrawal of U.S. troops, it should be in the framework we have given, that is to say that all non-South Vietnamese forces should be withdrawn. Including your own.

Second, concerning the question of local elections. Let me be frank with you. Understanding the political process in Vietnam is not the easiest matter for Americans. I put forward an hypothesis and not a condition. I was going to say that if it turns out easier to start with local elections and local sharing of power, we are prepared to envision this possibility. It simply seemed to us it may be easier in some respects, but we don't insist on it.

On the third point, I indicated certain aspects of the apportionment of power which it might be possible to discuss. I did this because when one speaks about free elections in the abstract, it has a quality of winner-take-all. Therefore, we are willing to discuss precise provisions which would apply whoever wins the elections and how he would exercise this power.

Xuan Thuy: Now, I would like to make a few remarks on your exposé and your views.

First, on what you said about our not saying anything different from at Kleber. I disagree with you in this view.

In the past few sessions, we have been listening to you expound your general views and specific views. The exposé of your views was rather long. I therefore had to listen to your views and I listened to you very carefully. And if some point was unclear I asked you to clarify it. This shows our great attention.

I said I listened to you with great attention because Mr. Special Adviser Kissinger is a University professor, you have been following the Vietnam question for a long time, you have many views on Vietnam problems and you represent President Nixon to negotiate with us. We therefore listen very carefully, as there is some significance in your coming here.

In the military field, previously we demanded the U.S. withdraw rapidly and totally troops from South Vietnam. Madame Nguyen thi Binh has proposed six months. We support her demand. Today I presented in detail how this withdrawal should be carried out.

You said this proposal of six months is unreasonable and impossible for technical reasons. But in this regard we have high respect for the U.S. technical capacity and means of transport and its desire to enter Vietnam quickly. Therefore your withdrawal should also be quick.

As for political points, we have also said something new. Previously we just proposed a provisional coalition government. Today, we have proposed steps to be taken.

My second remark concerns your remarks. I remarked there are points which remained at their original place, others which made steps backward.

Mr. Kissinger: I always like to receive encouragement. For a second I thought the Minister would say some went forward. I thought we were making progress.

Xuan Thuy: But I must point out weak points before encouraging you.

Mr. Kissinger: I will say that I am never over-confident when dealing with the Minister and Special Adviser. Excuse my interrupting.

Xuan Thuy: The points at the same place are:

—Your continued demand for mutual withdrawal;
—Your insistence on the maintenance of Thieu–Ky–Khiem;
—Your downgrading still of the conference in Paris.

You said that we only agree with those who stand for peace, and discard those who stand for war. This is right—we like peace-lovers. Therefore Thieu–Ky–Kliem must be changed.

And what points make a step backwards?

For instance, this period for withdrawal. It was previously twelve months; it is now sixteen months, and the greater part is left for the end. In the first period it is withdrawal by driblets.

I just point out these points in hoping your future proposal becomes more positive and progressive than this one.

The third remark is about the deadline. You put forward a deadline of the first of July. We do not oppose this deadline for negotiations.

On the contrary. But the success of the negotiations depends on the U.S. If you come here with serious intent, success will come—and the sooner the better. It may be before July 1. If you do not come here with serious intent, then maybe later than the first of July.

Finally, I have to state that there are two ways open to us. First, the peaceful settlement of the problem. Second, the war can be extended.

We prefer the peaceful settlement of the problem, and the sooner the better. Therefore we welcome Special Adviser Kissinger to come here. And therefore we maintain the Paris Conference, although I do not attend after Ambassador Cabot Lodge left, but I stay in Paris.

I have been glad to talk to you at the last few sessions and will be glad to continue to talk with you. I wish to continue to talk with you and wish you to come to agree on big questions and reach agreement.

I know you represent President Nixon and have many views. I do wish we can settle the problem through the talks and therefore I appreciate your coming here.

I don't know about the future, but so far your plan is not leading to a peaceful settlement.

And what you have said about the U.S. having nothing to do concerning Laos and Cambodia, and the U.S. showing good will on these questions, I think just the contrary.

You said four days before your departure for Paris there was an offensive launched in South Vietnam. But hostilities in South Vietnam have been going on—sometimes they are up, sometimes they are down, sometimes they are standing still.

So long as U.S. troops and other forces continue to be in Vietnam, hostilities will go on. And I as well as Special Adviser Le Duc Tho said last time that so long as we do not come to an agreement, then hostilities will go on in South Vietnam.

The last time we have laid stress on events in Laos and Cambodia and you returned to the U.S. A few days later, a coup broke out in the U.S. [*Cambodia*].

Mr. Kissinger: That is next, after I return this time.

Xuan Thuy: . . . in Cambodia and we have come to the conclusion in the statement by our government which said it is precisely the U.S. which wanted to wipe out the peace and neutrality policies of Cambodia, to turn Cambodia into a neo-colony, to use Cambodia to put pressure on the resistance fight of the Vietnamese people.

You also said the U.S. would reduce its air activities in Northern Laos if the other side would stop its activities. It is not a matter of reducing the bombing, it is one of ceasing it.

I must point out that during the nine year resistance war against French colonialism, the French colonialists used the same methods by

seizing the government of Emperor Bao Dai, and using the royal governments of Cambodia and Laos to put pressure on the Vietnamese, to use these so-called "legal" governments to gain international standing, and to use these so-called "legal" governments to put pressure on the Vietnamese struggle. But the French were defeated.

Therefore, in conclusion, we should settle the problem. A settlement will be reached the sooner the better—a real settlement.

Now I give word to Le Duc Tho.

Le Duc Tho: Minister Xuan Thuy has expounded our point of view on political and military problems, and expressed our remarks on your remarks, and you have replied.

I would now like to add a few remarks on your views. I would like to speak very frankly and straightforwardly.

First, I would like to speak about the situation in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia—in the peninsula of Indo-China as a whole, and in what framework we are holding our talks now.

We should determine who has the desire of prolonging and extending the war. Who wants to make military pressure on the other side. And who has good will and serious intent in settling the problem.

In this connection, our views differ very greatly. Because if we don't clarify these views, it will not be clear whether you want peace or war. Because our assessment differs from yours. This is the first question I would like to deal with.

The second point is I would like to make some remarks of mine on military and political questions and Laos and Cambodia.

In the last two sessions, you said you wanted a peaceful settlement. You said you didn't want to make military pressure or negotiate from a position of strength. Whether your statement made us believe what you said, your practical deeds make us doubt the truth of what you have been saying.

Recent events in Vietnam and particularly in Laos and Cambodia make us think you do not want yet to settle the problem. They make us believe you still want to continue Vietnamization of the war, want to continue to expand the war to Laos and Cambodia.

Let us review events in Laos. For the last few years—2 to 3 years ago—we may say the hostilities were not so great. Hostilities were going on, but a normal level.

But who occupied first the Plain of Jars? The U.S. helped the reactionary forces occupy the Plain of Jars.

Therefore the Lao people had to strike back and reoccupy it. Therefore the consequences are from your actions. Now you have introduced Thai troops and carried out fierce bombing of the Plain of Jars. The quantity of bombs used for such a small area as the Plain

of Jars equals the quantity of bombs used against Germany in World War II.

And what is the situation in Cambodia? Although there were hostilities in Laos and Vietnam, the Cambodian people for tens of years have been living in peace, independence, and neutrality. Who has caused the coup d'état to wipe out the neutrality, independence and peace policies of Cambodia? Who has brought to power this reactionary group in Cambodia? It was the U.S. and no one else. We charged you with that. Many people in U.S. political circles, the U.S. press and public opinion, many people said there was the hand of the CIA in this coup d'état.

Your intention is to extend the war to the whole of Indo-China and to use mighty military forces in support of your policy to bring Vietnamization to the success and negotiate from a position of strength.

In Laos, you said you didn't want to use Laos to bring pressure. On Cambodia, you said the U.S. had nothing to do with events. This does not conform with reality.

The Vietnamese have a saying that you can't use a basket to cover a lion or an elephant.

Mr. Kissinger: I like that.

Le Duc Tho: It is quite true.

Your actions are decidedly tantamount to a prolongation and an extension of the war. It seems you consider events in Laos and Cambodia have no relation to the Vietnam problem. But they are parts of your whole strategy. You want to use forces in Laos and Cambodia to make pressure on the resistance war in Vietnam. The events in Laos and the recent coup d'état in Cambodia show clearly your intention of prolonging and extending the war. With such an action, how can you ask us to overcome mistrust, how can you ask us to believe you.

Through this coup d'état in Cambodia, it is clear your intention is to turn Cambodia into a U.S. neo-colony, as Minister Xuan Thuy just pointed out. You wanted to combine the reactionary forces in Cambodia with South Vietnamese and U.S. forces to annihilate the new forces in Cambodia. This to you is President Nixon's policy of having Asians fight Asians.

It is evident now it is your policy to use the military forces to settle the Vietnam problem—as well as Laos and Cambodia, on the basis of a position of strength, a position of power. In our view, it is only an illusion. I must tell you frankly. No militant power can subdue our people and the Lao and Khmer people.

The lessons of the failures of the French colonialists after a nine-year war and of your failures of the last few years have not made you renounce your ambitions.

You think military power can make our people submit. I think you are mistaken. Your defeat in Vietnam—where does it lie? Your defeat mainly lies in your wrong assessment of the political forces of our people in standing up against you. You have not fully foreseen developments. You rely mainly on your mighty military forces.

It is a fact that in South Vietnam our forces consist only of infantry. No planes, no helicopters, no tanks, no high speed machines. What is the cause of our success? It is precisely the union of our people, the political force of our people which helps us enhance our weapons, which are only infantry weapons.

Hence the strength of our whole people in fighting foreign aggression is in the union of our whole people.

Therefore the principal error of yours in Vietnam and Laos is precisely the point I have just made. But you have not drawn from your experience.

You thought you could use a group of military reactionaries to overthrow Norodom Sihanouk and it would be all over. It is too simple thinking. It is precisely your actions there which make the whole people of Cambodia fight against the agents of the U.S. They have responded to the appeal of Prince Sihanouk and the National Front of Cambodia. The Khmer people have stood up with all their strength to defend freedom and neutrality.

This situation has developed rather quickly. You are a researcher, and read a great deal of newspapers. You have seen probably that the Khmer people have united themselves in a very vigorous way. It is a strong blow against your design and your agents. This is the strength of the whole people.

It is a sign of your failure and your agents' failure. It is a sign of your inevitable failure and that of your agents.

While you are suffering defeat in Laos and Vietnam, how can you fight in Cambodia?

You have sowed the wind, and you must reap the whirlwind.

You are sowing national hatred between Vietnam and Cambodia. But the three peoples of Indo-China—the Vietnamese, Lao and Khmer people—have had traditional unity in the fight against colonialism. This cannot be broken by you. Now, faced with the extension of the war to Cambodia by the U.S., the three peoples will continue to fight to have victory, no matter how great the sacrifices may be.

Therefore, whether a peaceful settlement for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia can be reached does not depend on us only. It depends on you precisely. Just as Minister Xuan Thuy said, when you withdrew Ambassador Cabot Lodge and downgraded the talks, Minister Xuan Thuy stayed here. I am here too, we have talks with you. We wanted

to go into substance to settle the problem. This is evidence of our good will and serious intent. But in the meantime, you caused the coup d'état in Cambodia. It shows you don't want to settle the problem, you want to extend the conflict. You thought you could force us to submit. But you were mistaken. If you want to talk with weapons and guns, we must reply with weapons and guns. With all our determination and courage.

The fighting in Laos and the last few days in South Vietnam are only legitimate self-defense against your prolongation of the war and extension of the war.

You said that for the last four days, when you were coming to talk, we launched attacks. But while you are extending and prolonging the war, how can we refrain from striking back in self-defense? If you continue fighting, we will continue the struggle.

When you stop making military pressure, when you give up your intention of negotiating from a position of strength, when you are prepared for real negotiations, then we are prepared to really negotiate with you and to really settle the Vietnam problem. I think the door is wide open for a peaceful settlement.

Since President Nixon came to power, he has missed many opportunities to settle the problem peacefully. He doesn't want to; he still nurtures great ambitions. But if he persists in doing so, he will sink deeper into the quagmire.

I hope that being a professor who has made a long study of international problems, you will help to settle the problem. I hope you will maintain a clear-sighted view, and look into the real problem, so we can achieve a settlement. Then peace will be restored in the Indo-China peninsula. This is a fact which I would like to put forward frankly to you.

Only by putting facts straight forward can one clearly see the serious intent of the other side for a settlement. If one side wants peace, and the other war, then no settlement can be reached.

Minister Xuan Thuy has said, and I have said many times, that we do want peace. But with the situation you have created in Indo-China, how can a peaceful settlement be achieved? The war has not been limited—it was extended.

Now I would like to make some remarks on what you said about Laos and Cambodia.

It is true that you have come 10,000 miles to the talks. And we persevere, we stay here while you are downgrading the Paris Conference.

But we hope you will make some new proposals. If I am not mistaken, you have not moved an inch in comparison with Kleber, mainly speaking. Although you have made some specific points, they are stepping backwards.

Militarily speaking, you are always speaking on the basis of mutual withdrawal. Concerning political questions, you always speak of a mixed electoral commission, which was put forward by the Thieu Administration.

In these conditions, how can we put forward something new? Although these proposals are called by you going into substance, you are always prolonging the war.

Now I wish to clarify a few points in our position.

Today, you have spoken on political problems. You said that the political process should reflect the relationship between political forces in South Vietnam and the popular will in South Vietnam. But the conception of the relationship of political forces in South Vietnam and of the aspiration of the people of South Vietnam differs from our point of view and yours. We consider a settlement must be based on reality and the relation of political forces in South Vietnam. But what is the relationship of forces in South Vietnam?

If the Thieu–Ky–Khiem Administration can survive until today, it is thanks to your weapons. They have no force at all. The Thieu–Ky–Khiem Administration tried to assemble four or five groups to unite with them. But these groups refused. Thieu–Ky–Khiem are isolated.

The great majority of the South Vietnamese people want peace, independence, and neutrality. Many of them are not communists, not members of the NLF.

So what is our conception of this relationship of political forces? If you speak of the political forces of Thieu–Ky–Khiem, you can count them on your fingertips. If you speak of the aspirations of the South Vietnamese people, they want peace, independence, and neutrality. This is a clear expression of their aspirations.

As to the aspirations of a handful of people in South Vietnam, military agents, people like Thieu, Ky, Khiem—they want war.

I agree with your words that a settlement must be based on the relationship of political forces and on the aspirations of the people. But we have a different understanding of the words in practice.

We want a lasting settlement, national concord. We do not want to carry out reprisals against anyone after the war.

But national concord cannot be achieved with Thieu–Ky–Khiem because they are frenziedly opposed to the PRG and NLF and opposed to all those who are for peace and neutrality. How can national concord be carried out with these people?

If you continue to maintain Thieu–Ky–Khiem, then no settlement can be achieved and no national concord is possible. Because they do not want peace. If you maintain Thieu–Ky–Khiem, it shows that you want to maintain them to continue the war.

We do want to realize national concord. We want to realize a broad union of political forces. But the forces must all agree on peace, independence, and neutrality. How can it be with those who are for war? That is the reason why we have put forward the three steps.

Therefore when Thieu–Ky–Khiem are changed, then the Provisional Coalition Government reflecting national concord provisionally, including all political forces, will be formed. Then we come to national elections to form a definitive coalition government. General elections must really be free. There should be no military pressures from any side.

Therefore our proposals are realistic, they reflect reality, they conform to the aspirations of the South Vietnamese people. Only such methods will reflect correctly the political relationship in South Vietnam and register it in a political process.

Accepting such a settlement will be accepting really the aspirations of the South Vietnamese people.

This is what I have to say on your proposals on political problems.

May I speak now a few additional remarks on Laos and Cambodia. We support the 5 points put forward by the Pathet Lao to find a peaceful settlement of the Laotian problem on the basis of the 1962 Geneva Agreements.[4] But if you refuse to settle the Laotian problem in this direction, then the war will go on in Laos.

Concerning Cambodia, we have many times stated our respect for the agreement of 1954 and the independence and territorial integrity of Cambodia. We do not recognize the Lon Nol–Matak government. We support the 5 points of Norodom Sihanouk.[5] We are convinced that so long as the Lon Nol–Matak government remains in Cambodia, then the Cambodian question cannot be settled. This policy of yours will fail. Our position on Laos and Cambodia is clear.

Therefore, if we now review the few sessions we have had, our points of view are still very different. I hope you will look into the real situation in Laos and really negotiate with sincerity not only on Vietnam but also on the Laos and Cambodia situations.

If you do not seriously negotiate with good will, then the situation will continue to be serious, and the disadvantage will be with your side.

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[4] See Document 197.

[5] Apparent reference to Sihanouk's five aims articulated subsequently at a Summit Conference of Indo-Chinese Peoples, April 24–25. The five aims were independence, peace, neutrality, the prohibition of all presence of foreign troops or foreign military bases on Cambodian soil, and the prohibition of the use of Cambodian territories by foreign countries for aggression against other countries. (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives,* 1969–1970, p. 24030)

And being a professor, philosopher, and statesman, I think Mr. Special Adviser Kissinger should have a clear view of this reality.

I speak my mind very frankly, I say what I am thinking. You said you wonder whether what we said is for the record. I speak for the record and what I think. Last time you said you wondered whether we speak for psychological effect or say what we are thinking. I am not used to psychological warfare, as you have been doing. We are Marxists, we speak realistically and straight into a problem.

Naturally, you disagree with some of what I have said. I ask you to think over what I have said, this is the only way to settle.

As Xuan Thuy said, we are prepared to settle if you are.

Mr. Kissinger: I can now recommend Mr. Special Adviser Le Duc Tho for the faculty at Harvard. He spoke for 55 minutes, exactly.

Le Duc Tho: What is important is the content.

Mr. Kissinger: I will of course study the remarks of Minister Xuan Thuy and Special Adviser Le Duc Tho with great care. At an appropriate moment, I will give a detailed reply.

I would just like to make a few observations now, and then ask a question about where we go from here.

At the end of my presentation, I listed six new proposals and suggestions we have made. If I understood Minister Xuan Thuy, he listed as a new proposal he made the order of the withdrawal of our troops under Madame Nguyen thi Binh's schedule. As I have had occasion to point out to Minister Xuan Thuy before, a new proposal which interests us is what you will do, not what we will do. Spelling out the modalities of an unreasonable demand we have already rejected is not a negotiating proposal.

I therefore still await with interest some proposal on what you are willing to do when we do something.

As for Special Adviser Le Duc Tho's remarks, let me make some relatively brief remarks.

The Special Adviser said we are carrying out a policy of making Asians fight Asians as if we wanted Asians to fight Asians. As I have had occasion to point out to the Special Adviser last time, we don't want anyone to fight anyone in Southeast Asia. I don't think we should return to the Nixon Doctrine in this context if there is another meeting.

As to Laos, there is one reasonable, simple test to see who is expanding the war; to see who is advancing.

Having participated in all discussions in our activities, I would like the Special Adviser to report to his colleagues in Hanoi that they are completely mistaken about our intention and actions in Laos.

I agree with him it would be useful if we can agree on an analysis of the situation, because if we can't, then we cannot make much

progress. We are prepared to discuss immediately a ceasefire in Northern Laos. This would put an end to military activities once and for all.

As for Cambodia, I despair of convincing the Special Adviser that we had nothing to do with what happened in Phnom Penh, although I am flattered of the high opinion he has of our intelligence services. If they knew I was here, I would tell them of this high opinion.

Again, there is a simple test. Who has troops in Cambodia? Not the U.S. I am impressed again with the linguistic ability of the people of the Indo-Chinese peninsula. We discovered that the Pathet Lao speak Vietnamese, and now we find the same phenomenon in Cambodia.

We have shown great resistance vis-à-vis the bases you maintain in Cambodia and which you use in attacking our forces in Vietnam.

I do not want to discuss the history of Cambodia except to reaffirm that we support the neutrality of Cambodia and have no intention or interest in using Cambodia to put military pressure on Vietnam.

We are prepared to discuss immediately concrete and specific measures to guarantee the neutrality of Cambodia and to make absolutely certain it does not become a pawn in any international conflict. We are willing to do this bilaterally with you or in an international framework.

What is not admissible is for you to define what government should be in power and for you to use Vietnamese troops to change the government of Cambodia.

I repeat: we shall not be the ones to expand the war to Cambodia; we shall not be the ones to threaten the neutrality of Cambodia; we shall not threaten you from Cambodia; and we shall not extend our activities in Cambodia.

We shall be prepared to entertain reasonable propositions to guarantee that Laos and Cambodia—especially Cambodia, as it is a new problem—remain neutral.

What events in Cambodia prove to me is that the war in Vietnam sets in train events which cannot be controlled by any of the participants. The Special Adviser said that he did not know whether President Nixon wanted to end the war or extend it. You of course will make your own judgments. I can assure you—and no one is in a better position to know this than I—that he sincerely wants to end the war and will go to considerable lengths to find an honorable end to the war.

Now a word about the political problem. I will not debate with the Special Adviser his assessment of political conditions in South Vietnam. He and I disagree.

If he is right, I do not understand why he does not accept our proposals. We have said we will not intervene in political changes that occur in Vietnam as a result of free political processes.

The Special Adviser would like to exclude Messrs. Thieu, Ky, and Khiem before the political process even begins. We have indicated publicly, and I now reaffirm to you all in solemnity privately, that we are ready to respect the results of the political process even if it leads to the rejection of the political forces to whom you object.

Therefore the only thing we should need to discuss is how to arrive at a free political process not subject to pressure.

I have also listened with great attention to what Minister Xuan Thuy said about our withdrawal and the seemingly heavy emphasis on departures at the end. I do not follow the tactics of your side which professes never to be satisfied with any proposal, and the best we can do is to get back to the point of departure. There is some merit in the argument by Minister Xuan Thuy and I shall have to discuss with our technical people what adjustments are possible. I will use my influence in the direction of more emphasis on the first few months.

But the two key points that remain to us and where I do not see where we can go, are:

—First, with whom you propose to discuss the withdrawal of your forces and how to establish a relationship between the two processes; and

—Second, how we proceed to define a political process which does not prejudge the outcome in advance. And I repeat, we do not insist on a particular outcome for ourselves.

We have two choices. We can proceed and hide behind the complexities of the problem. Both sides are sufficiently intelligent, and particularly your side so well prepared in dialectics, that we can keep this up forever. It would be an academic exercise leading nowhere, and it would have to be done without my participation.

Or we can attempt, in the spirit of Minister Xuan Thuy's remarks—and I was moved by his final remarks—to approach again these two questions in a new spirit to arrive at a solution, and to put an end to the war during this year.

Our two countries are not natural enemies. There is nothing either can want from the other.

The President sincerely wants peace. History will not judge us by how well we conducted our debates but only from the facts we have created.

I would therefore like to ask whether you see any point in continuing and, if so, how.

Xuan Thuy: You are finished?

Mr. Kissinger: Yes.

Xuan Thuy: I have said that we prefer to settle the problem peacefully. War is something reluctant to us. If the U.S. prolongs, extends,

and continues the war, then the Vietnamese and other Indo-Chinese people will have to continue the struggle.

I may frankly tell you that all your explanations concerning Laos and Cambodia have not convinced us you are telling the truth.

We are prepared to negotiate with you. As to your proposal, we have remarked that there is nothing new. Indeed, they showed some setbacks.

Therefore, we shall continue the negotiations. We should think over each other's views, and we shall put forward new ideas.

Le Duc Tho: May I make a few remarks on what was said.

Mr. Kissinger: Please.

Le Duc Tho: It is natural that each has his own assessment of the situation. But my assessment, I can say, is not prompted by a subjective assessment of wishful thinking. Objective events lead to our assessment.

I think if Mr. Nixon really does not want to extend the war, if he really wants a settlement, there should be practical acts to show his intentions. I expressed my assessment on the basis of recent events.

As you said, the U.S. does not want to see Asians fighting Asians. But what is the fact? Does not Vietnamization intend to see Vietnamese fight Vietnamese. Was not the introduction of Thai troops to Laos, Asians fighting Asians? Now civil war may break out in Cambodia—what is this? You stand behind the scenes to support the reactionary forces. Therefore I say that President Nixon's policy is Asians fighting Asians. You say you would sometime like to discuss the Nixon Doctrine. I am prepared to do so. But not now, at an appropriate time.

You say there are linguistic attainments in Laos and Cambodia. But I must say we are an oppressed people who have suffered aggression. We have no intention of carrying out aggression against any other country. What is the origin of the situation in Laos and Cambodia? Not we.

Mr. Kissinger: Actually, yes.

Le Duc Tho: It is U.S. aggression. You say there is North Vietnamese aggression against South Vietnam. Is it reasonable to say that we aggress against our people? It is U.S. aggression against South Vietnam.

U.S. aggression is the deep root of the problem in Cambodia. You say we are advancing in Laos. But the present circumstances were created by the U.S. there too. It is obvious, as I explained, about the Plain of Jars situation.

We have stated our standpoint on Laos. The 5 points by Prince Souphanouvong and the Pathet Lao are now awaiting answer by the other side. We understand that the two sides sit down and discuss it in Vientiane; this is our desire.

I would not want to debate Cambodia as the problem is obvious. Our concepts of Cambodian neutrality differ. These are problems to be settled. How to settle the Cambodian problem? We have stated our stand.

You have stated some views on Vietnam. May I make some comments. You say we have put forward the same proposals as before, which you have rejected. But your proposals are not different from your previous proposals which we have rejected.

It is not true that we force you or oblige you to do something before we. These are negotiations. If you put forward something reasonable and logical, we will put forward something reasonable and logical.

We cannot accept your military and political proposals.

Your political proposal is not acceptable because we differ in our political assessments. We both agree there must be free general elections in South Vietnam. But in this political process, there should be a provisional coalition government. The reasons for this Minister Xuan Thuy and I have said. Because if at the end of the war, there are two governments existing, they cannot avoid a resumption of hostilities at some time. Therefore, we proposed a provisional coalition government to realize national concord and to prepare for free elections. And only by the formation of a provisional coalition government can peace be achieved.

These are my remarks on the political problem and a few additional remarks.

As to negotiations here, in a word, briefly, each side must make an effort to make progress. We are prepared to negotiate with you, as Minister Xuan Thuy said. So far, our positions are far apart. This is the difficulty.

Mr. Kissinger: What do you propose?

Le Duc Tho: We think your proposals need some further study from our side. But under present circumstances, in our assessment, it is difficult to settle the matter.

Because the intensification and extention of the war, as I have analyzed, does not show your good will. And your proposals do not move an inch. This is our analysis. So what do we do now?

Mr. Kissinger: Well, I have outlined six important respects in which we believe we have made important proposals in this channel. We believe, for example, that the electoral commission which you dismiss too easily could create an area of negotiation which could bring about a degree of interim control, at least over electoral processes about which you are concerned.

If you do not believe that further study of our proposals and further reflection will permit you to continue these discussions, then

perhaps we should have an interruption in the negotiations. We know how to get in touch.

On the other hand, if you are prepared to study these proposals and meet in an effort to bring our positions closer together, I am prepared to make one more effort.

Xuan Thuy: We think if you believe your proposal should stand now, even if we make new proposals, then we should interrupt.

If you think your proposal is just an opening proposal put forward for bargaining, and we shall make further study, and you believe you need further study of our proposal, then we could each study and meet again.

Mr. Kissinger: All right. I propose we attempt one more meeting.

Le Duc Tho: We are prepared to meet once again. But I think that if you feel at the next meeting your proposal should stay where it is now and there is nothing new, then we should stop here. If you have new proposals, we shall meet again.

Mr. Kissinger: I have explained to Minister Xuan Thuy and Special Adviser Le Duc Tho that it is inadmissible that we always make new proposals, while all you do is tell us the sequence in which we should withdraw our troops. If this is what you believe, the war will run its course. We have a different assessment. For you have your evaluation and we have ours.

There must be reciprocity in this channel. If you think this channel is a place for us to accept your proposals, then there is no point in continuing. I am prepared to look at our position again. I don't know the results. But there is no hope of success in these meetings unless you review your own position and unless we have an assurance that for the first time in these meetings we will have a real negotiation.

Le Duc Tho: Because you have requested to meet us, therefore we want to see something new in your position. It is not something we demand from you.

Therefore we would like to see something new in your position. Only in this way can we settle the problem. Otherside [otherwise?] we will be in contact later to settle the matter.

Xuan Thuy: In a word, you have not accepted our position today. We have not accepted your position. In addition to expounding these positions, each expounded views. We should study them, and whenever either side wishes it can get in contact with the other.

Mr. Kissinger: This is the right way to proceed.

Le Duc Tho: We stay in relations.

(The meeting ended at 2:30 p.m.)

223. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 6, 1970.

SUBJECT

My Meeting with Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy, April 4, 1970

I met again with Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy for about five hours on April 4.[2] I took a strong line as you had instructed, stressing that there was no sense in another meeting unless they were prepared to say something new. Though they were obviously prepared to meet again, without precondition, they were not prepared to promise this. Therefore, we agreed not to set another date now but to get in touch when either side was ready to meet next.

Because of the importance of this meeting, my report is longer than usual.

I. What Was Significant:

—When I refused to open, they spoke first, which they have not done before in any private talks in any administration.

—They indicated a readiness to discuss the withdrawal of their forces linked to ours, though they were ambiguous about with whom to do it and though they evidently want to negotiate our schedule first.

—They went somewhat further than before in indicating their readiness to recognize the GVN, calling it an "objective reality." They asked for the removal of Thieu, Khiem, and Ky but not the abandonment of the GVN. (We shall review their earlier statements to determine the precise nature of this modification.)

—They have thus made two significant concessions, which they would not have done if they had wanted to break the channel. At the same time, these concessions are so subtle that they cannot easily be exploited in propaganda with our doves.

—They did not state that the "Provisional Coalition Government" would run the elections.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 852, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. IV. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Sent for information. Handwritten notes at the top of the page read: "8:25 am, April 7" and "Camp David File."

[2] Document 222.

—They made a change in the composition of the "Provisional Coalition Government" from their previous proposals, especially recognizing the GVN as a participating entity.

—They agreed to our point that a settlement had to express the balance of political forces.

—They did not reject our proposal for a deadline out of hand.

—They were extremely concerned about the Thai troops and the bombing in Laos, abandoning the cocky confidence of three weeks ago for a somewhat plaintive and bellicose defensiveness.

—They seemed deeply disturbed by events in Cambodia, and uncertain how to reconcile this new problem with their previous plans and assumptions. They were so confused about it that when I offered to discuss strengthened neutrality and guarantees, they said neutrality meant something different to them and to us.

—They did not mention our air attacks on the Barthelemy Pass, probably because it might have obliged them to break off the contact.

—They refused to entertain any discussion of cease-fire, either in Laos or Vietnam, saying that fighting could not stop until all our forces were withdrawn.

—They established a clear link between the conflicts in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, though they did not indicate any readiness to negotiate with us on Laos or Cambodia at this time.

—We have established a good public record. We have offered everything except unilateral withdrawal and replacement of the leaders of the GVN *before* the political process begins—though we made clear we would accept their replacements as a result of the political process.

—The general tone of the meeting was harder than in the past two.

II. Reasons for the Failure to Set Another Date:

—They are now so obsessed with the Cambodian situation that they cannot say much more until they can see the prospects there more clearly.

—They have to consider that what happened in Cambodia was done by us.

—They have gone to the limit of their present instructions.

—The fact that our meetings are interrupted may be more helpful for the future than if they had kept going. We have got across to them that these meetings are not the place for pointless exchanges and they therefore have to develop a concrete position.

—Nonetheless, they did not want to break off or interrupt the meetings.

• If they had wanted to do this, they would not have made the concessions which they made in this meeting.

• They had several chances to break off the talks, but they would have been ready to meet without preconditions if we had suggested another meeting.

III. What We Have Achieved in These Meetings So Far:

Since we are obviously at the end of a phase (and perhaps at the end of the meetings), it may be useful to sum up their results.

—We have gained some significant concessions. They have abandoned the ten points, indicated their readiness to talk about their own withdrawal, and softened their position on political settlement somewhat. This is still far from enough to bridge the gap between us, but it is more than we have given them in terms of basic positions.

—We have established a good public record because their concessions are more subtle than ours and because our moves all appear very reasonable. We went as far as the liberals can ask, without giving away anything.

—We have interrupted the discussion on the basis of two issues on which we have a good position with public opinion: (1) we have given a detailed, short schedule of our withdrawal, and they have refused to be specific about theirs; and (2) we have indicated that we are not wedded to any government, only to a free political process. We have a good record: (1) vis-à-vis public opinion, and (2) if we have to go hard as is very likely.

—We have a good basis for not replacing Ambassador Lodge.

—When Le Duc Tho returns to Hanoi—as I expect he will—they will have some difficult problems to sort out. This may add to the current confusion on their side, and help prevent them from taking extreme steps.

—It is probably just as well that there is not another meeting soon, since we would have been hard put to develop further proposals at this time.

IV. What Happened:

—After I insisted that they should speak first, there was a somewhat protracted fencing which ended with Xuan Thuy making a speech in which he said that my withdrawal proposal of last week amounted to a mutual withdrawal and said that they "cannot accept this principle." He also presented their political proposal in somewhat fuller terms than in the past and with some change in substance.

—Thuy said that they recognize the GVN as a "reality," and that a political settlement should take place in three phases. First, Thieu, Ky, and Khiem should be changed, and a new Saigon administration

formed; second, a "Provisional Coalition Government" should be formed, consisting of the PRG, the Saigon administration without Thieu, Ky, and Khiem, and representatives of all other political favors; third, there should be elections, after U.S. withdrawal, to elect a national assembly.

—At the end, Thuy said that they were prepared to discuss their withdrawal after political and military issues had been agreed to, but he did not say with whom they would discuss it, though he strongly implied that it would be this forum. He repeated Mme. Binh's proposal for U.S. withdrawal in six months, and proposed the sequence in which U.S. forces should withdraw. He also said that we should replace Ambassador Lodge.

—I then presented our political proposal. In response to Xuan Thuy's statement, I said that we could not accept their demand for the replacement of leaders of the GVN, though we could accept that the control of power after a settlement would be determined by the process agreed in the settlement. I also stated that the Electoral Commission could be given important functions. I said that we were now well represented in Paris for the current discussion, and repeated that we would be prepared to appoint a successor to Ambassador Lodge when it was appropriate.

—I then listed the six proposals we had made in these talks: (1) we have agreed to the principle of total U.S. withdrawal; (2) we have presented a flexible schedule for a short time; (3) we have said that we are not committed to the maintenance in power of any political force after a settlement; (4) we have presented methods for determining the popular will; (5) we have said that we are prepared to discuss precise terms for the distribution of power; and (6) we have said that we are prepared to link military and political issues, both in general and in connection with a cease-fire.

—I again proposed a deadline. They did not agree to one, though they did not reject the concept as they had done before.

—I then stated our position on Laos and Cambodia, repeating that we were prepared to reduce our military operations in Northern Laos if they would stop offensive operations. (I later said that we would be prepared to negotiate a cease-fire in Northern Laos.) I then said that we were prepared to work out arrangements to guarantee the neutrality and inviolability of Cambodia.

—I pointed out to them that they had started new military operations in South Vietnam just four days before this meeting.

—In reply to a question by Xuan Thuy, I said that we would be prepared to hold elections before or after withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese factors.

—Xuan Thuy made a speech in which he said that he and Le Duc Tho had good will, and that he wished to continue to talk with me. He denied that the timing of the offensive in South Vietnam had any significance in terms of our discussions, saying that wars go up and down.

—Le Duc Tho then made a very long and tough speech in which he said that our views of the situation in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia differ greatly from theirs. He said that we had escalated the hostilities in Laos by taking the Plain of Jars last year and by bombing, and he charged us with the coup in Cambodia. He said that the people of Indo-China were united against us and would fight until victory.

—Tho also said that they agree with our statement that the settlement of the political problem must be based on the relation of political forces but that so long as we maintain Thieu, Ky, and Khiem, it shows that we want to keep up the war.

—I replied to his statements on Laos by pointing out that Hanoi's troops were doing the advancing. I said there was a simple way of solving the problem: negotiate an immediate cease-fire in Northern Laos.

—I replied to his remarks on Cambodia by indicating our readiness to discuss measures to guarantee the neutrality of Cambodia. I indicated that we would not be the ones to expand the war to Cambodia, to threaten Cambodian neutrality, to augment our actions there, or to threaten them from Cambodia. But I said it was not admissible that they should define what government should be in power there and that they should use Vietnamese troops to make changes in that government.

—I said the key points which divide us are: (1) with whom they are prepared to discuss withdrawal of their forces, and how to establish a relationship between their withdrawal and ours; and (2) how to define a political process which does not prejudice the outcome in advance.

—We then went into the exchanges resulting in the decision to leave the request for another meeting to either party. They said they would be in touch with General Walters.

224. Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Saigon, April 8, 1970, 0526Z.

933. To the White House Eyes Only Henry A. Kissinger.

1. General Abrams and I have been working on an overall assessment of the inter-relationship between recent events in Laos, Cambodia and Viet-Nam and on recommendations for courses of action particularly with respect to Cambodia. We have decided to send in the assessment portion alone through State Department channels (Saigon 5182)[2] and to provide the recommendations separately through this channel because of their sensitivity. Following are those recommendations, to be read as the concluding portion of the ref message.

2. We think some selected and judicious help should be given to Cambodia for reasons set forth in the concluding two paragraphs of our assessment.[3] Here are our views on the forms that such cooperation might take:

3. One important area where early help will be needed is in the economic field. We should engage in quiet discussions with Japan, Australia, Malaysia and Indonesia as to how we might help. One possibility might be a special fund attached to the ADB.

4. We recognize the cross-border operations and other forms of cross-border cooperation are a very delicate business. As indicated in our assessment the Cambodian Government cannot request or wel-

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 410, Backchannel Messages, Southeast Asia, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

[2] Telegram 5182 from Saigon, April 7, is ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 ASIA SE. NSC staff member David McManis summarized the telegram for Kissinger and sent it through Haig, who characterized Bunker's assessment as "a hard line view!" (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 145, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, April 1, 1970)

[3] The last two paragraphs of telegram 5182 from Saigon read: "As seen from Saigon, it is in our interest to keep the Lon Nol Government in being because it will cooperate less with the VC/NVA than any likely successor government. We think this is true even if Lon Nol came to a limited accommodation with the enemy. The most likely alternative government to Lon Nol would be a government completely subservient to the Communists if not controlled by them.

"In the military field, we should so conduct ourselves as to induce uncertainty and worry in the enemy that we may take advantage of his exposed position if he commits himself too deeply into Cambodia in action against the Cambodian forces." Bunker concluded that there were courses that could achieve this end while also reassuring and encouraging the Cambodians. He agreed with the Embassy in Phnom Penh, that assistance to Cambodia should depend on evidence that the Cambodians were doing all they could themselves.

come them openly—indeed they might request them secretly and criticize them publicly—and we also understand that such operations create problems in the U.S. whether conducted by GVN or U.S. forces. We expect such operations would create especially intractable problems if conducted in thickly inhabited areas of Cambodia. The VC/NVA are often established in or near Cambodian villages, and air attack against such positions for instance would create an outcry that we must be careful to avoid. We are also quite aware from recent experience that most cross-border operations cannot be concealed.

5. The purpose of cross-border operations, as we have stated, should be to induce uncertainty and worry in the enemy that we may take advantage of his exposed position if he commits himself too deeply into Cambodia in actions against the Cambodian forces. A subsidiary purpose, which can be served at the same time, is to restrain the South Vietnamese forces from ill-considered actions across the border which could be dangerous or unprofitable and would result in friction between them and us. We can only exercise control if we sit down with the South Vietnamese and plan jointly for cross-border operations and contingencies. We regard this as exceedingly important.

6. There are some cross-border operations which could be undertaken with military profit. These would be in unpopulated areas where we could strike selected bases, headquarters, communications centers and supply lines. On the ground reliance should be on Vietnamese forces. The main U.S. effort should be in air and artillery support and operational planning. We have in mind targets where there is virtually no population other than enemy military personnel.

7. There may also develop military opportunities and/or political and psychological requirements which call for penetrations across the border. For example in certain tactical contingencies we might help the Cambodian forces by allowing ARVN units to engage in shallow penetrations of the border, to a degree just sufficient to prevent the enemy from discounting the threat to his rear.

8. It seems from here that what we need now are preparations and where necessary the initiation of selected and limited actions to meet three ends:

A. To signal to the enemy that we are not prepared to stand idle if they pursue a policy of military or insurrectionary pressure against the Lon Nol government;

B. To avoid serious strains in our relations with the GVN that are bound to develop if we try to clamp total restraints on them; and

C. To give encouragement to the Lon Nol government at a time when they are most in need of it.

225. Memorandum for the Record[1]

Washington, April 10, 1970.

SUBJECT

Minutes of the Meeting of the 40 Committee, 10 April 1970

PRESENT

Mr. Kissinger, Mr. Elliot Richardson, Mr. Packard, and Mr. Helms

Messrs. Thomas Karamessines, William Nelson, and Marshall Green and General Haig were also present.

Cambodian Request for Military Assistance

a. The Chairman [Kissinger] stated that he had convened a special urgent meeting of the 40 Committee at the request of higher authority to consider the message received the previous day from Chargé Rives (Phnom Penh 485).[2]

b. Immediate cognizance was taken of the fact that the request conveyed in the message for arms for Cambodia was not only vague and apparently exaggerated but also unofficial. It was not clear that it had the official backing of the Cambodian Government, even though the intermediary was Prime Minister Lon Nol's brother.

c. A considerable discussion ensued during which the following decisions were taken:

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[1] Source: National Security Council, Nixon Intelligence Files, 303/40 Committee Minutes, 1970. Secret; Eyes Only. Copies were sent to Mitchell, Packard, Johnson, and Helms. Chapin sent this memorandum to Kissinger under cover of an April 13 memorandum for his approval and Kissinger initialed it. Holdridge prepared a briefing paper for Kissinger for this meeting in which he attempted to "sketch out the issues" and provide recommendations about such major questions as how much interest the United States had in the Lon Nol regime, and whether the Lon Nol government was solid enough to warrant support, as well as a number of other related issues. (Memorandum from Holdridge to Kissinger, April 10; National Security Council, Subject Files, Cambodia, 1970)

[2] In telegram 485 from Phnom Penh, April 9, Rives reported that an Embassy official met on April 9 with Commander of the Phnom Penh Gendarmerie, Lon Non (Lon Nol's younger brother), "in what was obviously to be first semi-official probe here for US arms aid." Rives instructed the Embassy official to listen and explain that the United States needed assurances, at least from Sirik Matak, that these were authorized requests. According to Lon Non, the "immediate need is for 100,000 to 150,000 weapons to supply expanding army. Ultimate need will be from 200 to 250,000 weapons and arms." Lon Non made it clear he was speaking for his brother. Although Rives considered the quantities of the request exaggerated, he concluded: "I believe we must do something to help the Cambodians help themselves since their present efforts are to our benefit; no troops and only limited aid given indirectly." (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, DEF 19 US–CAMB) Kissinger refers to this telegram in *White House Years*, p. 470.

(1) Since Chargé Rives is expected to see Prime Minister Lon Nol imminently, the State Department will dispatch a message immediately instructing him to ascertain from the Prime Minister if the arms request is indeed official, and if so, ask the Prime Minister to designate someone in whom he has confidence with whom the U.S. can work on the problem.

(2) Following designation of the Prime Minister's intermediary, we should ascertain precisely what the Cambodians think their arms requirements are. It was recognized that there probably would be both real and psychological elements in their requirements.

(3) Mr. Packard undertook to determine what stocks of arms and ammunition of communist origin exist in the U.S. and in South Vietnam which would be available to fill the Cambodian needs. He stated he would have a paper prepared on this by 13 April.[3]

(4) Mr. Green's proposal that a telegram he had prepared be sent to Paris was approved with a modification suggested by the Chairman.[4] The thrust of this message was to encourage the French to provide military assistance to the Cambodian Government.

(5) Various methods of delivering the arms and ammunition to the Cambodians without the U.S. hand showing were discussed. It was the consensus that if sufficient captured communist arms are available in South Vietnam, the quickest, cheapest, easiest and most secure delivery could be accomplished from there, assuming the GVN would cooperate. It was agreed that further consideration of making arms deliveries with the assistance of the Indonesians or the Thais would be held in abeyance for the time being. The CIA undertook to explore the possibilities of the Cambodians making open purchases from Belgian arms dealers with covert U.S. funds provided for this purpose.

d. The Chairman stated that following receipt of Mr. Packard's paper and a report from Chargé Rives on his meeting with Prime Minister Lon Nol, he would convene a meeting next week to discuss this subject further.

Frank M. Chapin

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[3] Nutter made an oral report on this issue to the Washington Special Actions Group at its meeting on April 14 (Document 230). The WSAG rather than the 40 Committee became the forum for further decision of covert aid to Cambodia.

[4] Sent as telegram 053784 to Paris, April 11. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, 4/14/70, Cambodia and Laos)

226. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 9, 1970.

SUBJECT

Cambodia

Attached is an interesting commentary on the situation in Cambodia which was written on March 23 by Brigadier F.P. Serong, a retired Australian army officer who has specialized in studying insurgency and spent a great deal of time in Southeast Asia.[2] Brigadier Serong makes the following points:

—Sihanouk colluded with right wing elements to run a pseudo-coup during his trip abroad, and planned to return to "re-establish" the situation. However, he was betrayed.

—Sihanouk will try to establish a government-in-exile.

—Cambodian border province chiefs are deeply involved with Hanoi, the NLF and Peking.

—With NVA/VC military support, Sihanouk probably could get the allegiance of the four northern province chiefs and topple the Phnom Penh government in a few months. Ultimately, he would hand Cambodia over to Hanoi.

—Ninety percent of the income of the southeast Cambodian province chiefs comes from supplying the enemy through Sihanoukville. As it becomes clear that the new government cannot control the traffic, the province chiefs, who are presently quiescent, will get back in the supply business.[3]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970. Confidential. Sent for information.

[2] Attached but not printed.

[3] Nixon highlighted this paragraph and wrote: "*K*, we'd better see what Helms can do to pay them off." On April 15 Kissinger sent Helms a memorandum asking if it was true that 90 percent of the income of the southeastern province chiefs of Cambodia came from allowing supplies to pass to the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese through Sihanoukville. Kissinger asked if this traffic would resume once it became clear that the Lon Nol Government could not control it. Kissinger then asked for CIA's views on these assumptions and "whether or not it would be possible through discreet use of funds to prevail upon these province chiefs to refrain from their trafficking in supplies to the enemy." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. II, September 1969–9 April 1970)

—The Cambodian government needs strengthening. We must take positive action and can do so by proxy through the GVN, who will probably act if the U.S. approves.

The GVN should:

—Announce support for Phnom Penh and invite Thailand to do so.

—Help Phnom Penh secure Sihanoukville; some 3,000 Khmer Serai in the Delta could be offered.

—Make combat liaison arrangements in Northeast Cambodia with the Royal Khmer Army. This could produce a most uncomfortable situation for the NVA.

—Phnom Penh must assert control in the Capital and in Sihanoukville and also maintain pressure in the Northeast. This could produce cooperation from the border province chiefs and logistical strangulation of enemy efforts in the South.

—The present Deputy Prime Minister Sirik Matak is capable of replacing Sihanouk as a national father figure.[4]

[4] At the end of the memorandum Nixon wrote: "*K,* These may be way out ideas. But they do show some imagination. I want Helms & State & Defense & your staff to give me some options other than just 'letting the dust settle.'"

227. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 11, 1970.

SUBJECT

The Prospects for Cambodia and Vietnamese Attitudes

We have received the views of Secretary Laird on the Communist capabilities in Cambodia and Embassy Saigon's views on these capabilities and on the prospects there, particularly as they

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. Holdridge sent this memorandum to Kissinger on April 8 with a recommendation that he sign it.

affect Vietnam.[2] Their views are parallel in many respects. Following are some of the main points:

I. Assessment

—Both the Secretary and the Embassy point out that Communist forces in the border area are stronger than the Cambodian forces, although their superiority is not overwhelming. Secretary Laird estimates about 19,000 NVA/VC combat forces in the border areas opposite Phnom Penh and further south to the sea. He estimates that there are only about 2,000 to 4,000 Cambodian troops in that area to contain the Communists, with another 4,000 in Phnom Penh. (We consider that estimate very low, since the Cambodians have been calling up reserves and redeploying their forces.) The Embassy gives an estimate of about 17,000 VC/NVA combat forces in the entire border area (not just opposite Phnom Penh), and also estimates that there are about 3,700 Communist Cambodian forces available to Hanoi.

—Both the Secretary and the Embassy believe that the Communist forces would be able to defeat the Cambodian forces, but would not be able to overwhelm them quickly.

II. Prospects

—The Embassy and the Secretary agree that Hanoi cannot tolerate the loss of its Cambodian sanctuaries, and must do something to remove the Lon Nol government or force a change in Phnom Penh's policies.

—The Embassy and the Secretary believe that the current outlook is for intensified Communist guerrilla warfare, using some mix of local and Vietnamese Communist forces to make Lon Nol change his policies or else to topple the Lon Nol government by bringing "people's war" to Cambodia. This would be accompanied by a threat to take Phnom Penh.

—The Embassy further points out that the loss of Cambodian sanctuaries and supply lines, even if temporary, will force the Communists to rely more heavily on Laos. The Embassy thinks that the upsurge in infiltration of supplies through Laos last winter already reflected Communist fears that Cambodia was no longer a reliable funnel. It thinks

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[2] Attached is a copy of telegram 5182 from Saigon, April 7; see footnotes 2 and 3, Document 224. Also attached, but not printed, is an April 3 memorandum from Laird to Kissinger, which enclosed a JCS assessment of the North Vietnamese/Viet Cong capability to attack, seize, and maintain control over Phnom Penh. The assessment was prepared by DIA and coordinated with CIA. It concluded that with reinforcements from other border areas and sufficient time and preparation, the VC/NVN could take and hold Phnom Penh in the absence of South Vietnamese intervention. Without time and reinforcements, prospects for an early seizure of the capital were "marginal." Wheeler sent it to Laird under cover of memorandum CM–5011–70, April 2.

that Hanoi will now attempt even harder than before to try to force a stop to U.S. bombing of the Laos trails.

III. The U.S. and South Vietnamese Role

—The Embassy believes that a principal restraint on the Communist forces in Cambodia is their concern about what U.S. and South Vietnamese forces might do if Communist forces leave their base areas. The Embassy believes that it is to our advantage to leave the Communists in the greatest possible doubt about this, giving them no assurances that they can act freely in Cambodia without provoking our involvement. It believes we should conduct ourselves to induce uncertainty and worry in the enemy.

—The Embassy also believes that we should not restrain the South Vietnamese from cross-border operations too long if the Cambodian government requests help. Such a suspension, in the Embassy's words, "could not be maintained for too long without an outcry in Vietnam against the U.S. and Thieu, especially if the VC/NVA start hurting the Cambodian armed forces seriously." If Thieu were to veto cross-border operations in case the Cambodian army is badly hurt, the Embassy expects serious criticism to build up.

—The Embassy also believes that we should expect secret and even open Cambodian overtures for U.S. and South Vietnamese assistance if the new government's position becomes increasingly threatened.

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228. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 13, 1970.

SUBJECT

Interdepartmental Meeting on Fourth Redeployment Increment from South Vietnam, 5:00 p.m., April 13[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 95, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam, Troop Replacements, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

[2] The President's meeting with Rogers, Laird, Wheeler, and Kissinger lasted from 5:08 to 6:05 p.m.; Kissinger arrived at 5:05 and remained alone with the President until 6:17 p.m. (Ibid., White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) No other record of this meeting has been found.

Purpose of the Meeting

The Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and I are scheduled to meet with you this afternoon to discuss the fourth redeployment increment from South Vietnam. The following is pertinent:

—You have decided to announce the withdrawal of 150,000 additional U.S. forces over the next year or so. You have also decided to keep this decision from the members of the Cabinet and the bureaucracy, as well as the troop contributing countries, exclusive of Thieu and Ambassador Bunker.

—At today's meeting you will convey the impression that you are leaning towards approving the withdrawal of between 35,000 and 40,000 additional U.S. forces between April 15 and August 15 of this year. In the interim we will consult with the troop contributing countries on the basis of this decision and only at the last moment modify this simulated decision to correspond to the facts.

—Therefore, the best approach at this afternoon's meeting will be to discuss your decision in the context of proceeding with a fourth incremental redeployment between April 15 and August 15. You should concentrate on the magnitude of the withdrawal increment and its implications in light of what has developed into a substantial disagreement between General Abrams and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on one hand and the Secretary of Defense on the other.

Likely Positions

Laird: Withdraw 40,000 troops by August 15.

Wheeler: Postpone any decision until June 15.

Rogers: Unknown, but likely to favor continued withdrawals at least at Laird's recommended pace.

We have sent back channel messages to Bunker to obtain his and General Abrams' views and to start consultations with Thieu on a strictly close-hold basis, discussing the year-long bite of 150,000 in conceptual terms.[3] *Bunker* and *Abrams* prefer the year-long 150,000 with-

[3] In backchannel message WHS0016, April 6, Kissinger informed Bunker of the President's thinking about the 150,000 troops to be withdrawn within the next year, but with only token withdrawals over the next few months to permit the military situation to dictate the rate of withdrawal and allow Abrams flexibility. (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 410, Backchannel Messages, Southeast Asia, 1970) In backchannel message WHS0019, April 8, Kissinger asked for Bunker's "definitive views on whether he preferred the 150,000 plan discussed in backchannel message 0016 or Laird's plan to withdraw 40,000 troops between April 15 and August 15." (Ibid.) In backchannel message 949 from Saigon, April 8, Bunker informed Kissinger that he and Abrams preferred the former. (Ibid.) In backchannel message WHS0022, April 11, Kissinger informed Bunker that the President "was leaning toward the larger bite" and asked Bunker to discuss it with Thieu on

drawal to the option of 40,000 the next three months. They cite the military advantages of holding the bulk of these withdrawals to the first half of 1971 and believe *Thieu* will accept this route. Bunker's cable is at Tab A.[4]

Current Situation

As we have approached the fourth increment withdrawal decision, differences of view have surfaced within the Defense Department structure:

—On March 13 *General Abrams* forwarded an analysis of the situation to the Secretary of Defense. He recommended that the uncertainties in the enemy's activities and the current state of ARVN and local force improvement favored a temporary hiatus in further redeployments from South Vietnam. General Abrams specifically recommended that you withhold any decision on further withdrawals for ninety days, at which time you should reassess the situation. (His position is at Tab B.)[5]

—In view of General Abrams' March 13 proposal, Secretary Laird requested the views of the *Joint Chiefs of Staff* regarding the fourth redeployment increment. In a memorandum to the Secretary they recommended that a decision and announcement on further troop redeployments be deferred to June 15, 1970, i.e., 60 days. (The JCS position is at Tab C.)[6]

—*In sum,* General Abrams and the Joint Chiefs see the coming months as critical in maintaining Vietnamese confidence. They are concerned:

• that the enemy logistic build-up in South Vietnam and Laos, the shifting of five regiments from III Corps to IV Corps, and the presence of substantial caches in II and III Corps suggest a possible increase in VC/NVA offensive activity during the spring and early summer of 1970;
• that additional redeployments will exceed the South Vietnamese ability to take over new areas of tactical responsibility and maintain adequate general reserves;
• that continued, uninterrupted U.S. redeployments could upset further progress in pacification;
• about the uncertainties in Laos and Cambodia.

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a conceptual basis without precise figures. (Ibid.) In backchannel message 00030 from Saigon, April 13, Bunker informed Kissinger that he told Thieu of the plan to withdraw 150,000 troops and Thieu agreed with that plan. (Ibid.)

[4] Tab A, a retyped copy of backchannel message 948 from Saigon, April 12, is attached but not printed. The original copy is ibid.

[5] Tab B, MACV telegram 3303, March 13, Abrams to CINCPAC and Wheeler, is attached but not printed.

[6] Tab C, JCSM–150–70, April 3 memorandum from JCS to Laird, is attached but not printed.

—The military's views closely parallel those of the *members of my staff* as the result of their visit to Vietnam in late January and early February.

• Dr. Lynn, who looked at pacification, was concerned that the rate of U.S. withdrawal could have a serious impact on this program which had progressed substantially but which was still spotty and leveling off, if not regressing, in certain critical areas.

• General Haig, who concentrated on the military situation, concluded that the first three withdrawal increments had deprived General Abrams of the necessary flexibility to meet a step-up in enemy activity over the late spring and summer. He judged that the improvement of the ARVN forces under the Vietnamization program has not yet provided the necessary capability to fill the gap. Haig was especially concerned about Southern I Corps and II Corps, which have already been seriously depleted and which would be further depleted during the fourth withdrawal phase. Haig's view was that the chances of success for the Vietnamization program would be improved measurably if we could keep the bulk of our remaining combat forces in place until the fall rainy season.

—On April 7, *Secretary Laird* forwarded to you a memorandum (Tab D)[7] which discussed the military's concerns, but which nevertheless concluded that there are strong arguments for continuing our redeployments. Secretary Laird presented the following arguments:

• It is true that there have been large movements of supplies from Laos towards South Vietnam. However, it could be that this has occurred in the past and that improved intelligence has merely pinpointed the fact this year.

• Although the enemy's logistic activity may foreshadow an offensive, there are equally plausible interpretations. Recent improvements in South Vietnamese security may be forcing the enemy to rely more heavily on external sources of supply. Sihanouk's partial embargo last fall on supplies moving through Sihanoukville may have caused Hanoi to increase shipments from Laos in anticipation of trouble in Cambodia. Finally, the enemy may be attempting to preposition stockpiles to maintain his flexibility so that he can take advantage of any tactical or political target of opportunity in South Vietnam.

• Laird notes that the logistic build-up has not been matched by a corresponding build-up in personnel. Enemy strength is at least 40,000 below June 1969 levels.

• The movement of five enemy regiments from III to IV Corps has not increased the net enemy force.

• Recent events in Cambodia complicate the enemy's problems.

—Secretary Laird has offered three basic *options.*

(1) Delay further redeployment until 15 June pending further reassessment by the JCS.

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[7] Tab D is attached but not printed.

(2) Redeploy about 40,000 troops between April 15 and August 15 at a reduced rate of 10,000 per month compared to the 12,500 per month we have been maintaining up to now.

(3) Redeploy about 50,000 between April 15 and August 15, maintaining the present 12,500 per month average.

—Secretary Laird recommends Option (2), which would bring us from an authorized troop ceiling of 434,000 on April 15 to a new authorized ceiling of 394,000 on August 15.

Talking Points

In order to keep the discussion focused on the small bite course of action and to give the military an opportunity to fully express its views, I recommend that you attempt to center today's discussion on the military situation as seen from the perspective of General Abrams and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In doing so, you should also permit Secretary Laird to discuss fully the political/military considerations that have influenced him to overrule the recommendation of the JCS with respect to the fourth tranche. Finally, your discussion should include some of the steps which should be taken immediately with our allies to prepare for your announcement on Thursday, April 16.[8]

In order to do this, you should suggest at the conclusion of the discussion that you are leaning towards proceeding with the withdrawal of between 35,000 and 40,000 additional U.S. troops between April 15 and August 15. This decision will likely prove to be a great disappointment to the military and will set the stage for your actual subsequent decision, which will not be made known until just before your announcement.

—Ask Mr. Kissinger to summarize the current situation and the respective views of General Abrams, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Defense.

—Following the brief résumé by Mr. Kissinger, ask General Wheeler to outline the views of General Abrams and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

—Ask Secretary Laird to summarize his views in the light of General Wheeler's presentation.

—Ask Secretary Rogers to present his views, in the light of earlier arguments.

—Emphasize that you are fully sympathetic with the risks which have been outlined by General Wheeler and General Abrams, while pointing out that there are a host of political as well as military considerations which must be taken into account. These include a

[8] The announcement was postponed until April 20; see footnote 2, Document 236.

resurgence of Congressional opposition to the war, which has been intensified by recent developments in Laos and Cambodia and which could be manifested by imposed fiscal constraints on our activities in Laos.

—Emphasize that you consider the situation in Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam to be one ball of wax and that our actions in each area could have a major impact on Hanoi's calculations with respect to a negotiated settlement.

—In your view, some of the most pertinent considerations with respect to the next withdrawal decision are:

(1) The overall patterns of combat activity continue to trend downwards.
(2) The reduction of U.S. forces has constituted the principal incentive to the GVN to maintain the momentum of Vietnamization.
(3) The reduction of U.S. forces is a major factor contributing to public and Congressional support for Vietnamization.
(4) The economics of additional delays in withdrawals will place severe burdens on other Defense expenditures.

—In view of the foregoing you are leaning towards proceeding with an announcement next Thursday to withdraw additional forces of between 35,000 and 40,000 by August 15.

—Ask Dr. Kissinger to coordinate with State and Defense in preparing the required scenario for necessary consultation and notification to the troop contributing countries and other appropriate allies.

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229. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 14, 1970.

SUBJECT

Actions in Cambodia

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1002, Haig Special Files, Staff Memos, 11/30/69–7/23/70. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

Attached is an interim progress report from Director Helms[2] on two actions taken in Cambodia to sustain the present regime. The report states that:

—A senior CIA officer has been sent to Phnom Penh and is now in contact with our best placed agent in the Cambodian government. He is expected to return to Washington during the middle of next week with a full report on the current situation there.[3]

—A world-wide propaganda effort is well under way to call attention to the flagrant violation of Cambodian territory by the North Vietnamese, to seek to discredit Sihanouk's efforts to create an exile government, and to emphasize the value of a genuinely neutral Cambodia.

Director Helms also reports that other measures are being considered which might provide support for the current regime. At the present time actions such as black radio broadcasts stressing the Chinese and North Vietnamese threat appear to be counter-productive. However, two proposals are recommended:

—Jamming for the next month or so broadcasts from Hanoi and Peking supporting Sihanouk and directed towards Cambodia.

—Increasing Voice of America broadcasts to two hours a day.

Director Helms believes these efforts to counteract the Chinese and North Vietnamese propaganda campaign on Sihanouk's behalf might be very useful in the current situation. They would also provide a clear but discreet signal to Cambodia that we are willing to help in ways that would not impair their neutrality. State and USIA have apparently rejected these proposals. However, I believe they have merit.

Recommendation:[4]

That you approve my working with State, Defense and USIA to institute selective jamming of broadcasts to Cambodia from Hanoi and Peking and to increase Voice of America broadcasts to Cambodia.

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[2] The progress report was an attached April 10 memorandum from Helms to Kissinger. Helms wrote a note next to the paragraph about this action reminding Kissinger: "You alone know this [the dispatch of a CIA senior officer to Phnom Penh]."

[3] On April 15 Kissinger sent Nixon a summary of the senior officer's conversation with the agent. The agent stated that Lon Nol did not want to ask the United States for aid unless absolutely necessary and then it should be given "quietly." Kissinger noted that the agent was unaware of Cambodian approaches to the U.S. for military aid and that the Cambodian search for arms from other nations was not yielding much. Finally, the agent described the internal situation in Cambodia as quiet, the army as loyal, and reported that the Lon Nol government is sending propaganda teams to the countryside seeking to win over the people. The agent predicted that a republic would be established by popular referendum within 3 months. (Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, April 15; ibid., Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970, [1 of 2])

[4] Nixon initialed the "approve" option.

230. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, April 14, 1970, 2:47–4:10 p.m.

SUBJECT

Cambodia and Laos

PARTICIPATION

Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger

CIA
Thomas H. Karamessines
William Nelson

Defense
G. Warren Nutter
Lt. Col. Gerald H. Britten

JCS
Admiral Nels C. Johnson

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Marshall Green

NSC Staff
John Holdridge
Col. Richard Kennedy
D. Keith Guthrie

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Cambodia

The WSAG considered possible types and quantities of US assistance to Cambodia. All WSAG members agreed that the key issue was to determine the level of assistance that would reassure and help stabilize the Lon Nol Government and at the same time avoid stimulating the North Vietnamese to mount an all-out attack. The WSAG members agreed that more information was needed on Cambodian arms requirements.

The WSAG decided that Chargé Rives should be instructed to tell Matak at their meeting on April 15 that the United States can supply immediately 1,500 AK–47's from South Vietnam and can provide 1,500 more shortly. He will state that we plan to arrange for delivery through the South Vietnamese Government to a point which the Cambodian Government designates. However, our offer will not be conditional on

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

Cambodian acceptance of the use of the South Vietnamese as intermediaries. Chargé Rives will also inform Matak that we are prepared to give the Cambodians medical supplies either overtly or covertly, as the Cambodians prefer. He will seek more information on Cambodian requirements for arms and ammunition. The telegram of instructions to Chargé Rives is to be prepared by the State Department and cleared with Dr. Kissinger.[2]

The WSAG also decided that Embassy Djakarta should be instructed to ask the Indonesian Government whether it would be willing to sell AK–47 rifles and ammunition to Cambodia.[3]

The WSAG members agreed that it was desirable to encourage other countries to help the Lon Nol regime. In this connection, Dr. Kissinger will consult with Secretary Laird about urging Australian aid to Cambodia during the Australian Defense Minister's current visit to Washington.

The WSAG members agreed that an immediate Presidential decision should be sought regarding Souvanna's request for a second Thai battalion. Dr. Kissinger will prepare and clear with the State Department a memorandum to the President setting forth the advantages and disadvantages and requesting a decision.[4]

[Omitted here are the minutes of the meeting.]

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[2] Flash telegram 055340 to Phnom Penh, April 15. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, DEF 19 US–CAMB)

[3] Flash telegram 055342 to Djakarta, April 15. (Ibid., POL 27 CAMB)

[4] For the memorandum as sent, see Document 231.

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231. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Additional Thai Forces for Laos

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 567, Country Files, Far East, Thailand, Thai Involvement in Laos. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. Sent for action. Holdridge and Kennedy sent this memorandum to Kissinger on April 14 recommending that he sign it and indicating U. Alexis Johnson had cleared it.

Souvanna has asked for another Thai infantry battalion.[2] There is a battalion at Udorn which could be readied quickly although we may need to provide some weapons and other equipment.

The pros and cons of putting in the second battalion are not very different from those we considered in coming to the decision to agree to the first unit.

The Pros

—The first battalion was put in place without any significant notice—there have been no kick-backs so far. The risk of public attention focusing on the second may not be great. Thai forces already on the ground are credited with having bucked up the morale of Vang Pao's forces and contributing to the stand-off they have been able to maintain. The situation remains tenuous and we have several weeks yet to go before the rains take their toll on the North Vietnamese advance. The second battalion with its artillery support could do much to strengthen the defenses and give Vang Pao another useful shot in the arm. Moreover, it could free some Lao forces to bolster the defense of the strong point at Bouam Long which thus far has tied down much of the North Vietnamese reserve that otherwise could have been brought to bear against Long Tieng. The additional strength also may deter a North Vietnamese advance along routes 7 and 13 toward Vang Vien or Vientiane by increasing the threat on their flank.

The Cons

—On the other hand there is still no assurance that Long Tieng can be held. While a second Thai battalion would aid in that effort it would provide no guarantee. We still run some risk that the introduction of these forces would become known and result in a domestic outcry which might inhibit our future air operations in Laos. The problem of affecting an orderly withdrawal and preventing a serious loss of Thai forces would be more complicated (but not insurmountably so). These additional Thai forces might give the North Vietnamese an incentive to intensify their attacks. Moreover, the use of Thai forces will detract from their counterinsurgency activities in Thailand. We cannot be sure that this will be the last such request—it may be only the second in an escalating series. The Chinese might also react by stepping up their support of the insurgency in Northern Thailand.

We do not know whether Souvanna has directly approached the Thai with this request. Nor are we sure that the plans for employment

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[2] Souvanna's request of April 11 is attached to a memorandum from Helms to Kissinger and others, April 11. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 567, Country Files, Far East, Thailand, Thai Involvement in Laos)

of the unit have been agreed between them. We will need to confirm both of these points before we act.

Recommendation:[3]

That you approve our indication of willingness to agree to the introduction of a second Thai battalion subject to confirmation of a Lao request to the Thai and Lao-Thai agreement as to the concept for its employment.

[3] Nixon initialed the approve option.

232. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 15, 1970.

SUBJECT

Delivery of Arms and Ammunition to the Cambodian Government

1. This memorandum responds to a request from General Haig for a plan for the delivery of arms and ammunition to the Cambodian Government. In the light of decisions taken at the WSAG Meeting of 14 April[2] to supply captured AK–47 weapons, we are outlining below alternative plans which might be implemented if the captured AK–47 route proves not adequate or feasible.

2. *The Cambodian Army and its Weapons Supply:*

The Cambodian Army (FARK) has a troop strength of 50,000 men including 10,000 reservists who were recalled to active duty in March 1970. The Army is organized into 55 infantry and commando battalions with the average strength of 380 men in each battalion. The Army has in addition nine one-half brigades (Demi-Brigade) of various sizes.

3. This regular Army is supplemented by an estimated 50,000 militia which includes 30,000 home guards, 15,000 provincial guards, 6,000

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970. Secret; Eyes Only.

[2] See Document 230.

police and 5,000 members of the National Youth Movement. This militia is under the command control of the Cambodian Army.

4. The Cambodian Army has been supplied military aid by both Communist and non-Communist countries. In recent years it has attempted to equip the standard Cambodian infantry battalion with the 7.62mm Communist-manufactured family of weapons. This round is not compatible with the 7.62mm bullet used in NATO equipment. Moreover, the ammunition clip is not interchangeable. The basic weapon of each battalion is the AK–47 assault rifle. The battalion generally has 150 rifles. In addition, each battalion has 40 pistols, 120 carbines, 18 light machine-guns, 3 heavy machine-guns, 5 mortars, 3 recoilless rifles and 7 rocket launchers.

5. We have sensitive documentary intelligence listing the inventory of Communist-supplied weapons currently held in Cambodian warehouses under FARK control. (See Attachment A)[3] This currently stored equipment could equip almost 43 Cambodian Army infantry battalions. The Cambodians have also received weapons and ammunition from the Free World. This equipment was supplied by the United States until 1963 and by the French who have continued a military assistance program. Attachment B[4] lists such matériel currently in Cambodian warehouses. We have, however, no idea of its condition. If in good condition, this matériel would equip up to 30 Cambodian Army battalions. A major problem facing the Cambodians is the continued supply of ammunition for either of its family of weapons. Cambodia has no capability to manufacture ammunition. On the basis of our current information, however, it would seem that the Cambodian Army is capable of considerable expansion simply by the use of stocks of weapons held in their warehouses.

6. *Alternative Means of Covertly Supplying Weapons to the Cambodian Army:*

If the United States wishes to supply covertly weapons and ammunition to the Cambodians in addition to what can be provided by use of captured Communist weapons, there appear to be two immediate options open to us. These are to work out an arrangement with the Indonesian Government to supply the Communist family of weapons drawn from Indonesian stocks *or* to provide direct covert support from Free World weapons drawn from American stockpiles.

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[3] Attachment A, entitled "Cambodia: Inventory of Communist-Supplied Weapons and Ammunition, 1969," is attached but not printed.

[4] Attachment B, entitled "Cambodia: Inventory of Selected Free World-Supplied Weapons and Ammunition," is attached but not printed.

7. We believe the Indonesian Government currently has 10 to 15,000 AK–47's. We do not know the condition of this equipment or whether there is available a continuing supply of ammunition and clips. The Indonesian Government is thinking of assisting the Cambodians.[5] The Cambodian Government has asked for arms assistance from Indonesia. The Indonesians would like to see the Cambodian Government maintain its public neutral stance and would want to supply arms to Cambodia covertly. The Indonesians have sufficient civil and military airlift to make an initial delivery of weapons to Cambodia. Subsequent weapons deliveries could be made by ship. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] feels that the Indonesian Government would like to undertake this assistance program to Cambodia but in all probability would expect the United States to replace these arms probably with NATO-type weapons. CIA could undertake immediately to negotiate with the Indonesian Government on a covert basis for delivery of such weapons to Cambodia.

8. The most promising alternative to the Indonesian proposal is the covert supply of weapons to Cambodia through CIA facilities. Such weaponry is now being made available to the Laotian Government. If our storage facilities [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] were used, CIA could stage the weapons delivery without enlarging current facilities. The Agency has 1,000 man weapons-pack in which the basic weapon is the U.S. M–2 carbine. We can make 10 such weapons packs available within the next three weeks and transport them [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] if given sufficient airlift priority. Each pack could equip three Cambodian battalions. [*1½ lines of source text not declassified*] We also believe CIA could move the equipment covertly to Cambodia using CIA-controlled aircraft. A continuing supply of ammunition and clips is insured with this equipment.

9. Before either of these alternatives is considered we recommend that further talks be held with the Cambodians to determine the extent to which they really need military aid. We believe they should be encouraged to survey the equipment now available to them in storage. If desired, however, we stand ready to move ahead with either or both of the alternatives outlined above.

Dick

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[5] In telegrams 2631 and 2645 from Djakarta, both April 15, the Embassy reported that Suharto indicated readiness to assist Cambodia with small arms if the United States would replenish Cambodia's stocks. (Both are in the National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB)

233. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, April 15, 1970, 5:22–6:06 p.m.

SUBJECT

Cambodia

PARTICIPATION

Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Marshall Green
Jonathan Moore

Defense
G. Warren Nutter
Lt. Col. Gerald H. Britten

CIA
Thomas H. Karamessines
William Nelson

JCS
Admiral Nels C. Johnson

NSC Staff
Gen. Alexander M. Haig
John Holdridge
Laurence Lynn
Col. Richard Kennedy
Capt. Richard L. Sansom
D. Keith Guthrie

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

A WSAG working group is to be established to provide a systematic factual basis for considering what assistance the US might provide to Cambodia. The working group will be chaired by Dr. Lynn of the NSC staff or by an NSC staff member designated by him and will include one member designated by each of the WSAG principals. The working group (1) will prepare an analysis of the military shopping list given us by the Cambodians and (2) will assess what would be a reasonable objective for the Cambodians to aim at in trying to improve their military capabilities. The working group will consider the second question from two standpoints: (1) if the Cambodians were to aim at conducting a holding operation against North Vietnamese forces and

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

(2) if the Cambodians wished to develop the capability to withstand a frontal attack from the communists. The working group will submit its report by April 20.

The WSAG decided that the State Department should immediately request the views of Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams on how to deliver the AK–47's already offered to the Cambodians, and particularly on delivery across the border using the South Vietnamese Government as an intermediary.[2] In the meantime, CIA will go forward with planning for covert delivery by air. The WSAG will meet April 16 to consider the reply expected from Ambassador Bunker.

[Omitted here are the minutes of the meeting.]

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[2] In responding to telegram 056264 to Saigon, April 15, Bunker reported in telegram 5801 from Saigon, April 16, and in backchannel message 80 from Saigon, also April 16, that he had consulted with Abrams and there was no question about GVN's cooperation, but that cross-border ground delivery became more difficult and risky daily in view of VC/NVA occupation of a 10 kilometer strip of Cambodian territory along the border. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27–7 VIET S, and ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 410, Backchannel Messages, Southeast Asia, 1970)

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234. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, April 16, 1970, 5:50–5:58 p.m.

SUBJECT

Laos

PARTICIPATION

Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger

State
Marshall Green
Jonathan Moore

Defense
G. Warren Nutter
Lt. Col. Gerald H. Britten

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room. Robert Behr sent these minutes plus those of the April 14 and 15 meetings (Documents 230 and 233) to Kissinger on April 21. Kissinger initialed and wrote, "OK" on Behr's memorandum.

JCS
Admiral Nels C. Johnson

CIA
Lt. Gen. Robert E. Cushman
Thomas H. Karamessines
William Nelson

NSC Staff
Gen. Alexander M. Haig
John Holdridge
Col. Richard Kennedy
Col. Robert M. Behr
D. Keith Guthrie

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The WSAG was informed of the President's decision to go forward with moving a second Thai battalion to Laos in response to the request received from Prime Minister Souvanna. The movement will be arranged on the same basis and according to the same procedures as were set forth at the WSAG meeting of March 26, 1970[2] to govern movement of the first Thai battalion. Press guidance will remain the same as for the previous movement. A contingency plan for orderly withdrawal of the Thai battalion will be prepared.

Kissinger: The memorandum which Alex Johnson cleared regarding the second Thai battalion for Laos was sent to the President.[3] He has decided to go ahead with moving the battalion. I suppose the arrangements should be the same as for the previous battalion. What diplomatic moves are needed?

Green: We should have formal requests from the Lao and Thai Governments. The guidelines for our diplomatic approaches will be the same as last time. We will ask the Lao and Thai Governments to take a position of no comment in response to inquiries. We will emphasize that our assistance with movement of the Thai battalion implies no further or broader commitment on our part.

Kissinger: Do we say anything more than we did last time?

Green: We will refer to our previous understandings [regarding the first Thai battalion].[4] Of course, we still do not have a formal request for the second battalion.

Kissinger: Can we generate one?

Moore: Yes.

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[2] See Document 212.

[3] Document 231.

[4] All brackets in the source text.

Kissinger: How quickly can we move?

Nelson: We are ready to go. It should be possible to move faster than last time.

Kissinger: [to Moore and Green] You should take care of informing Embassies Vientiane and Bangkok.[5] The scenario will be the same as last time, with the same qualifications. Our press position will also be the same.

Nelson: Last time we moved without having received a formal note from the Thais and Lao. Should we wait this time?

Kissinger: No, proceed just as we did last time. Will we have to provide any additional equipment for the battalion?

Holdridge: Two more howitzers will be required as well as some fire control equipment.

Nelson: We have enough already in Thailand to take care of these needs.

Kissinger: Planning should also be the same as last time. A contingency plan will be prepared for an orderly retreat.

Green: It is more likely that this time the Thais will come to us with a request that we equip a battalion to replace the one being sent to Laos.

Kissinger: On Cambodia, we will hold off an analysis of possible assistance until we receive our study of Cambodian needs.

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[5] Ambassadors Unger and Godley were informed of the decision in telegram 057059 to Vientiane and Bangkok, April 17, and told to obtain a formal request from Laos to Thailand formally concurred by Thailand. If the two governments did not wish to confirm the presence of Thai troops in Laos, they should adopt a "public posture of 'no comment.'" The Embassies should initiate plans for an orderly retreat of the Thai forces in case of defeat by the North Vietnamese. The U.S. commitment was only to the support of the additional Thai battalion and "carried no implication of any decision to commit U.S. ground forces either to Laos or Thailand." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. V, 1 April 1970–11 August 1970) In telegram 2708 from Vientiane, April 17, Godley reported that when he informed Souvanna of the decision, the Prime Minister "was visibly relieved." Souvanna and Godley noted that the original Lao request of May 24 for a "regiment of combat forces" covered more than one battalion. Both agreed that there was no need for another letter to the Thais. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS) When Unger informed Thanat of the decision, the Thai Foreign Minister stated that Thailand was "operating on the basis of a formal request from the RLG." (Telegram 4620 from Bangkok, April 17; ibid., DEF 19 THAI–LAOS)

235. Memorandum From the Senior Military Assistant (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 16, 1970.

I just wanted to leave you with a list of actions which I interpreted as directives from today's meeting with the President, yourself, Helms and Cushman.[2]

[*1 heading and 4 paragraphs (10 lines of source text) not declassified*]

Laos

Concerning Laos, the President decided the following:

1. He wants maximum B–52 and tactical air strikes in support of the Royal Laotian forces. (Laird has been told this on countless occasions and I thinking he is so doing. In any case, the directive concerning the level of B–52 and tactical air support in South Vietnam and Southeast Asia in general [see Vietnam item #3][3] should ensure that the overall wind down does not cripple these operations.)

2. He ordered the movement of the second Thai battalion into Laos and the readying of a third battalion, if required.

Cambodia

1. The President indicated that he wanted not only the AK–47's but the 1,000-man packs without being specific as to numbers provided to the Cambodian Government.

2. He favored covert airlift under CIA.

3. He wanted CIA to actively search out additional initiatives which could be taken in the covert field to support the Cambodians.

4. He wanted CIA to get the word out abroad, if not here at home, that the US was prepared to intervene militarily in the event Hanoi initiates direct attacks against Phnom Penh.

5. The President raised the problem of the blockade of Sihanoukville. I think Mel Laird should be asked to prepare a formal

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Not initialed by Haig. A note on the first page reads: "John Howe; OBE."

[2] Nixon, Kissinger, Helms, Cushman, and Haig met from 3:40 to 5:10 p.m. in the President's office in the Executive Office Building. Kissinger remained alone with the President until 5:35 p.m. (Ibid., White House Central Files, Daily Diary)

[3] Brackets in the source text.

plan in the event the President decides to implement such a contingency. This should be easy since they have been around the horn on it several times, but we should have a formal plan here.

Vietnam

1. The President mentioned that he had ordered attacks against SAM targets in North Vietnam. (As you know, Laird is moving as slowly on this as he can short of refusing to obey the President's instructions. I recommend that you call Laird directly and then have Jon Howe or Winston get Capt. Robinson to check out whatever answers are provided by Secretary Laird.)

2. The President indicated that a level of 200 casualties per week in Vietnam would constitute a basis for direct air action against North Vietnam.

3. The President instructed you to prepare a directive immediately to Secretary Laird which would require that he maintain the current level of tactical and B–52 air activity in support of operations in Southeast Asia for the next four months. As you know, this is a tricky question and if we give Laird any leeway he will reduce sortie levels regardless of the instructions that he is given. For this reason, I think you should not only provide him the instructions in writing but face him eyeball to eyeball on this issue. You should also provide the Chairman, JCS with a copy of your written instructions to Laird so that we will have some kind of a check on his future actions. Winston is drafting a directive which I think you should also discuss with Larry Lynn without telling Larry that you did not use his memoranda on this subject to get the President's approval for the action being taken. Incidentally, Larry is still working on his financial memorandum which I think could prove to be the most important single paper in the NSC at the moment.

CIA Activities World-wide

1. The President told Helms that he wanted a major step-up in CIA covert activities world-wide and further that Helms should focus on stirring up problems for the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. CIA action programs should be imaginative and include broadcasts and other covert actions.

236. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 16, 1970.

SUBJECT

Problems on Vietnamization

As you prepare for your statement on Vietnam,[2] I wanted to bring to your attention once more certain problems related to Vietnamization. Some of these problems were treated in the recent reports of General Abrams and the Joint Chiefs of Staff which I highlighted and enclosed as part of your briefing material for your April 13 meeting.[3]

As you know, I have been concerned for some time about the progress of the Vietnamization program. The recent enemy attacks on various outposts and installations, though not dealing serious military blows, confirm that they continue to maintain a substantial infrastructure and are able to conduct widespread operations. In this connection, civilian and military members of my staff and outside observers like Joe Alsop who have visited Vietnam have pinpointed the problems of our withdrawal rate and the ability of the South Vietnamese to assume increasing responsibilities.

Military Views

General Abrams' assessment (Tab A)[4] noted both progress and developing problems in such areas as enemy and allied capabilities, air and logistic support, and RVNAF effectiveness. He argued for a pause in any further troop withdrawal decisions until June 15, citing the following:

—Enemy logistical and tactical signs suggest increased VC/NVA offensive activity during the spring and early summer;

—US withdrawals to date have stretched the South Vietnamese ability to take over new areas of tactical responsibility and maintain adequate general reserves;

—South Vietnamese confidence must be maintained if the momentum of Vietnamization and pacification is to be carried forward.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 145, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, April 1, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action. The date is handwritten.

[2] On April 20 Nixon announced that he was withdrawing 150,000 troops "to be completed during the spring of next year." The text of the statement is in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* pp. 373–377.

[3] See Document 228.

[4] Tab A is not attached, but see footnote 5, Document 228.

The JCS analysis (Tab B)[5] generally parallels that of General Abrams, and they also recommended a troop withdrawal pause until June 15. They cite favorable trends in the military and civil aspects of Vietnamization but believe that gains to this point are fragile and the next few months crucial. They maintain that allied forces are stretched nearly to the limit of their capability and point to enemy capabilities, the fragility of pacification, and the implication of events in Laos and Cambodia.

You have to date announced three successive withdrawal increments totalling reductions of 115,500 men below the authorized ceiling since you took office. Your projected reduction of an additional 150,000 troops over the next year or so (the bulk in early 1971) will result in an authorized force of 284,000 Americans by late spring of next year.

Air Support and the Budget

Beyond the question of the impact of troop withdrawals on the ground situation is the factor of declining air support which General Abrams highlights in his assessment. Budgetary restraints imposed by Secretary Laird and resulting redeployments of aircraft out of Thailand will have a great impact on B–52 and tactical air support. Imposed budget reductions since July 1 cut by about 22 percent B–52 and Tac Air sorties available to General Abrams. Furthermore, he has been advised of additional budget cuts in FY 71 which will reduce U.S. air forces in Thailand to the degree that B–52 sorties will be cut by another 14 percent and tactical sorties by an additional 20 percent from present levels.

We are in effect asking the South Vietnamese forces to take over some of our past responsibilities while at the same time expecting them to do so with less air support than we have enjoyed to date.

When these reductions are considered in the light of the situation in Laos, the potential situation in Cambodia and your expressed objective of being able to initiate air operations against North Vietnam, the prospects become all the more serious.

I should add that there was a delay in receiving the views of General Abrams which he cabled on March 13. On March 30, Secretary Laird asked for JCS views on the next troop redeployments and on April 7 he forwarded his views (Tab C)[6] to you on this subject, incorporating the sense of MACV and JCS judgments. He sent me the full reports of the military on the same date.

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[5] Tab B is not attached, but see footnote 6, Document 228.

[6] Tab C is not attached, but see footnote 7, Document 228.

Conclusion

My overall impression from reviewing the reports of the military, Secretary Laird, as well as my own staff, is that we are making budget and troop withdrawal decisions today without fully examining the implications of these decisions for the future. We may not know we are in trouble until it is too late to do anything about it. Moreover, if and when we get into trouble, we may have no budget flexibility to cope with the situation.

For this reason, I am now reviewing in detail the current and FY 71 budget situation relating to our programs in Vietnam. When this is completed within a few days, I will forward recommendations to you concerning these issues. In the interim, I think you should direct Secretary Laird now to hold in abeyance any limitations on levels of tactical air and B–52 support to our forces in Vietnam and to maintain existing air forces—land-based and sea-based—in place despite the financial adjustments this action might require.

Recommendation:[7]

That you authorize me to inform Secretary Laird to this effect.

[7] Nixon initialed the approve option.

237. Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 17, 1970, 11:32 a.m.

P: On two things that are quite clear on briefings here. The line of our enemies and many of our people here are playing that Lon Nol may not make it and Sihanouk is our best bet.

K: Right.

P: The Japanese think so. Contact somebody—this is an order—can you contact your opposite number? Call in the Ambassador and tell him that we consider Lon Nol's prospects excellent and we would find it difficult in our relations with them if they supported the other

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 362, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File. No classification marking.

side. And convey to Sato that we would be upset if Japan doesn't support him. Get the CIA jerks working on Cambodia—I don't see this about two sides. Are we getting across the story that this is a fictious thing?

K: Helms said yesterday after my conversation with you that they would throw it into high gear.[2]

P: Lon Nol is it and I would urge wide-spread demonstrations against Sihanouk.

K: They have already.

P: Get Helms' radio to broadcast in there that Sihanouk is coming in with NVN liberators. I want a report on my desk today at 4:00 with his ideas. I don't want—I want everyone in this government to know we are supporting the government in power. They are to [omission in the source text] up that hill and anyone who does not follow this will be fired. Tell Marshall Green that if anyone disagrees I want his resignation on my desk by noon.

K: I have to get Laird to do what you said. They must follow your strategy.

P: Do it with Green or on the Johnson level. Tell him that you may have other views but the President feels this way and we are going to do that. There is no possibility of our supporting Sihanouk and we are supporting Lon Nol. Tell Helms to have printed one million leaflets with NVN and a picture of Sihanouk, saying "liberate Cambodia." Get my point?

K: Absolutely.

P: Get a program and have a report on my desk at 4:00 on how they carried it out.[3]

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[2] Helms and Kissinger talked on the telephone at 12:15 p.m. on April 16 about sending a CIA communicator and one officer to Phnom Penh. Helms stated that Green and Rogers had not yet agreed to the move, explaining it was a "problem of real estate and room." Kissinger asked Helms to write him a brief formal status report on the problem and assured the DCI there would be "no further negotiation" on the issue. (Transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Helms, April 16; ibid.) Kissinger discusses this problem in *White House Years*, pp. 466–467.

[3] Kissinger was not able to contact Rogers or Green because both were out of town, so he talked with Jonathan Moore on April 18 informing him of the President's insistence that CIA send a communicator to Phnom Penh. Moore replied that he would consider the telephone call a Presidential directive. (Transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Moore, April 18; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 862, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

238. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, April 18, 1970.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Kissinger
John H. Holdridge, NSC Senior Staff Member
William Nelson, CIA
[*name not declassified*]

SUBJECT

Dr. Kissinger's Conversation with CIA Officer Recently in Phnom Penh

[*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], explained that he had been sent to Phnom Penh on the QT to contact the Agency's number one agent in Cambodia and to get from him a better feel for the realities of the situation. (This agent [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] has been working for CIA for quite some time and has simply worked his way up through the bureaucracy.) [*1 line of source text not declassified*], going to Phnom Penh in the course of a swing through Europe so as to avoid running into people who might recognize him. [*1 line of source text not declassified*]

[*1 line of source text not declassified*], extremely euphoric over the political change in Cambodia. [*name not declassified*] was a dedicated man who hated Sihanouk and all he stood for and he now felt there was a good chance for Cambodia to make some progress.

Dr. Kissinger asked how the coup had come off. He had heard Sihanouk had staged the anti-Hanoi and anti-PRG demonstrations, and that these had gotten out of control. Was this possible? [*name not declassified*] replied that they, meaning General Lon Nol and Vice Premier Sirik Matak, had done it. Mr. Nelson said that Lon Nol and Matak had been put into power last summer by Sihanouk to improve the economy, and were still working with him when he left for Europe although they were very disturbed at the increasing NVA/VC use of the country. There was some question as to whether the demonstrations against the Hanoi and PRG Embassies were spontaneous, but the feeling against the Communists in Cambodia was widespread, particularly in the cities, and emboldened Lon Nol and Matak to go farther than they had originally intended. However, they had sent an emissary to

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Holdridge sent this memorandum to Kissinger on April 21 and Kissinger initialed his approval. (Covering memorandum from Holdridge to Kissinger, April 21; ibid.)

Sihanouk to ask him to join them, but Sihanouk had refused to see him. Sihanouk must have been badly advised. Perhaps he felt that he could handle the situation, and that it was not really so serious. There was no indication that Sihanouk was behind the demonstrations.

Returning to the subject of [*name not declassified*] euphoria, [*name not declassified*] said that this euphoria did not seem to be accompanied by a realization of the practical requirements. [*name not declassified*] had not focussed on such questions as weapons and the VC encampments in Cambodia, and he, [*name not declassified*], felt that here was another small Southeast Asian country where nobody knew what was going on. The country was not too badly off financially, though—all the assets which Cambodia had possessed under Sihanouk had come into the hands of the Lon Nol Government, plus the "palace funds" which had been socked away by Sihanouk.

Dr. Kissinger mentioned he had heard that Lon Nol had been involved in supplying the VC, and wondered why Lon Nol had changed. Mr. Nelson confirmed that a Hong Kong Chinese had handled the financing of the supply arrangements for the VC through Cambodia, and that this Chinese had made pay-offs to Lon Nol and Sirik Matak with the understanding and the blessing of Sihanouk. He personally could not account for the shift on Lon Nol's part. Mr. Holdridge commented that since Lon Nol had been in effect operating under orders, he may have concluded that he might as well enjoy some of the benefits. This would not, however, necessarily mean that he approved of what Sihanouk was doing and he could have welcomed the opportunity to move against the Communists.

[*name not declassified*] observed that the Cambodians figure the next thirty days are critical. They believe that the people are on their side, and have come to realize that the many silly things that Sihanouk had done had hurt the country. The army was in bad shape, and arms were needed for the students and the civil service. As of April 10, the Cambodians didn't know what arms were actually needed. They did not seem worried about Sihanouk's broadcasts from Peking, and said that they wanted the people to hear him. This would publicize Sihanouk's zig-zags and foolishness, as well as the fact that he was a tool of the Chinese. As to foreign assistance, they were asking the small countries for help and hadn't asked the US yet (again this was as of April 10). They would first try the Indonesians and Filipinos.

To a question from Dr. Kissinger as to whether Sihanouk could have kept the Communists out of Cambodia, [*name not declassified*] replied that it was not a strong country. Dr. Kissinger observed that it could be argued that Sihanouk had been making the best deal he could for the country. He, Dr. Kissinger, always thought Sihanouk was a political genius. Was he mistaken? Mr. Nelson replied that Sihanouk was

fast on his feet and adroit, but was up and down. He was with you one day and against you the next.

[*name not declassified*] had been in Phnom Penh before this most recent trip, and had seen the masses marching for Sihanouk. They had seemed sullen, in contrast to the demonstrations in favor of the new government. Still, the VC could come right up and take Phnom Penh. In moving about the city, he had seen how the army was functioning in setting up its protective posts, and had the impression that the troops were lackadaisical. In setting up his appointments [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] he had traveled around considerably in pedicabs, and had seen no patrols. They had thought he was a newsman, of whom there were plenty in the city. He noted in passing that [*name not declassified*] had been delighted to get this visit, since it amounted to a concrete expression of US support.

Dr. Kissinger asked if the Cambodians would cave to the Communists. [*name not declassified*] replied it was now clear that they were scared and worried, but he didn't really know whether they would cave. Dr. Kissinger wanted to know if Sihanoukville had been closed, and how the Communists would supply their base areas. Would they need to rely entirely on the Ho Chi Minh Trail? Mr. Nelson declared that they could rely on their stockpiles for a while, but there were no more incoming shipments. Before, Chinese ships had come to Sihanoukville every six weeks to two months, and the supplies off-loaded from these ships were then taken to a Cambodian arsenal in Kampong Speu from which they were diverted and shipped to the border by the Hak Ly trucking company. The Hak Ly trucks have now all been commandeered by the Cambodian army.

On the subject of the Cambodians possibly crumbling, [*name not declassified*] observed that after they found they had greater problems with the NVA/VC than they had anticipated, and that the French (with whom they had been rather close) were not doing anything, they had come to the conclusion that somebody had to help them, and that this somebody was the US. With more fighting on their hands, their morale needed bucking up, the only way at the moment to give this bucking up was to give the AK–47 package and provide a Swiss bank account. If we wanted to keep this kind of Cambodia alive, a material gesture had to be made very soon. They were beginning to sound frantic. [*name not declassified*] thought that Lon Nol and Sirik Matak would certainly appreciate guns and bullets. [*2½ lines of source text not declassified*] Sirik Matak, who had pulled out a crumpled piece of paper and scrawled down a TO&E for a light Cambodian battalion and had drawn out of his hat the total of 200,000 Cambodian troops. This was the origin of the shopping list which had been passed along to us in terms of equipment, medicines, and clothing.

Dr. Kissinger again asked if the Cambodians would collapse if the Communists moved out of their sanctuaries against them. [*name not declassified*] thought that they would, but Mr. Nelson felt that they would fight. In his opinion, the Communists hadn't yet decided what to do and wanted elbow room and to move the Cambodian troops back from the border. They were rolling up the smaller Cambodian posts to get freedom of movement. But there was nothing to indicate that they would or would not move out. He personally believed that they would think twice about opening up another front. This would be a major operation requiring many battalions, and the Communists had shortages of rice and ammunition on their side. They might still hope to wiggle around and make a deal with Lon Nol. In the meantime, they had pulled several of their battalions out of South Laos into Cambodia, for what purpose he did not know. They had a major logistical problem in moving supplies South due to the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Mr. Nelson was certain that there was lots of worry in Hanoi.

Dr. Kissinger asked [*name not declassified*] if he could get back into Phnom Penh easily. [*name not declassified*] replied negatively, saying that he was too conspicuous, and there were too many newsmen in the city. Mr. Nelson, [*2 lines of source text not declassified*] He had hoped that a decision could have been made by now, and was still waiting for one. Dr. Kissinger remarked that they would have had this decision except that all the top people in State were out of town and he did not wish to put the matter before Mr. Samuels, who was Acting Secretary. He felt sure that the word would be passed by Monday or Tuesday.[2] [*2½ lines of source text not declassified*]

In conclusion, Mr. Nelson mentioned that two C–141s were [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] ready to go. One contained AK–47s and the other was loaded with one 1000 man battalion package of US arms and equipment. He hoped that the arms would move that evening. He noted, too, that the Thai battalion was all set to move into Laos.

[2] April 20 or 21.

239. Editorial Note

While in Hawaii to welcome back the astronauts from the Apollo 13 moon mission, President Nixon met on April 19, 1970, from 7:30 to 9:10 a.m. with Commander in Chief, Pacific, Admiral John McCain and

other military advisers in the Governor's suite of the Kahala Hilton Hotel for a military briefing on the Pacific Command. (President's Daily Diary, April 19; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files) According to an April 20 memorandum from General James D. Hughes, the President's Military Aide, to Kissinger, the briefing by McCain included the following discussion on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia:

"Admiral McCain stated the B52s are doing a great job overall. He discussed certain missions and the President showed great interest in this. In particular, the missions flown were on SAM sites numbers 387–751 which were covered. The results were good (you probably already have received the word). The President was greatly interested.

"Admiral McCain felt that the border areas in Cambodia were definitely controlled by Viet Cong and North Vietnamese and felt that their principal effort was to isolate Phnom Penh. He expressed four possible solutions for Cambodia.

"a. Go back to military aid to bolster the weak Army.
"b. Covert financing to assist them with their financial difficulties.
"c. Let the ARVN cross the border and fight. Admiral McCain mentioned that General Lew Walt in a recent visit to President Thieu said that Thieu was violently in favor of this.
"d. Proceed as we have in Laos—Air strikes and artillery support.

"Admiral McCain felt that the ARVN could provide air and artillery support in Cambodia if we would take up the slack in South Vietnam.

"The President asked about the forces required to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail. CINCPAC stated that the cut would require 2–3 divisions in the III and IV corps areas and approximately 5 divisions in the I and II corps areas. Further CINCPAC felt that it was not practical to do this with conventional forces but air strikes and irregular forces were more effective. The President expressed high interest in this, particularly in the development of contingency plans to accomplish this mission.

"During the discussion of Vietnam, the President showed much interest in the Chieu Hoi program. CINCPAC was most optimistic about the program and claimed that it was definitely on the upswing. A comparison of the first quarter of calendar year 1970 with first quarter calendar year 1969 shows a slight reduction but CINCPAC felt that this will be overcome this Spring.

"1969 First three months—10,612
"1970 First three months—8,983

"The President was very interested in the SAM sites and asked if our reconnaissance efforts were productive. He was anxious that CINCPAC have plans to strike new strikes and re-strike old ones.

"CINCPAC mentioned the importance of the POL pipeline beginning at the port of Vinh.

"The President expressed interest in this and said that we should keep this information coming in so these lines can be hit. Strikes against POL pipelines would be difficult to hit because of ground cover. The CINCPAC mentioned that the best area was approximately 12 miles in Laos, however, he felt that the port of Vinh had to be closed. The President pressed the point and CINCPAC said the best way was to take the docks and pumping stations. He urged CINCPAC to submit plans on these and other lucrative targets for considerations. The President reiterated that he considered the oil sites a high priority target and again urged that the CINCPAC propose plans to target these sites." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 559, Country Files, Far East, Southeast Asia, Vol. II, General)

At Nixon's request, McCain traveled to San Clemente, California, to give Kissinger the same briefing the next day, April 20. Kissinger and Nixon met with McCain from 2:15 to 2:30 p.m. in the den at San Clemente. (President's Daily Diary; ibid., White House Central Files) In reporting his discussion with the President and Kissinger to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Wheeler, McCain stated that the President had asked what would be the best mix of GVN and U.S. forces to use if cross-border operations were mounted. Nixon also asked if only South Vietnamese forces should be used with the United States providing air and artillery support from within South Vietnam. McCain assured the President that plans were being prepared and would be submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on an urgent basis. The President informed McCain that Lon Nol should be helped to establish communication with Saigon and that he had approved financial support for the Lon Nol government as well as transfer of Soviet bloc weapons captured by South Vietnam's armed forces for Cambodia's armed forces. The theme of the meetings, McCain told Wheeler, was "the need for speed in view of the 'precarious situation' in Cambodia." (Telegram 220437Z from CINCPAC to CJS, April 22; OCJCS File 091, Cambodia, 14–21 May 1970, as quoted in the Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, JCS, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969–1970,* pages 247–248.)

After the meeting the President called Kissinger and informed him that "Cambodia is important and we will have to do it fast. I need to know how soon the VN can get going over there." Nixon also wanted to be sure that Cambodia formally requested South Vietnamese assistance. The President stressed that, "Aiding Cambodia with arms is useless—they cannot use them. Get the Money to Lon Nol." When Kissinger informed the President that he had doubled the CIA initial figure of $5 million, Nixon replied, "that will give him [Lon Nol] some

assurance. Don't limit the psychology thing." Finally Nixon suggested to Kissinger that he wanted to make clear to McCain that while he was not ordering U.S. troops to take part in the operation, "I don't want SVN to get in there and then get the hell kicked out." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, December 20, 2:40 p.m.; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 362, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

Kissinger recalls that McCain, "brought home to Nixon the danger to Laos and Cambodia" and "gave focus to his inchoate anxieties about Cambodia." According to Kissinger, McCain also reinforced Nixon's conviction that the withdrawal schedule for U.S. troops should be flexible. Kissinger admits that he had come to the same conclusion as the President and McCain: the United States could not stand by and watch Cambodia collapse and ultimately cause the collapse of the U.S. effort in Vietnam. (Kissinger, *White House Years*, pages 480, 487)

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240. Telegram From the Staff Secretary of the National Security Council Staff Secretariat (Watts) to Winston Lord of the National Security Council Staff[1]

Washington, April 20, 1970, 1832Z.

WH00519. Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger. From John Holdridge. Subject: Situation in Cambodia.

The following telegram from Rives covering a conversation with the Cambodian Chief of Staff depicts a serious political and military deterioration in Cambodia. The NVA/VC forces are not only widening their hold on the strategic areas along the Vietnamese border, but are pushing more deeply inland and have cut key communication lines, including the railroad to Sihanoukville. The Cambodian army does not seem to be able to do anything about the situation (although an offensive is being planned), and morale of the population and the troops is steadily diminishing. The Cambodians are having difficulty in obtaining arms aid and are very short of ammunition; aid from the U.S. appears to them as their main hope. The President will be receiving a formal request from Lon Nol which will ask for help in arming 430,000

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970. Top Secret; Nodis. Kissinger was in San Clemente on April 20; see Document 239.

men, and for the dispatch of Cambodian troops in Thailand and Vietnam into Cambodia to help relieve the military pressure. No ARVN help along the lines of that given lately is desired.

In the light of the pressing military situation, the kind of aid from the U.S. which the Cambodians envisage appears completely unrealistic. Arms and ammunition on a priority basis may contribute importantly to staving off a Cambodian military collapse, but the training and arming of a force of the size contemplated will take a significant amount of time—probably more time than the Cambodians can afford. The problem would appear to be more of keeping the NVA/VC forces sufficiently distracted along the Vietnamese border to preclude their being able to strike inland—in short, the kind of ARVN operation which the Cambodians now say they do not want. Cambodians in Thailand and Vietnam (the Khmer Serei and Khmer Krom) are neither numerous enough or well enough trained and led to do the job.

Refs: State 056117[2] and 057061.[3]

I have just had meeting with Fonmin and Mindefense Chief of Staff General Srey Saman.

1. Re delivery of 1500 AK–47 rifles, Cambodians request that this be made directly to Phnom Penh soonest. This decision due to fact that other areas such as Svay Rieng and even Sihanoukville, which I had suggested as possible landing zones, are no longer secure for road transport.

In view of USC insistence on continued security and confidential nature of entire operation, Chief of Staff suggested that plane or planes could land at night and be directed immediately to military terminal which is on opposite side of field from civilian one.

Action request: please inform soonest whether above acceptable, what type of aircraft will be used, what aircraft will be carrying, and flight data.

2. Chief of Staff also asked if equipment like mortars and ammunition could be urgently delivered at same time. Also 105 mm shells.

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[2] Not found.

[3] In telegram 057061 to Phnom Penh, April 17, Rives was instructed to tell Sirik Matak that the United States had located 1,500 AK–47 rifles available for delivery within 2 to 3 days and 4,000 to 5,500 available for delivery within 2 to 3 weeks. The United States needed to know whether the most feasible means of transfer from Cambodia was delivery via land across the Cambodia-South Vietnam border or air delivery to a Cambodian base. Rives was to assure Matak that the United States would "provide feasible assistance in a timely manner," but Cambodia should not have "inflated expectations" of U.S. military aid on which there were important restrictions. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970)

3. Re AK–47 ammo, I inquired whether Indonesians had been approached. In reply Chief of Staff indicated it was part of request to Indonesia and would be pressed again. Will let me know if Cambodia needs assist vis-à-vis Indonesia.

4. In reply to query re medical supplies, Chief of Staff said urgency was for weapons and that medical needs being met temporarily by six tons of medical supplies brought in earlier for VC and seized.

5. I shall be informed today of officer who will discuss with Acting DATT the specific and accurate estimate of what Cambodian military now has in use and in stock. This will be transmitted as soon as ready.

6. As reported earlier, the only countries who have been given specific shopping lists are USG, Australia, Japan and Indonesia.

7. FonMin informed me that as result our conversation last week, Lon Nol sending series of letters to sea countries such as Burma, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, urging them make declarations regarding their anxiety over Cambodian situation and opposition to foreign interference.

8. Chief of Staff then informed me that he and FonMin crafting letter to President Nixon from General Lon Nol which will be ready in day or two. He read me draft. Crux of message is that situation becoming desperate, Cambodia needs arms and hopes that President will supply same in accordance with Nixon Doctrine. Cambodia does not want foreign troops, including South Vietnamese who have recently intruded into Cambodian territory. According to letter, the government requires total of 430,000 men under arms. He requests that Cambodian troops in Vietnam and Thailand be sent to Cambodia where they will be made part of army with ranks presently held.[4]

9. Chief of Staff then drew out map which he have me showing latest situation in various zones. According to latest indications, VC now extend roughly from Kep inland to slightly north of Tani, then east to frontier; within this area Cambodian military have had to evacuate Kirivom and Tuk Meas has been taken by VC. This means railroad to Sihanoukville is cut. General indications are that infiltrators proceeding ahead of this drive in small groups have already passed beyond Kompong Speu.

10. To east of this zone situation described earlier remains relatively stable. Here within next few days Cambodian military will make determined attack which they feel is essential to raise morale of population and troops which is steadily diminishing.

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[4] The text of the letter, April 21, is in telegram 593 from Phnom Penh, April 21. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB)

11. Cambodian military staff requests that if possible attacks be made behind two areas given above by Kampuchea Krom from Vietnam.

12. Turning to map again, Chief of Staff indicated that Route No. 7 from west of Krek to Snuol is completely cut and area virtually isolated by NVNA/VCM every indication is that NVNA/VC attack to be made towards Kratie from Snuol area. Therefore General Lon Nol requests attack by special forces, if available, from within SVN towards Snuol.

13. Road from Snuol to Sen Monorom also cut and here General Lon Nol requests attack by special forces, if available, from Bu Prang in SVN toward Dak Dam and Sen Monram.

14. Finally, General Lon Nol and Cambodian military wonder if it would be possible to assign to Embassy staff from Vietnam a Colonel Ly Vong Sar, whom they understand is in the American army but is a Cambodian. He would act as liaison between Embassy and Cambodians.

15. Discussion centered for some time on possible future NVNA/VC moves and their objectives. It is obvious that Cambodians have views relatively similar to ours regarding either the conquest of Cambodia, with a puppet, Sihanouk or another installed, or attendance at a new Geneva conference during which a division of Cambodia might be attempted and lead eventually to a Vietnamese or Lao situation.

Comment: Atmosphere of meeting not very gay. More than once, General stressed deterioration of civilian and military morale.

Despite my insistence that RKG must not allow itself to become over hopeful of American aid, it was evident that this is what virtually all hopes are based on. Australia has replied it is considering Cambodian request, Japan apparently has not replied and neither apparently has Indonesia. General stated that a small Cambodian mission departs for Paris evening of April 21 to make further request for aid. He asked if I felt that contact with American Embassy Paris would help. I advised against this as possible irritant to French.[5]

Rives

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[5] In telegram 058788 to Phnom Penh, April 20, 2351Z, the Department instructed Rives to contact Lon Nol and assure him that "we are behind his government, that we are interested in providing support, and we are studying what more we can do to help." (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970) This telegram was sent in reaction to telegram 579 from Phnom Penh, April 20, and it was hoped that Rives' approach and assurances to Lon Nol would "help boost GOC morale and give leaders a more positive outlook." (Ibid.)

241. Editorial Note

On April 21, 1970, at 10:35 a.m. Secretary of State William Rogers and Assistant to the President Henry Kissinger spoke on the telephone. Kissinger told Rogers: "The President got up at 6:30 this morning to everyone's dismay." Kissinger then informed the Secretary that the $10 million was being sent secretly to Lon Nol. Rogers worried: "I think he [Nixon] is making decisions off the drop of a hat. We can make a good case for helping them [the Cambodians] but we should do it openly. We can make a good case that this might not be a good time—this government might not last." Kissinger replied: "He [Nixon] feels to put in a lot of aid is self defeating. What he thinks is to do things to help their morale but not their huge requests. That's why he is doing this." Rogers stated that: "We should think carefully what we are doing while he is bucking up their morale. Even if they don't survive they will keep the VC at bay. But if they go down the drain and it becomes known—and I think in this day and age it will be known—and if it's known we are sending money through black bags we have paid a high price—we emphasize feelings about government some people have. We may have to pay a price." Kissinger and Rogers discussed the issue further and then Kissinger asked the Secretary: "Do you think there's a prayer for Vietnamization if Cambodia is taken over?" Rogers answered, "Yes," although he admitted it would be a "psychological set back." Kissinger said: "You're entitled to your opinion." The two men then discussed whether the North Vietnamese take-over of Cambodia was possible and whether it would impede U.S. aims in Vietnam. Kissinger suggested it would, while Rogers was more dubious about the effect or even the North Vietnamese ability to take over Cambodia. Kissinger admitted: "It is absurd that 100 NVN 18 miles from Phnom Penh should throw our people into a panic. What can you do with a government that can be taken over with 5 thousand?" Kissinger told Rogers, "he [Nixon] is so determined on this [the money]—we should raise your crucial question of what we want to do. Not one problem at a time and slipping into something we don't understand." Rogers responded, "What worries me is how little other governments want to get involved." Kissinger suggested that "they may be watching in a paralyzed way hoping somebody else will do something." Rogers replied that Nixon "should not be making the decision all by himself . . . he can't operate like that." Kissinger agreed that "he must hear his senior advisers on these things and I will try, but failing that, I will follow his instructions." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Rogers and Kissinger, April 21; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

At 12:05 p.m. on April 21 Kissinger called Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland and asked him: "What is your assessment? Could we take a Cambodian defeat—if Sihanouk came back?" Westmoreland responded: "That's more political but it seems Sihanouk has taken a considerable loss of face. My impression is that Lon Nol is capable of holding the country together. The 15 battalions that they have mobilized shows that this administration [Lon Nol's] has popular support. They need arms and provisions but they should be effective." "Do you think the VN can move in and handle it without us, except for artillery and air support?" Kissinger asked. Westmoreland replied affirmatively, "They have some very fine troops. But we have the rainy season coming up next month which will complicate things. The dry season would facilitate it, but with our support on the borders and helicopter and tactical air they can be effective but I don't think they can clear them out." "Can we?" Kissinger then asked. Westmoreland replied: "We would be hard pressed in the rainy season but it could be done. If Gen. Abrams wants to we could do it." Kissinger asked: "Would it be worth it?" Westmoreland responded: "If we could destroy COSVN headquarters this would indeed. We would have an apparent idea where it is. It's about 10,000 troops. Troops would have to move into the area and stay some time. It would be costly with respect to casualties because there are no doubt mines, booby traps, bunkers, etc. But we could do it. The weather period is an unhappy coincidence and would inhibit our operations flexibility. The VN would be less effective but with the proper support they could be effective and would be desirable." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Westmoreland, April 21; ibid.)

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242. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 21, 1970.

SUBJECT

Conveying the Word to Hanoi

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Kissinger summarized this memorandum for Nixon on April 22, but that memorandum was not initialed and there is no indication it was sent to the President. (ibid.)

1. At the President's request, we have taken several steps to give the North Vietnamese leadership clear reason to believe that if Vietnamese Communist forces in Cambodia attack Phnom Penh, United States forces will hit them from the rear by mounting sharp attacks on Vietnamese Communist sanctuaries.[2]

2. To get this word across, we have arranged for one basic story to be pipelined into several channels that should get it back quickly, and credibly, to Hanoi.[3] The basic theme planted with all our sources used runs as follows, though there have been suitable variations in each specific instance:

The US and the GVN have long felt that Vietnam internal security problems can never be really solved so long as the Communists have sanctuaries in nearby Cambodia. Hence, the US and the GVN have long itched to attack these sanctuaries and the Communist troops resting or refitting in them. Recent events in Cambodia have considerably whetted American and South Vietnamese appetites, but the US (particularly) has felt the Vietnamese Communist muscle flexing in neutral Cambodia was giving Hanoi such a propaganda black eye worldwide—particularly within the US itself—that the United States Government was reluctant to see the waters muddied by allied military involvement in the Cambodian-VC/NVA fight. However, if the VC/NVA forces make further military moves against Phnom Penh, the US is set to take prompt advantage of world opinion focus on Cambodia's plight in the face of North Vietnamese invasion and clear up the sanctuary problem by attacking VC/NVA forces from the rear.

3. [*17 lines of source text not declassified*]

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[2] On April 24 Helms sent a memorandum to Kissinger reporting that NLF official [*text not declassified*] was given a convincing written report indicating that the GVN and U.S. intended to invade Cambodia. According to the Helms memorandum, "[*name not declassified*] became very nervous, shaking his legs and feet nervously" when he heard the report. "[*name not declassified*] remained in an agitated condition throughout the meeting. [*name not declassified*] stated that the National Liberation Front 'expected United States intervention in Cambodia but not so soon.'" When queried about NLF and North Vietnamese troops in Cambodia, [*text not declassified*] acknowledged their presence, but stated "it would be political suicide for us to admit it." (Ibid., Box 207, Agency Files, CIA, Vol. II, 1 January 1970 to 30 June 1970)

[3] The message was passed to Mai Van Bo in Paris on April 29. Bo was "deeply interested, probed extensively for additional details, and during the meeting revealed that the DRV apparently had not felt the US would send its own forces into Cambodia for fear of adverse reaction from the 'Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Congress, public opinion and eventually the electorate at the polls.'" (Memorandum from Helms to Kissinger, May 1; ibid., Box 579, Cambodia Operations (1970), Actions in Cambodia, Vol. 1)

4. In line with the above considerations, the following moves are now in train:

5. [Omitted here is detailed discussion.]

6. In both tone and content, the President's 20 April speech[4] will make this message more credible to Hanoi. From a strictly operational perspective, the best possible support for this story's (and our sources') credibility would be the movement of selected US troops to the immediate vicinity of the Cambodian Frontier of South Vietnam.

Dick

[4] Reference is to the President's Address to the Nation broadcast at 6 p.m. on April 20 from San Clemente, California, in which Nixon reported "no progress" on the negotiation front and announced his intention of withdrawing from Vietnam an additional 150,000 forces over the next year. (*Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* pp. 373–377)

243. Memorandum From Jonathan Howe of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 21, 1970.

SUBJECT

Plan for All-South Vietnamese Operations Against Enemy Sanctuaries in Cambodia

Attached at Tab A is a report from MACV on the initial planning conference held today to consider an all-ARVN operation against enemy base camps in Cambodia.[2] (FYI: Your memorandum requesting such a plan was sent to Secretary Laird last Friday morning. Tab B)[3] The MACV report indicates that:

—The concept of an all-South Vietnamese operation is acceptable to the South Vietnamese armed forces.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1324, Unfiled Material, 1970, 3 of 11. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Sent for information.

[2] Tab A was MACV telegram 5307, April 21, 1141Z, from Abrams to McCain and for information to Wheeler; attached but not printed.

[3] Tab B was an April 16 memorandum from Kissinger to Laird noting that MACV plans for ground operations against Cambodian sanctuaries involved considerable U.S. participation and asking for a plan for successfully attacking them using only South Vietnamese forces "in order to provide maximum flexibility in our planning." Attached but not printed. For a summary of MACV planning using U.S. forces, see Document 219.

—The South Vietnamese apparently do not want to attack targets deep in Cambodia (this parallels the request from Lon Nol received this morning that the U.S. intervene to keep the South Vietnamese from operating "deep into" Cambodian territory. Tab C[4])

—The South Vietnamese favor hitting base areas which pose the most direct threat to their country and are unenthusiastic about any operations along the Mekong.

—Present planning is centered on base areas 706/367 and the Crow's Nest area. These areas are in the Parrot's Beak in the Svay Rieng Province. (See map at Tab D)[5] Penetration into this area has been restricted to 7 to 8 kilometers at the request of the province chief.

—The South Vietnamese staff will need time to develop plans and effect coordination. The plan will be forwarded as soon as possible.

The covering memorandum from Secretary Laird's office[6] emphasizes that coordination with the RVNAF leadership is the time-consuming factor at the present time.

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[4] Reference is to an attached telegram from Phnom Penh containing a letter from Lon Nol to Nixon; see footnote 4, Document 240.

[5] Attached but not printed.

[6] The April 21 memorandum from Pursley to Kissinger is attached but not printed.

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244. Memorandum From the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Westmoreland) to Secretary of Defense Laird[1]

CM–5063–70 Washington, April 21, 1970.

SUBJECT

Courses of Action With Regard To Cambodia[2]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970. Top Secret. Pursley sent this memorandum to Kissinger under an attached April 22 covering memorandum that indicated Westmoreland gave it to Laird the morning of April 22.

[2] On April 22 Kissinger telephoned Westmoreland to request his or Moorer's support at the NSC principals meeting at 3 p.m.; see Document 248. Kissinger asked: "Can you see that whoever comes stands firm?" Kissinger told Westmoreland that the President "can understand the political people thinking of reasons why we shouldn't, but the

1. Following our discussions this afternoon, and in response to your request that I provide recommendations on immediate courses of action with regard to the Cambodian situation, I reviewed developments within Cambodia, and submit the following comments and recommendations.

2. The latest intelligence concerning the situation in Cambodia, while fragmentary, strongly suggests that the enemy is moving to isolate Phnom Penh by the systematic interdiction of all the major roads and waterways leading into the city. Because of Phnom Penh's dependence on oil for power, this can have serious repercussions for the future. Small, but effective, enemy forces are astride virtually all of the other main roads leading into Phnom Penh, with the possible exception of some roads to the west, and are maintaining blocking positions on the navigable river routes. The enemy objective may well be to isolate the city of Phnom Penh, bring military pressure to bear on it from all sides, and perhaps, ultimately, to bring Sihanouk back to regain political control at the appropriate time.

3. There is evidence that the FARK is marginally effective against these military moves by the VC/NVA. They are apparently untrained for operations above platoon or company level, and apparently have not been able to stop advances of even relatively small enemy forces. In addition to poor training, they suffer from a severe shortage of arms and equipment. While we can, and must, do everything possible to provide appropriate equipment, I suspect that this, by itself, will no longer be enough to stem the enemy advance. As you know, we have begun the air shipment of captured AK–47s, with the first 1500 guns and a supply of munitions, presumably moving out of Saigon this evening, by VNAF aircraft to Phnom Penh. While we will probably be able to ship an additional four or five thousand such weapons in the

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military usually stands with its Commander-in-Chief and he wants to do something." Westmoreland promised his support and that he would "get the message to Moorer." Westmoreland also cautioned Kissinger that he may have overemphasized the importance of the monsoon season in his previous conversation. There was a month of good weather remaining. Kissinger explained he was thinking of three operations: current small level GVN cross border operations, something larger but not an investiture of all the sanctuaries, and all-out investiture of the sanctuaries. Westmoreland favored the second. Kissinger asked if this "makes sense," suggesting that Westmoreland knew better than anyone "the trouble field marshals in Washington can make." "To do the job right would require a division size force of 10,000 troops," Westmoreland answered. In response to Kissinger's question, he replied that Abrams could put two or three GVN divisions into Cambodia in different areas if the U.S. provided transportation, logistics, artillery, helicopter gun ships, and tactical air support at the border. Kissinger ended the conversation with a quip: "I hope you need a political analyst in the army. I'll never be able to go back to Harvard." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Westmoreland, April 22; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

next several days, as I indicated above, this probably will fall far short of altering the military situation. I recommend that serious consideration be given to providing U.S. M–1s to the Cambodians. We are currently supplying these to the South Vietnamese People's Self Defense Forces. A large proportion of these weapons can be diverted to help equip the some 85,000-man force in Cambodia.

4. In my view, we must move well beyond the measures outlined above if we are to stem the deterioration within Cambodia. The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong have taken a calculated risk in moving out of their base areas. Their logistic situation is becoming more strained. I believe we should now move quickly to exploit their vulnerabilities. I would recommend, therefore, that, as a matter of urgency, plans be developed for attacks by division-size RVNAF forces on vulnerable enemy positions. Targets selected for attack, in order of priority, should be headquarters and communications facilities, caches and supply depots, and troop areas and concentrations. Such attacks should commence within the next several days. In about a month, monsoon rains will complicate such operations. As you are aware, MACV is currently undertaking such planning with the JGS, and, hopefully, we will have some details within the next 24-hours for your consideration. I am informed that the JGS and the RVNAF III and IV Corps Commanders are meeting today to prepare these plans, and they will go to President Thieu for approval following this meeting. MACV is doing everything possible to speed up the process.

5. I would recommend that we also rescind some of the current restraints placed on U.S. forces. Specifically, we should place U.S. forces on the border to provide logistic and artillery support for the RVNAF forces engaged in operations within Cambodia. I believe we can exploit the developing situation without the necessity of actually crossing the border with U.S. forces. We have asked General Abrams to provide his views on how such U.S. support can be optimized.

6. I believe it would be prudent for us to also develop a plan for employment of the Khmer in the CIDG. My initial thought is that they can best be utilized in raids across the border from strategically-located base areas which can be logistically supported by U.S. forces and, in which we can provide appropriate Vietnamese or U.S. Special Forces Advisors. However, we must leave to General Abrams, specific recommendations with regard to their employment.[3] I would

[3] In telegram MAC 5164 from Abrams to Wheeler, April 18, Abrams reported that there were 3,500 Khmer Serei serving in CIDG camps in South Vietnam adjacent to the Cambodian border and most would respond to a request from Cambodia for assistance. Abrams suggested that the South Vietnamese might oppose Khmer Serei leaving the camps. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 410, Backchannel Messages, Southeast Asia, 1970)

recommend, however, that we be authorized, now, to plan for their employment and support, generally, along the lines I have indicated above.

7. In summary, while all assistance of a material nature should be provided to the Cambodians on an expedited basis, I believe we have gone beyond the point where this, alone, can arrest the deterioration. We must move quickly against the vulnerable enemy base areas in Cambodia with RVNAF forces. This should relieve the pressure on the Cambodians. If we react quickly enough, we may be able to exploit the situation to our overall advantage without any substantial involvement by United States forces on the ground.

W.C. Westmoreland[4]

[4] Printed from a copy that bears this typed signature.

245. Memorandum From President Nixon to his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 22, 1970.

I think we need a bold move in Cambodia, assuming that I feel the way today (it is five AM, April 22) at our meeting[2] as I feel this morning to show that we stand with Lon Nol. I do not believe he is going to survive. There is, however, some chance that he might and in any event we must do something symbolic to help him survive. We have really dropped the ball on this one due to the fact that we were taken in with the line that by helping him we would destroy his "neutrality" and give the North Vietnamese an excuse to come in. Over and over again we fail to learn that the Communists never need an excuse to come in. They didn't need one in Hungary in 1956 when the same argument was made by the career State people and when Dulles bought it because he was tired and it was during the campaign. They didn't

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Personal File, Box 2, Memorandum for the President, January–December 1970, April 1970. Confidential. The memorandum is unsigned. The classification was changed by hand to Top Secret. Also printed in Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 1484.

[2] The NSC meeting of April 22; see Document 248.

need one in Czechoslovakia when the same argument was made by the State people, and they didn't need one in Laos where we lost a precious day by failing to make the strike that might have blunted the whole offensive before it got started, and in Cambodia where we have taken a completely hands-off attitude by protesting to the Senate that we have only a "delegation of seven State Department jerks" in the Embassy and would not provide any aid of any kind because we were fearful that if we did so it would give them a "provocation" to come in. They are romping in there and the only government in Cambodia in the last 25 years that had the guts to take a pro-Western and pro-American stand is ready to fall. I am thinking of someone like Bob Murphy[3] who would be sent there on a trip to report back to me and who would go in and reassure Lon Nol. This, of course, would be parallel to your activities which will be undertaken immediately after the NSC meeting, in the event that I decide to go on this course, with some of the lily-livered Ambassadors from our so-called friends in the world. We are going to find out who our friends are now, because if we decide to stand up here some of the rest of them had better come along fast.[4]

I will talk to you about this after the NSC meeting.

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[3] Robert D. Murphy, career Ambassador and former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs during the Eisenhower administration.

[4] Nixon sent Kissinger another memorandum on the morning of April 22 which reads: "In the event we make the decision to go along with the present Cambodian government I want you to call in the major Ambassadors who could be of help to us and lay it on the line with them that we are going to back this government [Lon Nol] and will expect them to go along with us. The Japanese, the French, the British and I am sure two or three others come to mind in this respect. Have a check made as to how many the list should include. I think just getting the word out at the Washington level will seep back pretty fast to the foreign offices and could change the climate substantially." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 341, Subject Files, HAK/President Memos, 1969–1970)

246. Memorandum From President Nixon to his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 22, 1970.

It is quite clear from reading Sihanouk's letter to Mansfield[2] that Sihanouk has become a captive, perhaps a willing one, of the Communists, lock, stock and barrel. Be sure that a copy of this letter is, in confidence, given to Rogers and to Helms, but if you will re-read the letter carefully you will find that it parrots the Communist line in virtually every respect. My guess is that the Chinese would never let him get it out unless it had been a letter along these lines, but it is also very possible that this reflects his own personal views. Perhaps you can think of a way, or Helms can, that the substance of his communication, without revealing the Mansfield source, gets around in places where it would hurt him.

Attachment

Letter From Norodom Sihanouk to Senator Mike Mansfield

Beijing, April 21, 1970.

In this so dark and so painful period in the life of the Cambodian people and of mine, your voice, Senator, was raised again in defense of truth and justice. If your government and so many others had listened to the voice of wisdom and human liberalism which was always yours, the peoples of Indochina and Indochina herself would have recovered peace in independence a long time ago. Unfortunately, wisdom and good sense have never prevailed since the end of the Indochinese war and the Vietnamese people first, then the Laotian people, finally the Cambodian people, have in spite of themselves soon fallen into a second war of Indochina, longer and more murderous yet than the preceding one.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 341, Subject Files, HAK/President Memos, 1969–1970. Confidential. The memorandum is unsigned. Kissinger summarizes this message in *White House Years,* pp. 489–490.

[2] Although the letter was not attached, an unofficial translation is printed as an attachment. (Ibid, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970)

As far as my people and myself are concerned—and taking into account the egoism of certain great powers—an egoism that has allowed the installation in Phnom-Penh of an illegal, dictatorial, bellicist and racist government, practising genocide without precedent in modern history, with the exception of the monstrous crimes of the Hitlerian regime, we have no other recourse than an armed fight for national liberation and the triumph of justice, even if we have to obtain them at the price of an ideological change in Cambodia.

The most severe ideology—as long as it is based on social justice—is infinitely preferable to a regime composed of greatly corrupted people and anti-popular reactionaries who impose themselves upon the nation with guns and bayonets; through bluff and demagogy, through the odious and anachronistic awakening of a racism which had been asleep for many centuries, through the mass assassination of a national opposition, a mass genocide of a foreign and unarmed population and by lighting up of the fires of a war that the "vis-à-vis" (opposite number) has neither wanted nor provoked against our nation.

I do not know what our future will be but what I want to tell you here is that the Khmer people and myself will never forget what Senator Mansfield has done for us and for peace and justice in the world.

Pray, Senator, accept the assurance of my eternal gratefulness, of my very high consideration and of my everlasting friendship.

N. Sihanouk of Cambodia

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247. Memorandum From President Nixon to his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 22, 1970.

I want you to call on the Soviet Chargé after our Security Council meeting and give him a flat warning that in the event the Communists do move on Phnom Penh we shall react—that we do not want this to

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Personal File, Box 2, Memorandum for the President, January–December 1970, April 1970. Confidential. The memorandum is unsigned. The classification was changed by hand to Top Secret. Confidential. Kissinger summarizes this message in *White House Years*, p. 490.

impair our relations on SALT and in other areas, but that the President has made a command decision that this involves our interest in Vietnam and that we shall not stand by.[2]

[2] In his memoirs, Kissinger recalls: "The pace of events gave me no opportunity to carry out these instructions [this memorandum and the previous three from Nixon]. In a meeting later in the morning of April 22 I advised against sending Murphy (or Dean Rusk, his [Nixon's] later suggestion) to Cambodia because it would just trigger an enormous debate and would probably be overtaken by events at the NSC. The President said: 'Well, whatever, I want to make sure that Cambodia does not go down the drain without doing something.' He went on: 'Everybody always comes into my office with suggestions on how to lose. No one comes in with suggestions on how to win.' The President ordered a replacement for our chargé, Lloyd Rives, in Phnom Penh, and US support for shallow cross-border operations. As with many Nixon orders to fire people, it was intended to show his displeasure; it was not meant to be carried out; it never was at lower levels." (*White House Years,* p. 490)

248. Editorial Note

On April 22, 1970, from 3:04 to 4:42 p.m., President Nixon met with the members of the National Security Council. The participants, in addition to the President, were Vice President Spiro Agnew, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, Secretary of State William Rogers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle Wheeler (who resumed his duties in time to attend the meeting), Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms, Presidential Assistant Henry Kissinger, and the Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness, General George A. Lincoln. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) According to an April 21 memorandum from Dwight Chapin to Kissinger, President Nixon restricted the meeting to these individuals and did not want any of the Under Secretaries present. The President also insisted that "there should be no note taker." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–028, NSC Meetings, 4/22/70) No contemporary record of this meeting has been found and apparently none was made.

In his memoirs Kissinger provides a relatively full account of the meeting recalling that the National Security Council was faced with three options: current shallow operations (preferred by Laird and Rogers), attacking the sanctuaries with GVN troops with U.S. tactical and logistical support but no ground troops (Kissinger's preference), or all out U.S. and GVN attack on the sanctuaries (the choice of Bunker, Abrams, and the Joint Chiefs). Kissinger recounts that Nixon's National Security Council meetings had a stylized nature to them. Issues had

been so analyzed by lower-level officials and the principals tended to perform their roles "like actors in a well-rehearsed play." There was always the suspicion that more was going on than each of the participants knew, as well as the general ambivalence between supporting the President's position and fear of domestic reaction to escalation of the war. Kissinger recalls that the domestic reaction to action in Cambodia loomed heavily during the meeting. According to Kissinger, Rogers opposed major cross-border operations but not bombing if Lon Nol was overthrown; Laird opposed all out destruction of the sanctuaries, which both Helms and Agnew supported. At this meeting Nixon broke his usual habit of not announcing his position until after the deliberations by announcing his support of GVN operations with U.S. support but not U.S. ground troops. Wheeler recommended that the South Vietnamese attack the Parrot's Beak and then the discussion turned to what to do about the other sanctuaries with Laird and Rogers trying to limit the U.S. role. At this point, Kissinger recalls that Agnew stated that either the sanctuaries were worth attacking or were not. He did not understand "all the pussyfooting about." He favored an attack on the Parrot's Beak and the Fishhook including the use of U.S. troops. Kissinger suggests that Nixon resented being shown to be "less tough" than Agnew. Kissinger recalls that the President complained to him about not being forewarned of Agnew's view and Kissinger believes that Agnew's stance accelerated Nixon's decision to go for the maximum option. (*White House Years,* pages 490–492)

On April 22 at 6:20 p.m., Rogers and Kissinger spoke on the telephone. Kissinger told Rogers that he had talked an hour before to the President who was thinking about authorizing an attack on the Parrot's Beak. Rogers hoped that it would not include U.S. air support ahead of time. Rogers also hoped that the operation would have a definite time limit. Kissinger agreed to recommend that view to the President. Rogers feared that this action might cause the fall of the Lon Nol government, stating that when the Cambodians "hear guns, they run." Kissinger agreed with Rogers' view probably expressed at the NSC meeting of April 22 that "it would be nice to have an ally who could fight." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Rogers and Kissinger, April 21; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

249. National Security Council Decision Memorandum 56[1]

Washington, April 22, 1970.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Attorney General
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Actions in Support of the Cambodian Government

Based on the NSC meeting of April 22,[2] I direct that the following steps be taken:

—Immediate step-up of U.S. military assistance—wherever possible through third country channels.

—Maximum diplomatic effort to enlist assistance by other interested countries.

—Authorization for specified shallow cross-border attacks against North Vietnamese/VC sanctuaries in Cambodia, to be conducted by GVN forces in division size with cross-border U.S. artillery support. U.S. tactical air support should be planned but made available only on the basis of demonstrated necessity.

—Air movement of ethnic Cambodian forces now in CIDG units in South Vietnam with their equipment to Phnom Penh as soon as possible. Arrangements should be made for their subsequent logistical support through South Vietnam.

—Congressional liaison, when appropriate, will be handled by the White House.

The Washington Special Actions Group is designated as the implementing authority for these actions.

Richard Nixon

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 4/23/70, a.m. and p.m. Top Secret; Sensitive; Principals Only. A copy was sent to Wheeler.

[2] Document 248.

250. Memorandum From Roger Morris, Winston Lord, and Anthony Lake of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 22, 1970.

SUBJECT

Cambodia

We believe that the situation in Cambodia demands action by the U.S., but that the nature of our action is constrained by the facts of the situation. Failure to act within the limits of possibility could destroy the chances for salvaging what we can.

I. False Issues

We must recognize that there is no attainable perfect solution in Cambodia. It is clear now that the government of Lon Nol cannot rally support in the countryside and, more important, that the Cambodian Army is extremely weak both in competence and in spirit. Short of sending in U.S. divisions and/or of deep and long-term ARVN penetrations of Cambodia, it does not seem possible to achieve the "best solution": an anti-Communist Cambodian government in control of its country and preventing VC/NVN use of its territory against South Vietnam.

We do not have the time required to build up the Cambodian Army to the degree of effectiveness required by the situation—if this were ever possible. To try to find this "best solution" is unrealistic.

Another false issue is the question of sending in U.S. divisions or of supporting deep and long-term ARVN penetration. This would probably be militarily ineffective in the long run unless we were willing to become bogged down as a garrison force in another country. The Cambodian government could not accept deep and long-term ARVN penetration without destroying any pretensions to political legitimacy, and the military value of such penetration would, again, be extremely

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970. Secret; Eyes Only. Kissinger discusses this memorandum and his meetings with these NSC staffers on this memorandum in *White House Years*, pp. 493–494 and 497. Lake and Morris resigned from the NSC staff over Cambodia. (Letter from Morris and Lake to Kissinger, April 29; ibid., Box 1048, Staff Files, Lake Chronological File, 6/69–5/70) William Watts also resigned, an account of which is in William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*, p. 145.

doubtful. These steps would also raise a political storm here, as it would be the most shocking spur to fears of widening involvement in U.S. ground combat in Southeast Asia.

Deep ARVN raids on a short-term basis or "one-time" use of U.S. forces on a large scale could ease military pressure, but only in the short run. It could *not* alter the basic balance. Lon Nol himself is against deep ARVN penetration, long or short term. With the Cambodians slaughtering Vietnamese, the GVN will have political problems coming to their aid on a massive scale.

This does not by any means rule out all U.S. actions, however. We need not fear giving the North Vietnamese excuses for their own activities. They do not need public excuses. They act on interest, as we should.

II. U.S. Objectives

Given this framework, our objectives should be:

—*To avoid the return of Sihanouk.* If he returned, it would be the result of a Communist decision to allow this, which implies meaningful assurances that he would do their bidding. His return would have a military effect on the war in Vietnam, as the Communists would no longer be bound by the restraints of discretion imposed by the unspoken nature of Sihanouk's earlier accommodation with them. More importantly, Sihanouk's return as a Communist stooge would have a serious psychological effect in Vietnam and Laos, and would at least provide an issue for Thieu's opponents against him, especially and dangerously among hard-liners in the Army.

—*To avoid public U.S. involvement in the pursuit of an unattainable objective.* We should not therefore by word or deed publicly commit ourselves to the existence of the Lon Nol regime, although we should continue to support Cambodian neutrality. Any public U.S. military involvement (whether troops or direct military assistance) in Cambodia could have the effect of tying us to Lon Nol. It would have four very serious consequences:

- It would heighten the adverse psychological effect in Vietnam, Laos and elsewhere of the regime's dissolution through more specific involvement of U.S. prestige;
- It would limit our own options if the situation deteriorates further and could involve us later in a serious crisis and commitment to military action which we would not now desire;
- It would reduce flexibility in the diplomatic situation and the possibility of achieving the objective listed immediately below; and
- U.S. troops in Cambodia would have a strong and damaging political effect in the U.S. which would both hurt the President's Vietnam policies and divide the country further. Fears of widened U.S. involvement in the ground war in Southeast Asia are evident.

—The *best objective* we believe realistically attainable would be a return to the status quo ante without Sihanouk—i.e., *a neutral Cambodian government under current or other non-Sihanouk leadership which has reached a private undertanding with the Communists that they may use the border areas in the same fashion as earlier.* This would mean that the Cambodian government would look the other way but not publicly acquiesce. This would imply the possibility of continuing Menu and defensive cross-border operations by the GVN—without active Cambodian opposition to military activity by either of the Vietnamese forces in the limited border area. Although not a good situation, this would be better than a Sihanouk government which actively opposed the GVN and would publicly oppose Menu, etc.

—There should be at least some good chance for the Cambodian Government to reach such an accommodation, if it seeks one seriously and if we do enough in the short run to make it clear to the Communists that they cannot easily reimpose Sihanouk. The situation would not be essentially different from that in which the Communists were willing to live pre-coup, and there may be some question from their point of view about how one gets reliable assurances of puppetdom from a man like Sihanouk. Their sensitivity to the Cambodian situation has been amply demonstrated. One may presume there is a good chance that they would like to see it resolved in a way which would allow them to make use of the border areas for their struggle in the main theater.

—We should give assistance to Lon Nol in the short run which would help achieve such a diplomatic solution. This implies indirect U.S. military assistance and other supporting moves.

III. Implications for Decisions on U.S. Actions

With these thoughts in mind, we believe we should:

—Take actions to improve the possibilities of an accommodation between the Cambodian Government and the Communists. We should approach Lon Nol and advise him of the assistance which we feel we can give, but also advise him that we believe it would be in his interest to seek a solution directly with the Communists. We should not suggest to him exactly what this solution should be, except by implication. He would be better at it than we.

This would obviously severely damage his morale, and his approach to the Communists could be interpreted by them as a sign of weakness. But damage to his morale would move him in the direction of accommodation, and his approach to the Communists would be private to avoid hurting the morale of his supporters. Although his approach would be a sign of weakness, no one knows better than the Communists how weak he is anyway.

It is not certain by any means that they will stop short of installing a puppet whatever we do. But the elements of uncertainty in their calculations noted above, and the actions outlined below, give the status quo ante without Sihanouk a certain attraction to them.

—Continue to rally diplomatic support for Cambodian neutrality, but not for Lon Nol himself.

—Take actions which would help put pressure on the Communists to reach accommodation and which would buy time for such a move. These would include:

• Military assistance to the RKG through covert GVN assistance (e.g., the AK–47's and other weapons) and through the Indonesians, Australians and perhaps the Thais;
• Continued psychological operations against Sihanouk;
• Strong U.S. military actions within current guidelines in Southern Laos and within South Vietnam against Communist troops along the Cambodian border; and
• Continued agreement to shallow border actions by GVN forces with Cambodian concurrence.

—There should be the following firm conditions to acquiesence in shallow GVN attacks into Cambodia:

• The Cambodian Government must officially request this type of assistance, and be willing to make this request public.
• These operations should be strictly ARVN, with no direct U.S. role; i.e., no U.S. troops, advisors or tactical air support. If this limits the extent of ARVN operations, they should be so limited. (Note General Westmoreland's conclusion that "if we react quickly enough, we may be able to exploit the situation to our overall advantage without any *substantial* involvement by United States forces on the ground.")
• Since the North Vietnamese can up the ante, we should make clear in advance that we will not send our forces into Cambodia to bail out the South Vietnamese if they get into trouble.

—There should be no U.S. direct military involvement in Cambodia. We must assume that any use of U.S. forces in Cambodia, e.g., U.S. tactical air, gunships, military advisers, or participation in cross-border actions with GVN forces, will become public very quickly. These actions, as argued earlier, would increase our involvement and prestige in a losing cause, limit diplomatic flexibility, and have severe political consequences in the U.S. And it could bog us down in another war in the long run.

—These factors all apply still more strongly against significant air attacks on North Vietnam. As you know, we oppose bombing North Vietnam also on the grounds that it gains us much less in damage against North Vietnam than it loses us here in its effect on our society and abroad in our relations with friendly nations and our negotiations

with opponents at the SALT and Warsaw talks, etc. These negative arguments grow in strength the greater the level of bombing considered—e.g., bombing the city of Hanoi or the dikes.

If we do decide on direct U.S. involvement in Cambodia, we believe it should be (a) public and (b) in a multilateral context. It would be particularly damaging if we intervened directly and tried at first to fuzz it with U.S. public opinion. And the Nixon Doctrine has little meaning if other countries more directly affected than we refuse to help.

IV. Geneva Conference

The above package of U.S. actions might not be sufficient to gain our least bad alternative of a Cambodian Government modus vivendi with the Communist forces and a return to the status quo ante without Sihanouk. We are already doing or plan to do everything suggested above except the approach to Lon Nol recommending that he seek accommodation with the Communists.

Thus, our above moves with relation to Cambodia should be coupled with an all-out U.S. campaign in favor of a new Geneva Conference. Our basic pitch would be that:

—Due to various Communist pressures, events in Indochina are apt to get out of hand.

—We are trying to avoid the spreading of the military struggle in Southeast Asia and prefer a diplomatic solution.

—We obviously cannot go to a conference if the Communists start marching on Phnom Penh.

—Many countries have expressed an interest in a new Geneva Conference.

—Such a conference would supplement, not supplant, other negotiations under way or contemplated, such as the Paris Talks, internal discussions among the various Laotian factions, and a possible dialogue between the Lon Nol government and the Communists.

There are several arguments in favor of our taking the initiative on a Geneva Conference:

—Given the present fragile situation in Indochina, and particularly Cambodia, a bold move is obviously required. Our present half-measures of cautious diplomacy and very limited military assistance clearly won't stabilize the situation. For reasons cited above, our bold moves should *not* be military ones.

—Such an initiative by us would certainly receive very strong and widespread approval around the world. Among the countries that count, the British, French, Soviets and various Asian nations have all, to one degree or another, favored such a conference. Malik's initiative,

however subsequently fudged, clearly shows that the Soviets would probably go along with a conference, and that perhaps some elements in the Hanoi leadership would also. Faced with the international pressures caused by our initiative, it would be very difficult for these countries to block such a conference. This, in turn, would isolate the Chinese who by themselves could hardly prevent a conference.

—There would be strong public support in this country for such an initiative.

—This international and domestic support for our trying to find a diplomatic, and not a military, solution would place the President in a very strong position if the Communists blocked the convening of a conference or marched on Phnom Penh. We would be in a better position to take stronger military measures once we had demonstrated our willingness to go the diplomatic route and the Communists' preference for continued military struggle. The advantage would be only tactical, however, and we believe the same arguments as outlined above would counsel against strong U.S. military action in any case.

—With regard to Cambodia, even with all the problems that such a conference would pose, the odds would seem somewhat better than our present ones. The broad umbrella of a conference, *coupled* with a dialogue between Lon Nol and the Communists, should give us a greater chance to prevent Sihanouk's return and establish a modus vivendi on the pattern of the status quo ante.

IV. Conclusion

We thus believe that the U.S. should not commit its prestige through its diplomatic position or its actions to an objective which we believe is unrealistic—a Cambodian Government under Lon Nol or anyone else which is anti-Communist and in control of the whole country. The next best solution is a return to the status quo ante without Sihanouk, including an accommodation between the Cambodian Government and the Communists which would allow Menu and limited defensive cross-border operations by the GVN. Direct U.S. military involvement in Cambodia would damage rather than enhance the prospects for such a solution. A strong move for a Geneva Conference would be essential.

In the end, however, we believe the U.S. must face squarely the basically untenable situation in Cambodia—and that no remedy in proportion to our interests may be available.

251. Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 22, 1970, 1330Z.

169. Ref: WHS–0028.[2]

Consequences of Sihanouk's Return.

1. Consequences of Sihanouk's return, or another Communist victory, though they would depend somewhat on way in which this came about, would be profound not only in South Viet-Nam but also throughout all of Southeast Asia.

2. Sihanouk would return a Communist captive, shorn of any ability to play a neutralist role in Southeast Asian struggle. Lon Nol government and its principal supporters would presumably be liquidated or otherwise neutralized. Cambodia would become even more useful for Communist purposes and provide a base which North Vietnamese could exploit with even greater freedom to prosecute their objectives in South Viet-Nam.

3. There would be a longer or shorter period of confusion and turmoil in Cambodia following the takeover. The economic problems there would be increased, and demands would be put on Hanoi, China, and the Soviets for economic and military aid. This would put a premium on Sihanoukville as a port of entry.

4. We would assume VC/NVA would find it easier than in the past to recruit or impress manpower from the Vietnamese minority.

5. The restoration of Sihanouk or another Communist victory would give an enormous fillip to VC/NVN morale and propaganda. It would be treated as an American defeat.

6. It would have great impact in Laos, which would then have three Communist powers on its borders. Concern in Thailand would grow, and in Indonesia there would be increased pessimism about the future of the area.

7. With a Sihanouk restoration or Communist victory, the VC/NVA would be in a stronger position to carry on protracted warfare and they

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 410, Backchannel Messages, Southeast Asia, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Received at the White House Situation Room at 9:41 a.m. Washington time.

[2] In White House telegram WHS0028, April 21, Kissinger requested, on behalf of the President for the NSC meeting on April 22, Bunker's and Abrams' candid views on the "military/political/psychological consequences of a Sihanouk return or another Communist victory in Cambodia." (Ibid.)

would be even less disposed than now to negotiate in Paris. Getting the VC/NVA out of Cambodia as part of a peace settlement would be more difficult.

8. A hostile Cambodia would force a reexamination of the speed of the Vietnamization process by both the GVN and the US, and might counsel extending the period of American involvement in South Viet-Nam.

9. While Thieu has the impression that the return of Sihanouk would be viewed by Vietnamese as a restoration of the status quo, we doubt that the consequences would be that simple. Not to be ruled out is the possibility that a development in Cambodia so unfavorable to Vietnamese prospects could create discouragement in South Viet-Nam political and military circles and there could be a serious let down in South Viet-Nam. While most Vietnamese military leaders have not wanted to probe too deeply, too widely, or commit too many forces in cross border operations, people like Ky can be expected to criticize the US and possibly Thieu for failure to take advantage of what Ky called "a golden opportunity." In such an event, and coming on heels of the 150,000 redeployment target, US–GVN relations might be put under some stress. Just as the loss of Laos would produce shock waves in South Viet-Nam, there would be even greater shock waves if Cambodia fell to Communist control or to a Sihanouk who was their captive.

10. One of the major likely consequences would be a prolongation and, over time, a possible intensification of the war, especially in the southern part of Viet-Nam. Whether this prospect would be met with renewed GVN determination would depend in part on the ability of South Vietnamese political and military leadership to damp down the criticism of the US and possibly of Thieu.

11. We do not believe that the development of a larger threat across the border would increase the interest of the GVN in seeking negotiated solutions through wider concessions, but rather would harden their insistence on a continued and indefinite US presence. At the same time it might encourage more of the dissident political elements within South Viet-Nam to advocate concessions and compromises, increasing political strains in the South.

12. Thus I would conclude that the return of Sihanouk or a Communist victory in Cambodia would be a serious setback. It would add to our problems and those of the GVN; it would complicate obtaining a reasonable political settlement for Viet-Nam; it would make more difficult obtaining agreement on mutual withdrawal from Viet-Nam, Cambodia, and Laos; and it might force US into a long term and costly large-scale presence in Viet-Nam. Every prudent step should be taken to reduce its possibility.

13. The following measures are submitted for consideration:

A. Increase worldwide psychological warfare campaign through overt and covert assets to call attention to North Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia. Attention should be called to the Communist interdiction of Mekong River as international waterway. This campaign should emphasize that Hanoi's hostile actions in Cambodia threaten the conflict in Southeast Asia.

B. Undertake diplomatic effort through the UN, ICC, and any other grouping of nations which can be used to help stabilize the situation in Cambodia. In recommending this course of action we are not unmindful of previous attempts to harness this approach which have been less than productive.

C. Implement presently agreed upon indirect arms assistance efforts to the Cambodians with maximum speed, realizing that this gesture in the short term is of more psychological than military value.

D. Encourage and actively guide as appropriate the current efforts of the GVN to establish direct contact between Saigon and the Lon Nol government.

E. Expand military assistance to the Lon Nol government through indirect channels to include communications equipment, heave weapons, aircraft spare parts and limited number of T–38 [*T–28*] aircraft.

F. Airlift three battalions of Khmer Serei and one battalion of KKK oriented CIDG troops into Phnom Penh after conducting appropriate coordination with the Lon Nol government. These four battalions are combat-ready units. Their movement to Phnom Penh could be carried out by GVN aircraft. These troops are equipped however with M–16's and other American equipment, thus their deployment poses some follow-on logistics problems, none of which are insurmountable. We have indications these troops would be willing to go to Cambodia. There are also 3,000 recruits of Cambodian descent in the CIDG training pipeline. Thieu told me and informed General Vien that Cambodians should be released if they want to go. There are reports that Lon Nol would be willing to receive and integrate this type of manpower into his own forces.

G. Increase the number of short term ARVN cross border operations in shallow penetrations designed to increase VC/NVA concern about the security of their base and logistics areas.

H. Maintain military pressure on North Vietnamese forces in northern and southern Laos and encourage the Thai government to send infantry battalions to the Sam Tong/Long Tieng salient.

I. Provide US gunship, artillery and TACAIR support to ARVN forces operating in Cambodia against significant VC/NVA targets.

J. Mount selective and carefully targeted combined US/GVN military operations against high payoff targets in Cambodia. One of these might be against COSVN headquarters.

K. Mount naval operations with GVN resources to open the Mekong River as an international waterway if VC/NVA forces continue to interdict the river. This should be undertaken only after the appropriate psychological warfare stage setting has been achieved via actions outlined in recommendation A.

L. Update and prepare for prompt implementation, a scenario and a contingency plan which would utilize US/GVN naval resources to quarantine the port of Sihanoukville immediately after our intent to impose such a quarantine was appropriately signalled to interested nations.

M. Apply appropriate military force against carefully selected targets of tactical or strategic importance located in the southern and western portions of North Viet-Nam along the Lao/North Vietnamese border.

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252. Memorandum for the Record[1]

Washington, April 23, 1970, 7:20 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Amb. U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Col. Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

SUBJECT

Meeting of WSAG Principals on Cambodia[2]

1. The execute order is out. Air authorization to MACV.

—Issue: Should advisors for ground air controllers go in and go in with helos?

2. Air Advisors.

—Issue: They should be able to use tac air without prior authority from Washington.

All believe that Dr. Kissinger will put it to the President per his agreement with the Secretary of State.

Kissinger: Can we keep the correspondents out?

Packard: It may focus more attention than otherwise on the activity.

All reviewed the draft of a cable to Abrams prepared by Johnson.[3]

All agree that Moorer will call Abrams and discuss the public relations aspects.

It was agreed to meet again at 3:00 p.m. the next day.

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[2] No minutes of the morning meeting of April 23 have been found, but an April 23 briefing memorandum from Kennedy to Kissinger for the evening WSAG meeting provides a partial account of what took place. At the morning meeting Kissinger asked for confirmation of U.S. military moves along the Cambodian border and stated that no U.S. personnel were to go into Cambodia, although he said he would raise the issue of U.S. forward air controllers with the President. Packard agreed to limit press coverage in the operational area; Johnson was to prepare a "diplomatic scenario;" Unger was to ask the Thais to assure Lon Nol that they would secure the Thai border; and Thieu should ensure Lon Nol that South Vietnam had no intention of occupying Cambodia. Kissinger agreed to send an additional 1,000-man pack to Cambodia and informed the WSAG of the President's desire for "maximum diplomatic encouragement of third country assistance to Cambodia." (Ibid., Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 4/23/70, a.m. and p.m.)

[3] Not further identified.

253. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Cambodia Options

The Situation

Cambodia's President Lon Nol has written asking immediate U.S. aid in arming Cambodian forces to a total of 410,000 (Tab A).[2]

North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces are nearing Phnom Penh. They have moved with surprising ease against the poorly organized, ill-equipped and ill-trained Cambodian forces. It is not certain that they intend to take over the country but they may soon be in a position to do so. The Cambodian forces of 35,000 Army and 40,000 Paramilitary is being expanded rapidly—addition of 30,000 is now underway, but it will take time for them to become effective. Fuller background was covered in my memorandum of April 22.[3]

Our Chargé in Phnom Penh, though perhaps excessively alarmist, reflects the concern of other foreign embassies in recommending we be prepared to evacuate American personnel from the city.[4]

The Consequences of Cambodia's Fall to the Communists

Cambodia's fall to the Communists would have the following seriously adverse consequences:

—In the immediate aftermath of a Communist takeover in Cambodia there would be a profound psychological shock in South Vietnam.

—Over the longer run, South Vietnam would be completely surrounded by hostile territory.

—The heretofore limited covert operations of Communist forces from Cambodia into Vietnam will become overt and much larger.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive.

[2] Tab A was a retyped copy of telegram 593 from Phnom Penh, April 21; see footnote 4, Document 240.

[3] Not printed. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970)

[4] Telegram 582 from Phnom Penh, April 21. (Ibid., NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, April 21, 1970)

—The Communists could send in North Vietnamese units and units formed of Vietnamese residents of Cambodia. They could also form a Guerrilla movement of Cambodian ethnics in South Vietnam. The new situation might not have immediate military consequences, but would certainly begin to tell in six months or a year.

—Communist forces in South Vietnam, particularly in the Delta area, could count on obtaining all the food and military supplies they need, whereas now they suffer some shortages.

—Vietnamization would be impossible to carry out. The South Vietnamese government and army could not preserve itself against pressure from all sides without a very large continuing presence of U.S. forces.[5]

—Our negotiating position would be complicated.

—In the rest of Asia, there would be a feeling that Communism was on the march and we were powerless to stop it. Thailand in particular would be subject to greater pressure.

What We Are Doing

The following measures have been undertaken or are planned:

—The ARVN has undertaken several ground operations against Communist forces in Cambodia since the change of Government. Those have been fairly extensive, and have included South Vietnamese air support. One such operation which was just completed involved 2,500 men and lasted for two days. Penetration was 3 or 4 kilometers.

—An operation on a larger scale is pending, however. This will involve a multi-division effort in Svay Rieng with full air and artillery support. The initial thrust will be 7–8 kilometers, but will be joined by other forces moving to cut off the entire Parrot's Beak. It is hoped that this particular operation will cause the Communists to draw off the combat units which they are now employing against Phnom Penh in order to defend their base camps. The operation has received general approval from both the ARVN and MACV drafters, but still needs final approval from the ARVN joint general staff.

—U.S. operations have been essentially B–52 strikes. (Tactical air operations on a small scale have been permitted for some time in the extraction of special forces teams from missions in Cambodia.) Strikes have been conducted at a rate of one or more per week against Communist base camps just opposite the Vietnamese border, mainly in III and IV Corps.

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[5] Nixon highlighted this paragraph and wrote the following note: "K. put this in speech if I have to make one."

—This week strikes are planned for targets opposite the Central Highlands in II Corps, the Angel's Wing area of III Corps, and in the zone between III Corps and IV Corps southwest of the Parrot's Beak.

—These raids have been effective in destroying supplies and dislocating troop concentrations, but have not seriously interfered with Communist military plans. If continued during the major ARVN operation mentioned above, or during similar operations of this scale, the disruptive effectives could be much greater.

—One U.S. tactical air operation is now planned: Operation Patio, which will cover an area 20 miles deep into Cambodia from the Vietnamese border, about 60 miles south of the tri-border area. It will consist of tactical aircraft and forward air controllers for artillery fire, and will be backed up with teams on the ground.

—U.S. arms shipments to Cambodia have consisted of 1,500 AK–47s, which were airlifted into Phnom Penh as of 12 noon Washington time April 22. 1,300 more will be sent in the same way tomorrow. A 1,000-man pack of U.S. arms and equipment will also go into Cambodia shortly.

—Several thousand more AK–47s will be readied and shipped over the next week.

Our Immediate Options

The Lon Nol government is better than any alternative at this point. Given the likely consequences of its fall, it is in our interest to give it the moral support it needs by evidencing willingness to help and to help its struggle by giving what material assistance we can.

—*Military Assistance* The Cambodians have asked for quantities of equipment far in excess of what they could use effectively or what could be delivered in time to be of help in the present situation. They now primarily need light weapons, ammunition and radios.

—Delivery of even small quantities quickly will have an important psychological effect and bolster Cambodian morale though they will not necessarily change the unfavorable military balance.

—There are *two ways* we can help:

—Open delivery—this would enable us to move large quantities in quickly. But the risks are not worth it.

—Use CIA 1000-man packs—These are available now and each fully equips a unit. They could be moved rapidly to equip three new regiments the Cambodians are forming and be delivered without directly showing our hand. If it is disclosed we would have the excuse that we had wanted to limit our commitment.

I *recommend* that for now we stick to the CIA packs.[6] It will not meet all of the Cambodian's requests but will do enough to have some military impact in the Phnom Penh area and give a morale boost.

Approve CIA Packs

Prefer Open Delivery

Military Operations in the Border Region

Attacks against North Vietnamese/VC sanctuaries near the South Vietnam border will tie down enemy forces needed for their protection, disrupt his logistics support and take some pressure off the Cambodians. Attacks can be made by cross-border operations, tactical air, or B–52s or a combination of these.

Cross-border operations—There are three levels.

—Shallow—2–3 miles in depth of the type now conducted by ARVN forces of brigade size supported by their own artillery and tactical area. These attacks harass the enemy and tie down some of his forces but have been insufficient to limit his offensive operations in Cambodia.

—Deeper Penetrations—These would extend up to ten miles into Cambodia and would require forces numbering up to a division supported by tactical air and artillery. They would attack bases and headquarters now beyond reach disrupting enemy logistical support and sowing confusion which would take some pressure off Cambodia. Such attacks limited in depth or duration would be responsive to Lon Nol's desire that they go no deeper.

—Massive operations—of multi-divisional size supported by artillery, tactical air and B–52s seeking to permanently deny the sanctuaries to the enemy. This would seriously disrupt enemy logistical support and capability to operate either in Cambodia or against South Vietnam. Lon Nol would at least publicly criticize such attacks, however, and international repercussions could be serious. It would involve greater U.S. involvement and could provoke North Vietnamese reaction against Phnom Penh.

—*Air Attacks*—either by tactical air or B–52's could damage enemy bases and concentrations which could not otherwise be reached. They could be independent of or in support of cross-border operations. They would have disruptive effects on enemy operations in Cambodia and Vietnam but would have their maximum effort in conjunction with ground operations. They risk disclosure, however, with potential adverse international and domestic reaction.

[6] At the end of the memorandum, Nixon wrote: "OK, all plans."

I recommend, in the present situation, deeper penetrations of division size but not permanent investiture of the sanctuaries. The penetrations would be conducted by ARVN divisions supported by their own artillery and tactical air and by U.S. cross-border artillery, tactical and B–52 strikes on specific targets. To further assist the ARVN forces, I recommend U.S. forces be deployed in the border area to relieve ARVN forces needed for these attacks.

I recommend you approve deeper ARVN penetrations with U.S. cross-border artillery support, tactical air and B–52 strikes.

Khmer Krom and Khmer Serai Deployment—There are 3,500 Cambodian ethnics forces now in South Vietnam equipped and trained. They are part of the Special Forces. Lon Nol asked for them and Ambassador Bunker recommends that four battalions of them be airlifted to Phnom Penh with their equipment. They would strengthen Cambodian forces at Phnom Penh and have an important desirable psychological effect in Cambodia. They lack logistical support, however, and we will have to arrange to provide it. This can be done through the South Vietnamese.

I recommend we approve airlift of the Cambodian Forces to Phnom Penh as soon as possible.

I have enclosed summaries of the recommendations of Ambassador Bunker (Tab B)[7] and the JCS (Tab C).[8]

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[7] Tab B was a retyped copy of Document 251 and a summation of the recommendations it contained.

[8] In Tab C the JCS recommended providing M–1's to equip Cambodia's 85,000 person army, developing plans for attacks by division-size RVNAF forces on enemy positions in the sanctuaries, rescinding the current restrictions on U.S. forces on the border to provide logistic and artillery support for RVNAF forces engaged in Cambodia, and developing plans for employing Cambodian "ethnics" in the Special Forces. These recommendations were taken from a copy of Document 244, which was also attached at Tab C.

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254. Editorial Note

At 7:20 a.m. on April 24, 1970, President Nixon met with Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Thomas Moorer, Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence Lieutenant General Robert Cushman, and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger until 8:15 a.m. Kissinger remained with the President until 9:02 a.m. (National

Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) Kissinger recalls that the President explicitly excluded Secretary of State Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird from the meeting on the pretext that this was only a military briefing, but in reality it was because of the President's "extreme irritation at the bureaucratic foot dragging" of both their agencies on the question of U.S. air support for the South Vietnamese Parrot's Beak operation. According to Kissinger's recollection, the President wanted to discuss the feasibility of a combined U.S.–ARVN attack against the Fishhook sanctuary to complement the South Vietnamese attack on the Parrot's Beak. Kissinger recounts that Moorer and Helms were strongly in favor of the combined operations, believing that they would relieve the North Vietnamese pressure on Phnom Penh and destroy enemy supplies and gain time for Vietnamization to work. After the meeting Kissinger recalls that he telephoned Laird to inform him of the discussion at the meeting. Laird suggested that it would be wise not to make any decision before Rogers testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 27 so that the Secretary of State could answer truthfully that no American forces would be going into Cambodia. Laird also suggested that Moorer and Abrams were opposed to the joint U.S.–ARVN operation against the Fishhook. Kissinger then telephoned Moorer who in no uncertain terms rejected the Secretary of Defense's contention. (Kissinger, *White House Years*, pages 495–496) At 2:25 p.m. on April 24 Kissinger telephoned Wheeler to ask if he and Abrams were recommending on military grounds "this COMUS thing." Wheeler answered that they were and they supported it on military grounds. Kissinger recommended that Abrams act on the assumption that the operation might be ordered. (Transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Wheeler, April 24; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

On April 24 at 7:20 p.m. Kissinger called Helms to ask him what he thought in his "private capacity of the course of action" discussed at the meeting that morning. Helms stated: "It seemed to me that if he [Nixon] is prepared for the fallout, then it is the thing to do. He obviously was." Kissinger asked Helms if he thought "it is worth it?" Helms thought it was. Kissinger then asked Helms if he thought there should be two operations, suggesting that there would be as much flak for one as for two. Helms agreed. Kissinger then told Helms: "It is my judgement and strong recommendation that any decision must be discussed with Cabinet Members—even if the decision has already been made and an order is in the desk drawer. You can't ram it down their throats without them having a chance to give their views." Helms agreed that "you have to bring the other fellow in." Kissinger added, "And give them the opportunity to discuss the wisdom of it." Helms suggested

that even so, "it is just not right to start monkeying around with something like this at the last minute. I think the state of mind I saw this morning was just right—keep it and not monkey with it." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Helms, April 24; ibid.)

The next day Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle Wheeler, who reassumed his duties after a brief stay in the hospital, informed Commander in Vietnam General Creighton Abrams that the President was concerned that he would be subject to the same kind of criticism that President Kennedy endured after the abortive Bay of Pigs Operation in April 1961 if the Cambodian operations failed. The President wanted ARVN and U.S. commanders to "have an aggressive frame of mind and a determination to achieve success." (JCS telegram 5711, April 25, Wheeler to Abrams, JCS Files, OCJCS File 091 Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 25 March–27 April 1970, as cited in JCS Historical Division, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969–1970,* pages 252–253)

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255. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, April 24, 1970, 10:40 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Richard Helms, Director, CIA
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff
Brig. Gen. John A. Vogt, Jr., USAF, Joint Staff, Director for Operations

SUBJECT

WSAG Meeting (Principals)

Dr. Kissinger: I have spoken with the President. There must be no leaks. All the departments will be held responsible. There should be a list of people who get Nodis cables on this subject.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

The decision memo reflects the President's views.[2] If Cambodia becomes a Communist base, Vietnamization becomes impossible. The psychological blow will be terrific. We require implementation of the NSDM quickly.

Helms: [gives a briefing.][3] There is no attack in the city but they are trying to surround it, terrorize it, and then send in a delegation to negotiate. There is a report that VC terrorists are in the city. Encircling is a more effective tactic in terrorizing than taking the city.

The Cambodian Army took back Saang.

I can show you the location of the sanctuaries. The big ones are near Takeo and Loc Ninh.

Packard: Pour heat into the sanctuaries.

Moorer: We have a plan to execute the Parrot's Beak operation. It's a division-plus size operation on two sites. Next is the plan for the COSVN area. We started the cross-border operations last night. We have no U.S. tac air now in Cambodia. The VNAF does it except for part.

Abrams has an order to look at all possible operations and plan them.

Kissinger: Have we moved troops to the border since the President ordered them?

Moorer: Some elements of the 25th have moved, but not in the last 24 hours.

Kissinger: The President ordered it. It must be done. He wants specific units moved to the border in the vicinity of the base areas. He wants a written statement by the close of business stating what units have been moved to the base areas.

What is opposite COSVN?

Moorer: Primarily U.S. forces—the 1st Cavalry. They can be moved closer. We will move them immediately and notify you by close of business.

We also will cover the areas which the South Vietnamese cover.

The NVA may move their forces but they can't move the caches.

Johnson: What do they have in there?

Moorer: A small force—one regiment in the Parrot's Beak.

Johnson: Why is the first operation in the Parrot's Beak?

Moorer: Because the South Vietnamese can handle it and succeed.

Johnson: What does that include?

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[2] See Document 249.

[3] All brackets in the source text.

Moorer: South Vietnamese tac air and artillery. They'll have U.S. artillery and tac air support—if needed. There is no constraint on U.S. tac air. The recce we'll leave to MACV.

Kissinger: If MACV requests it, we approve.

Johnson: Do we tell Lon Nol?

Kissinger: Yes, but about the time we launch it.

Green: Lon Nol should request it. If we put to him he might agree.

Kissinger: Tell him shortly before.

Johnson: We will have the messages ready.

Moorer: We'll go from both sides.

Kissinger: Will the VC turn around—will it force them back?

Helms: North Vietnam calculated we wouldn't do this; it will jolt them.

Johnson: The problem is we don't want to push them deeper into Cambodia.

Moorer: If we get at the caches, they have a logistics problem.

Helms: One report is that they have enough supplies in the bases to keep the war going a long time.

Kissinger: Can we keep this going next week?

Moorer: We can keep this one going but not another major operation.

Packard: It's a feint against COSVN and then they attack Parrot's Beak.

Helms: It's near Saigon; thus it's a good move for the rear in South Vietnam. It will have a psychological effect.

Green: Is there any U.S. involvement?

Kissinger: No Americans go into Cambodia.

You will have plans for U.S. tac air—but request from Washington.

You will have plans for the other operation. The one against the COSVN headquarters is a feint.

Moorer: Yes.

Kissinger: Can't we stop the press from going in the area?

Packard: We can stop them for a while—they will see what we can do.

Kissinger: I want the press policy of MACV to close it off and let it leak out. If this is worth doing, we want the message to get to the other side.

Packard: We must act as though we're serious.

Johnson: MACV handled it as an operational announcement.

Kissinger: We must take the responsibility to impress Hanoi.

Johnson: In the approach to Lon Nol, we have a scenario for what he says.

Kissinger: You prepare a scenario for the diplomatic and public relations aspects: what do we say, where we say it.

Packard: We should approach the Thai to assure Lon Nol they will protect the borders.

Johnson: We should do this. We will notify Unger.[4]

Moorer: What about Thieu? He should be on board.

Johnson: We will want Thieu to assure Lon Nol they have no intention to occupy Cambodia. We'll give Moorer a paragraph for a cable to Abrams.[5]

Kissinger: Can we let Lon Nol know help is on the way?

Johnson: He has been told that the rest of the AK–47s will be delivered this week. We have a draft letter for a response to the Lon Nol letter.

Kissinger: Get it today. Make it as forthcoming as possible.

Helms: Lowenstein and Moose are going to Cambodia Tuesday.[6]

Johnson: We will get instructions to Rives. We also will beef up Rives—he will get additional officers.

Helms: I will see Mansfield today at 4:00, per your instruction.

Kissinger: I will see Fulbright this afternoon.[7]

Green: Should we press on UN actions?

Kissinger: No.

We will meet at 4:00 to discuss the military, political scenario and public relations scenario. We need a Presidential statement.

The President wants a major diplomatic effort to get others to do something—Japanese, Indonesia. The President will promise to replace

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[4] This was apparently already done; see footnote 2, Document 252.

[5] Not found.

[6] April 28. Richard Moose and James Lowenstein were staff investigators for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

[7] No record of Helms' meeting with Mansfield on April 24 has been found. Helms met with Mansfield at 2:45 p.m. on April 23. In an April 23 memorandum to Rogers with a copy to Kissinger, Helms stated that he "informed him [Mansfield] that [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] was being sent to Cambodia. I briefed him along the lines the President and you indicated to me. Senator Mansfield's reaction was, 'I can have no objection [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]. In fact, it is legitimate, desirable, and should be done.' " (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970) No record of Kissinger's discussion with Fulbright has been found, although Kissinger recounts that at the President's request he met with Chairman of the Armed Services Committee Senator John Stennis; see Document 256.

the stocks if they need it. He wants a proposal within 24 hours for the maximum encouragement to other countries.

Green: Regarding Indonesia: Malik wants to hold back military assistance until after a diplomatic conference. The others in the government want to go ahead with military assistance. How do we do this without alienating Malik?

The Australian is too pallid. We bucked him up. We sent another message to the Japanese.[8]

Kissinger: Let's do a memo to the President—what we have done, what we can do for each country.[9]

Johnson: The UK is a lost cause.

Green: He will delay his trip to Europe.

Kissinger: The 3,500 Khmer—are they moving?

Moorer: Abrams was contacted. He's working up a plan now. Some are already across the border. 1,100. We plan to use South Vietnamese aircraft for the rest.

Johnson: What about relations between Song Ngoc Trang and Lon Nol?

Moorer: There's close cooperation politically on the reception in Phnom Penh.

Johnson: We should work out the clearance in Phnom Penh as soon as we can know the arrival time.

Do we continue to pay them?

Kissinger: Yes.

Johnson: We should get a South Vietnamese mission into Phnom Penh soon. We're working on it.

Moorer: We will get all the information available before the 7:00 o'clock meeting.

Kissinger: Military assistance takes a long time to be effective. Can we handle the 1,000-man packs through the GVN?

Helms: Yes. We will work it out. We would agree to turn it over to the GVN now for this purpose.

Kissinger: The Chiefs want to send M–1s from the self-defense forces.

Moorer: Yes. We have them and ammo and the Cambodians already have some.

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[8] Not found.

[9] Reference is to an April 25 memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, the first in a series of daily briefings for the President on actions in Cambodia. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 570, Cambodian Operations (1970), Actions on Cambodia, Vol. I)

Helms: It would be helpful if a man could go in to help them for a few days with the packs.

Kissinger: I see no problem. I will raise this with the President.

Packard: How about communications equipment? They need it. We should include some with delivery of the packs.

Packard: How about Intelligence? Should we go deeper with COMINT?

Moorer: I'll take a reading on this.

Kissinger: How many M–1's can we give them? I want a recommendation on this this evening.

Johnson: I like the packs as a first step.

Helms: We will have details on the packs tonight.

Moorer: I will look to see that the Attaché group is adequate to handle the incoming shipments.

Johnson: Shouldn't we beef up the Attaché group?

Moorer: I agree. We'll get it underway.

Packard: How about the waterway? We need protection there. It's an international waterway.

Moorer: We would use South Vietnamese boats to escort them. We have developed plans.

Packard: We can use the river to get a third day's supplies of oil, etc.

Kissinger: Should we have air delivery of all things?

[All agree.]

Packard: We have 14,000 M–1s and M–14's that could be delivered within 14 days.

Kissinger: Let's have a plan by this evening to deliver the weapons and radios. We need an estimate.

Johnson: How much can they use effectively?

Helms: We need some people in to help them organize. We'll have this for later.

Johnson: The question is, are we going the Lao route?

Helms: These are the basic questions.

Kissinger: Compared to the Cambodian Government, Laos looks good.

Packard: We have a package for a 30,000-man force with ammo for the operation—it'll cost $30 million. It's too early to decide. We have some radios that could be available in one to fourteen days.

Kissinger: We will confirm that the arms were delivered by South Vietnam. It was not an answer to the arms request. It was done with our knowledge and approval.

[At 11:50, General Vogt briefed on the plan.]

Vogt: As early as Sunday night EST, with elements of two divisions, 10,000 men. They'll be there ten days. They face 5,800 enemy troops. The Task Group of the US 25th Division will apply pressure on the border area around Parrot's Beak. The 1st Cavalry will move up against the border in the north near COSVN headquarters. We'll give tac air, gunship and medical evacuation, and aerial resupply and evacuation assistance as required.

Kissinger: That is to be approved here.

Vogt: We want advisors along for control of the US tac air and gunships in case they are needed. We could helo in but we'd prefer to go along.

Kissinger: I will take it up with the President.

Vogt: They will withdraw at the end of the operation.

Johnson: We tell Lon Nol they will withdraw.

[All agree, but with a caveat.]

Moorer: I will explain to Abrams the problem of Cambodian civilians in the area.[10] I suggest a letter to Thieu that we are aware of the operation, we are supporting it, and we want to be sure Cambodian casualties are kept to a minimum.

Kissinger: We want to be sure.

Moorer: We will put out the execute order now.

Kissinger: I approve the letter.

[The meeting ended.]

[10] In telegram 6347 from Saigon, April 26, 0832Z, Bunker reported that he fully discussed the problem of avoiding casualties among Cambodian civilians, and Thieu himself was aware of the importance. Bunker reported: "Vietnamese forces have been and are under very strict instructions in regard to treatment of Cambodian population and avoidance of civilian casualties." (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL CAMB/KHMER) The letter was therefore apparently not needed.

256. Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon, his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), and the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee (Stennis)[1]

Washington, April 24, 1970, 4:06 p.m.

P: Where did I find you?

K: In my office—I am going into one of those WSAG meetings shortly.[2] I have talked to Senator Stennis—in fact, he is sitting here now. I would like to report to you his conclusions in his presence. I presented the general problem of the situation.

P: You told him I asked you to talk to him?

K: Yes; that this was at your special request. I was very open with him. I explained the consequences of a collapse of Cambodia, the large aid request (which has grown larger), your reluctance to get involved in a war in Cambodia, and your conviction that the aid program, as such, is going to not be effective for about a year or so, and would get us into a situation analogous to others. I showed him the map of these base areas which are really part of the war in Vietnam—the forces there are operating against our forces.

P: The Senator knows about Menu?

K: Yes; I summed up those Menu results again—the enormous stores there. And the Senator then came to this conclusion. I asked him to sit here while I reported it. He said, of course his first preference is air action. Second, wherever possible, his preference is South Vietnamese ground forces. If necessary and if helpful to the war effort in South Vietnam, he could see the utility of a raid of several weeks' duration that included American ground forces, as long as it sped up the end of the war in South Vietnam. [Mr. Kissinger turned to the Senator and asked if that had been a fair statement of his conclusions.][3]

P: I will talk to the Senator in a minute, but first, let me tell you one thing. First, I am concerned about one thing. Get hold of Helms and have him get in touch with Saigon and have a couple of his guys fly into Phnom Penh to install that signal equipment. There is no need for that guy to wait 45 minutes. Tell him we want that signal—we are

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File. No classification marking. According to Kissinger's memoirs, *White House Years,* Kissinger and Nixon pre-arranged this call to impress Stennis. (p. 496)

[2] See Document 257.

[3] All brackets in the source text.

at a critical time where we need the back-channel immediately. Don't you think so?

K: That is an excellent idea.

P: Not uniformed, military men, but Helms' men to install the equipment. This will help on our consideration. You might explain to the Senator about that equipment. Another thing I would like to know on COSVN is: If we thought we would have to hit COSVN in event they took Phnom Penh—whether or not they take Phnom Penh 30 days from now, will the rains be too great?

K: Almost certainly I know the answer. Westmoreland said it can't be done in any effective way.

P: If we take COSVN, we have to do it now?

K: Yes, but without air support if it is done now. [In response to the President's query], the rain situation changes in October.

P: Not till then? Check that further. I want a clear answer to how long our option lasts—whether it lasts one month, one week or something else. I am basing it on the assumption that it lasts two weeks.

K: The rainy season lasts for three months after it starts.

P: As I understand it, we have only three weeks to exercise this option. Assuming we are trying to find a way to take the shorter road, I think we have to recognize we may not find another opportunity.

K: That is right.

P: These guys have been talking about a protracted war. That is why last night, I had come to the conclusion you have to seize the opportunity when it is there, considering the weather, etc.

P: I will talk to the Senator.

K: It may take an hour to get an answer to those two things.

P: You don't have to call me back—anytime after two hours. I am going out for an hour.

Stennis: Mr. President.

P: I want to thank you for talking to Henry. I will sum up what my views are: (1) I don't want us to get into a quagmire of military aid to Cambodia. Or else we will get into another situation. On that request, we are not going to give a lot—a few rifles doesn't bother you does it? You tell your colleagues we are not going to get into a big aid program for Cambodia. We will provide minimum rifles because they did opt for us. With regard to these areas (1) as far as American activity is concerned, the first choice is air action including the B–52's which *only* you and Senator Russell know about. It's the best-kept secret of the war. (2) We will also consider the possibility of tactical air to follow. But that is all air action on the borders—not inside. It's within the 2–5 mile area. As far as any ground action: there will be no ground

action with relation to Cambodia. They have to save themselves. Any ground action will relate only to our troops in South Vietnam and our Vietnamization program. If ground action takes place, we will have the South Vietnamese do it—we trained that army. (3) Our other option, we will not exercise unless we have to—that of having Americans helping South Vietnamese only if we consider that that will, in the long run, help reduce our casualties in Vietnam. How does that sound to you?

S: It sounds good—I will be with you on the nailhead.

P: We are not going to get involved in a war in Cambodia. We are not going to occupy Cambodia. We do want basically to win in South Vietnam.

S: We have to.

P: In order to do that, we have to hit those sanctuaries in Cambodia.

S: This is part of your necessary steps in handling the war in South Vietnam.

P: As you remember, in my speech Monday I warned that if their actions in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam endangered our troops in South Vietnam, we are not going to sit and take it.

S: I am with you all the way. I did express some concern. I didn't think you were planning it—I had to see.

P: We are not going to fly anybody in to save Phnom Penh—or Cambodia. We are going to do what is necessary to help save our men in South Vietnam. They can't have those sanctuaries there.

S: I will be with you—I commend you for what you are doing.

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257. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, April 24, 1970, 4:20 p.m.

SUBJECT

WSAG Principals Meeting

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director, Central Intelligence Agency
David Packard, Under Secretary of Defense
General Earle Wheeler, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Admiral Thomas Moorer
U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Richard Kennedy, NSC Staff

Kissinger: What is the monsoon situation?

Wheeler: It will begin to switch in mid-May; by June the area will be impassable in the Parrot's Beak area except on roads. It will last five months. The NVA put supplies on platforms with stilts.

Kissinger: Are there any issues remaining?

Johnson: 2,500 more AK–47s (above the 1,300) will be ready 1800 Saigon time tomorrow. Saigon and Phnom Penh are working it out between them.[2] We may have to use SAC C–123s.

[All agree.][3]

Johnson: We have a new message from Lon Nol about the Khmer.[4]

Kissinger: Tell Lon Nol what we have done and tell him we agree to the movement of the Khmer Serai. 1,000 have already moved. Alex [Johnson] will get word to Lon Nol today, if necessary, telling him only that we agree and are making plans.[5]

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[2] In telegram 062631 to Saigon and Phnom Penh, April 25, 1910Z, the Department asked Bunker to resolve a problem that arose over the second shipment of AK–47s from South Vietnam to Cambodia. Thieu was reportedly concerned about public acknowledgement of the shipments and Cambodian violence against South Vietnamese in Cambodia. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER) In telegram 6395 from Saigon, April 27, Bunker reported that he saw Thieu who agreed immediately to the shipment even though Cambodia had made no formal request. As Thieu put it, "if a neighbor's house is burning, you don't wait to be asked to provide help." Thieu insisted on the following conditions for future assistance: "indiscriminate killing of Vietnamese stop, voluntary repatriation of Vietnamese be allowed and facilitated, and there be no publicity about the shipment." (Ibid.)

[3] All brackets in the source text.

[4] In an April 24 letter to Nixon, Lon Nol reported that the situation in Cambodia was deteriorating rapidly. He wrote: "I have the honor to beg your excellency and the USG to be kind enough to examine the possibility of sending Special Forces composed of Khmer Kroms (Cambodians of South Vietnam) and Montagnards of Mondulkiri to Snuol (Kratie), to Mimot (Machai Mea), to Svay Rieng, to Kandal, to Takeo and to Kampot." This was the only way, Lon Nol continued, Cambodia could hold on until it could rearm its forces with U.S. assistance. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER) On April 23 journalist William Beecher of *The New York Times* reported that the United States was providing secretly to Cambodia AK–47 rifles captured in South Vietnam. Kissinger recounts the President's reaction to this leak in *White House Years,* pp. 494–495.

[5] Transmitted in telegram 062423 to Phnom Penh, April 25, 0021Z. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

The President is prepared to send M–1s.

Wheeler: MACV can get 15,000 M–1 carbines from RVNAF. We can get them moving about 1,000 per day beginning 29 April. Ammo accompanies it. M–1 rifles could be substituted but that would take longer.

Johnson: Tell Lon Nol now we are working with the GVN to get the 15,000 carbines and ammo.[6]

Kissinger: Do we want to go ahead with the 1,000-man packs?

Helms: It's better to wait until the Defense Attaché office is beefed up.

Wheeler: We'll get attachés there from Thailand now.

Kissinger: I will tell the President we'll hold them up until the attachés are ready to receive it.

Johnson: Laos has a request for assistance from Lon Nol.[7]

Kissinger: Now Laos is giving military assistance? [Laughter]

He has a message from Souvanna.

Johnson: We should instruct Godley.

Kissinger: We should give him the message that the U.S. is behind Lon Nol which he can repeat to Lon Nol.

Green: We could stop rice shipments from Southern Laos.

Kissinger: Galbraith can't see Suharto till later?

Green: Right. We really can't expect Indonesia to help until the Pan-Asian meeting.

Kissinger: How about the COMINT?

Moorer: The COMINT is adequate.

Kissinger: Thieu has been approached?

Moorer: We sent a message to Abrams.[8]

Wheeler: Abrams briefed Bunker and Berger. Then he saw Thieu with Ambassador Bunker and briefed Thieu. He has not reported the reaction.

Johnson: A joint cable called for urging Thieu to do all possible to protect civilians in the area. The Secretary of State wants further ex-

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[6] Transmitted in telegram 062422 to Phnom Penh, April 25, 0019Z. (Ibid.)

[7] Reference is to a request from Lon Nol to Souvanna for a light battalion of 600 men, as reported in telegram 2893 from Vientiane, April 24, 1128Z. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, Cambodia, 4/23/70, a.m. and p.m.)

[8] JCS telegram 5689 from Moorer to Abrams, April 24. (JCS Files, OCJCS File 091, Cambodia, Ground Strikes Against Base Areas in Cambodia, 27 Mar–27 Apr 70, as cited in Historical Division, JCS, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1969–1970,* p. 253)

hortation on this. [All agree.] A message will go to Bunker through the military channel.[9]

We have a letter from Gorton.[10] We'll send a message filling the Australians in on what assistance we are giving.

Kissinger: How about the press in South Vietnam?

Moorer: Abrams has been asked to see how we can keep exposure to a minimum.

Wheeler: The ARVN keeps them away.

Kissinger: Can the ARVN hack it?

Wheeler and Packard: Yes, with support.

Kissinger: Did Unger get any reply?

Helms: Thanat thinks it's fine.

Green: Rives thought it was a good idea.

Johnson: Thanat says he's telling Lon Nol not to worry.[11]

Kissinger: How far in will they be after 24 hours?

Wheeler: Just a few miles. It's a pincer movement.

Kissinger: Then it's still shallow then.

When will the press know it's a large operation?

Wheeler/Packard: The first day, maybe the second day.

Wheeler: There may be lag of 24–48 hours after the northern press begins before the southern move begins.

Kissinger: When will we begin to get flak?

All: Tuesday.[12]

Johnson: Fulbright will be angry that the Secretary didn't tell him.[13]

Packard: Let's go back to the tac air question. You asked how extensive tac have we been doing in Patio. Abrams says he can extend Patio activity to cover areas of high enemy density: 350, 331, 201, 202, 609, 740. He can't do it in the South. Abrams wants to do it when he can. The question is whether it's advisable to open up tac air at the same time.

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[9] For Bunker's response, see footnote 10, Document 255.

[10] Not found.

[11] Apparent reference to telegram 4977 from Bangkok, April 24, 1135Z, in which Unger reported that Thanat assured him that Cambodia could withdraw its forces from the western border with Thailand without anxiety and that he had passed the word to Cambodia that Thailand "wished to be of help." (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

[12] April 28.

[13] Rogers was scheduled to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 27.

Kissinger: The President is eager to do it.

Wheeler: The sorties are limited. We can't do it.

Packard: Transfer some out of Steel Tiger for a time.

Wheeler: OK, but leave it to him.

If we move a CVA from the Sea of Japan, we could put in another 100 sorties a day.

Packard: We should do as much as we can now.

Johnson: OK.

Moorer: So we recommend a CVA and tac air starting Sunday night.

Johnson: I'm worried about taking a CVA away from Korea. We have removed the 106's and told Park of the force cut.

Moorer: Just during the month of May.

Green: We could explain to Park later if we need to.

Kissinger: I will check with the President on the CVA and tac air.

Johnson: Should we tell the TCC countries and Japan after the operation starts? How do we handle the TCC's in Saigon? Can they be briefed there? I planned to do it in the capitals.

Kissinger: Shouldn't the GVN do it?

Packard: I think the GVN should do it.

Kissinger: I agree.

Wheeler: The GVN could call in the Ambassadors in Saigon and tell them. Abrams wouldn't normally cut them in on a GVN/US operation.

Kissinger: Brief them only after it begins to surface.

Johnson: Please raise with the President the Lowenstein-Moose question. The Secretary is concerned.

[At 5:05 Dr. Kissinger leaves to see the President. At 5:17 he returns.]

Kissinger: The President approves the carrier and tac air.

Wheeler: We should let Abrams pick the time to start it for the maximum impact. It may be best to do it all at once.

Kissinger: O.K.

Wheeler: The order of priority now is: (1) South Vietnam, (2) Steel Tiger, (3) Barrel Roll. It will now be: (1) Cambodia, (2) South Vietnam, (3) Barrell Roll and (4) Steel Tiger.

[All agree.]

Johnson: Should we tell Lon Nol?

Wheeler/Packard: No.

Johnson: The helicopters never came up?

Wheeler: It never comes out and never from South Vietnam, Cambodia or North Vietnam.

Johnson: What about Lowenstein and Moose?

Helms: Is it better that they go sooner than later?

Johnson: They'll be going all over.

Packard: They won't be in Phnom Penh until the operation is well underway. It's from 4 June–11 June.

Green: What do we show them?

Kissinger: Do they ask for classified information?

All: Yes.

Green: We can give the same instructions as we gave for Pincus and Paul.[14]

Johnson: It's probably as good a time as any.

Kissinger: When does the operation go?

Moorer: At the earliest, on the 27th.

Kissinger: Alex, you do a draft on a press statement for White House approval. Just the operative paragraph. [The meeting ended.]

[14] Walter Pincus and Roland Paul, chief staff investigators for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

258. Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

April 24, 1970, 5:06 p.m.

P: Are you still in your meeting?[2]

K: We are on the verge of winding it up. [In response to the President's query],[3] I am in my office.

[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Records, 1969–1976, Telephone Conversations, Chronological Files, 19–26 April 1970. No classification marking. The President arrived at 4 p.m. at Camp David with his friend Bebe Rebozo; Kissinger was in Washington.

[2] The WSAG meeting; see Document 257.

[3] Brackets in the source text.

P: I want a report because I have to take off. We were very lucky—the weather was miserable all the way up. We broke through the clouds here, and the weather is beautiful. How's the meeting going? Are the boys in good spirits?

K: There's nothing like a spanking to make them behave.

P: Do they see it's a big deal?

K: Wheeler said he never thought he'd live to see the day he could do one of these operations.

P: He's even pleased with COSVN! This one is a hell of a thing—this pincer thing. It's a small version of the Bulge—and Calais(?). You must have been there.

K: Yes, I was . . .

P: How about getting the guy to set up the communications equipment?

K: I talked to Helms, and its on the way. With regard to the monsoon, it begins on May 15 and by June 1, everything is inundated.

P: Then our last day of ordering it would be May 5?

K: That is pretty late. I would say May 1.

P: Then we have one week.

K: My own judgment is to follow as closely as possible . . . [The President interrupted to say he understood.][4]

K: From May 1 to 3, you can handle it. They have a proposal from Abrams along the lines of your thinking to start tac air all along the Cambodian frontier which would include COSVN Headquarters, but not pay particular attention to it. It would hit every base area.

P: He thought of it independently? Do it! Do it! And Laird is to follow this up. Tell Wheeler, no crap now. I don't want to order tac air unless it is done. Damn it, they don't do these things. You are in charge. If it isn't done, it's your ass. (to which K laughed)

P: Wheeler does understand? Do you have someone over there? You have the Admiral who could keep you informed. Pass a message to Abrams back-channel that I have ordered it. When will tac air begin?

K: We will leave it up to Abrams, but no later than when the operation in the Parrot's Beak occurs.

P: The point is it will divert them—bombardment before invasion.

K: And to keep them pinned down. These guys want to move the carrier down from Korea.

P: Do that.

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[4] Brackets in the source text.

K: I think it's a good idea.

P: We have moved the mining crew in. On November 3, [1969] we said all that and didn't do anything. This time they won't be expecting [it.]

K: They are passing some messages in the clear.

P: They are. We will look at it on Sunday.[5]

K: Do you want me to set the meeting definitely?

P: No, but you think about it. The problem is the left-wing is setting us up for a real fall here on the ground that poor little Cambodia—4,000,000 of them—asked for our help. We didn't give them help and they went Communist. They will forget that Kennedy lost Cuba by the Bay of Pigs. The other side is, if we don't do it now, we may have to do it later. If they take Phnom Penh later, we could move on COSVN. The third point that worries me is I don't think we will have a real shot at North Vietnam.

K: I agree with all these things.

[5] April 26.

259. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 26, 1970.

SUBJECT

Meeting on Cambodia, Sunday, April 26, 1970 at 4:30 p.m. in the President's EOB Office[2]

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Personal File, Box 58, Speech File, NSC, Ground Operations in Cambodia. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Sent for information.

[2] No record of this meeting is in the National Security Council Meetings Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Kissinger calls it an NSC meeting in his memoirs and recalls that: "From the outset, the meeting took an odd turn. Helms gave an intelligence assessment that Hanoi was expanding its base areas, linking them together and trying to create so much insecurity in Phnom Penh that the government would collapse. Wheeler described the proposed operation against the Fishhook complex and the possibility of expanding it to include other base areas. Nixon tried to avoid confrontation with his Secretaries of State and Defense by pretending that we were merely listening to a briefing. He would follow with a directive later. To my astonishment, both Rogers and Laird—who after all

PARTICIPANTS

Secretary Rogers
Secretary Laird
The Attorney General
Director Helms
General Earle Wheeler
Henry A. Kissinger

Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of today's meeting should be to consider the ramifications of authorizing the combined U.S.–ARVN operation into Base Area 352/353 (Fish Hook area of Cambodia containing COSVN Headquarters). Conceptually, this operation would constitute a second punch when combined with the already approved ARVN operation into the Parrot's Beak scheduled for the early morning hours of April 28th Saigon time. The combined U.S.–ARVN operation into Base Area 352/353 has been under preparation by MACV for several weeks but up until now, Secretary Laird has not been aware of the likelihood of its being approved and opposition can be anticipated from him as well as from the Secretary of State. The Joint Staff and MACV, however, have been proceeding with the view towards early implementation of the plan in the event you decided in favor of it. Care should be exercised at today's meeting not to surface the fact that General Wheeler has been conducting intensified planning to implement the attacks on Base Area 352/353 without the full knowledge of the Secretary of Defense.

General Outlines of Plan for Attack on Base Area 352/353

—The immediate military objective of the plan would be to destroy a main enemy headquarters area (COSVN) and troop and logistics facilities.

—The area contains the headquarters, as well as a large complex of troop logistics facilities, ammunition storage areas, hospitals, POW camps and Command and Control Headquarters for one division and six regiments. It is a primary staging area for enemy units operating in South Vietnam. The estimated enemy strength is approximately 4,000 men, with a reserve of up to 8,000 others who could be sent to the area in the event of attack. Intelligence indicates that enemy forces have been directed to defend this base area in the event of attack.

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were familiar with their illusive chief's methods by now—fell in with the charade it was all a planning exercise and did not take a position. They avoided the question of why Nixon would call his advisers together on a Sunday night to hear a contingency briefing." Kissinger then recounts that Nixon was "immensely relieved. He construed silence as assent; at any rate he had avoided controversy." He and Kissinger went to the White House's family quarters to draft Document 260. (Kissinger, *White House Years,* p. 499)

—General Wheeler will be prepared to brief the broad outlines of the plans which would involve elements of the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division and a brigade of the ARVN Airborne Division, together with elements of the U.S. 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. Total forces would consist of approximately 16,000 U.S. and 2,000 to 3,000 ARVN. It is estimated that the operation will require three to four weeks to complete and can be executed within 72 hours of receipt of orders to do so.

—*Timing.* It would appear important to execute this operation in coordination with the ARVN operation in the Parrot's Beak. Assuming the ARVN operation kicks off as scheduled on the morning of the 28th, we can anticipate that knowledge of the operation will surface within two days or as early as Wednesday or Thursday Washington time. In order to obtain maximum psychological impact on the enemy and minimize the period of domestic turbulence, it would appear desirable to kick off the combined U.S.–ARVN operation as early as Wednesday or Thursday of this week. Furthermore, the rainy season normally commences in this part of Southeast Asia by approximately mid-May. Therefore, if you decide to approve this operation, a decision should be made to do so not later than Monday afternoon Washington time. This would enable us to get maximum benefit of the one-two punch, reduce the heat through conducting both operations simultaneously and achieve the maximum span of favorable weather.

—*Ancillary Operation.* All factors considered—troop reductions, approaching rainy season, the critical situation in Cambodia, continuing intransigence in Hanoi—this one-two punch may constitute a major watershed in the outcome of events in Southeast Asia. For this reason, you may also wish to consider extending blanket authorization to General Abrams to conduct ground operations into the entire complex of identified enemy base areas along the Cambodian border. This authority would constitute prima facie evidence of your determination to take whatever steps are necessary to protect U.S. forces in South Vietnam as Vietnamization proceeds. It would also constitute a major threat to the continuation of enemy offensive operations against Phnom Penh. In addition to this broad authority, you may also wish to authorize additional military strikes against selected targets in North Vietnam which are directly linked to the current enemy offensive in Cambodia. These might include tactical air strikes against supplies and logistics installations adjacent to the Laotian border in North Vietnam (Ban Karai, Mu Gia and Nape Pass complexes). These actions, and those you have previously approved, when combined with a strong public announcement by you, would constitute positive evidence of your determination to take whatever steps are necessary to achieve a prompt settlement of events in Southeast Asia or at least serve to seriously disrupt the enemy's campaign against Phnom Penh.

Conduct of the Meeting

—Inform the group that you had some time ago asked Secretary Laird to prepare a plan for combined U.S.–ARVN operations into Base Area 352/353 which contains COSVN Headquarters and other substantial North Vietnamese/Viet Cong facilities and that you have convened the meeting today to consider the possibility of implementing this plan in conjunction with the already authorized ARVN operation into the Parrot's Beak.

—Ask Director Helms to review the situation in Cambodia and to assess the importance of Base Area 352/353 to the enemy.

—Ask General Wheeler to brief the group on the concept of the MACV plan asked for earlier and to present his views on the military benefits, risks and overall implications of the plan.

—Ask General Wheeler to comment specifically on the timing of the plan, with the view towards obtaining maximum psychological impact.

—Following General Wheeler's presentation, you may wish to ask each of the participants, in turn, to present their views from the perspective of their overall responsibility, starting with the Secretary of State and then the Secretary of Defense.

—Following discussion of the combined U.S.–ARVN operation into Base Area 352/353, you should then discuss with the group the desirability of authorizing blanket authority to the U.S. Commander to conduct ground operations against all Cambodian sanctuaries and also to conduct concurrent air strikes into North Vietnam along the Laotian border against supplies and facilities which are contributing to the current NVA/VC offensive in Cambodia. Specifically, you should ask General Wheeler which areas should be hit and what benefits might be gained from additional ground operations in Cambodia and air strikes in North Vietnam along the Laotian border.

—At the conclusion of the meeting, you should inform the group that you will distribute a Decision Memorandum to each of the participants on an exclusively eyes only basis and that this memorandum should be in their hands by the start of business tomorrow morning.

260. National Security Council Decision Memorandum 57[1]

Washington, April 26, 1970.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Attorney General
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Actions to Protect U.S. Forces in South Vietnam

Based on the National Security Council meeting of April 26, 1970,[2] I direct that the following steps be taken to protect U.S. forces operating in South Vietnam:

—Authorization for the conduct of ground operations by U.S. forces or by US/GVN forces into identified North Vietnamese/Viet Cong sanctuaries in Cambodia up to a depth of 30 kilometers. With the exception of the operation against Base Area 352/353, U.S. or combined US/ARVN operations against specific base areas will be submitted to me for approval on a case-by-case basis.

—Authorization for the provision of U.S. tactical air/helicopter and artillery up to a depth of 30 kilometers in all base areas north of and including 352/353.

The Washington Special Actions Group is designated as the implementing authority for these steps.

Richard Nixon

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 4/27/70. Top Secret; Sensitive; Principals Only. A copy was sent to Wheeler.

[2] See Document 259 and footnote 2 thereto.

261. Notes of a Meeting[1]

Washington, April 27, 1970.

Mtg—Rogers–Laird–K[issinger]–[Nixon and Haldeman]—in EOB

—called because Rogers complained didn't know decision re COSVN was being made yesterday[2] & that Laird shared his view.

—Rogers case in mtg based on decision taken w/o consultation—clearly tried to hang K for inadequate info to P[resident] re consequences. Feels COSVN operation will cost great US casualties w[ith] very little gained. COSVN not permanent location, not a supply base, knockout would not be crippling blow.

—Laird's case: not opp[osed] to COSVN—but very upset re NSDM[3] saying WSAG responsible for implementation—holds Sec Def must have that responsibility—under Constitution. Did try to say Abrams opposed to COSVN—but waffled several times as K answered back with other info.

—Became clear on questioning by P that Rogers' real problem was his testimony this afternoon on the Hill. He doesn't want to have to say we're sending in US troops to Cambodia—but he can't say otherwise w[ith] NSDM already out w/o lying, which he won't do. (P agreed.) Rogers used various agruments—mainly along line of prob[lem] of taking massive US casualties.

—K mainly laid low—did inject factual pts re Abrams' views to correct Laird—each time w[ith] Laird's subsequent agreement.

—P raised q[uestion] of alternatives. Made it clear that Parrot's Beak not adequate action alone—must combine with another operation. Willing to consider another area if all agree—incl[uding] Abrams—that COSVN is undesirable. Problem of alternatives is that all would also require US troops & objective would be much less than COSVN—so pay the same price but get less (actually pay somewhat less because lower casualties).

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, Staff Members Office Files, E.R. Haldeman, Haldeman Notes, April–June 1970. No classification marking. Kissinger recounts this meeting in *White House Years,* pp. 500–501 and Nixon in *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon,* p. 450. These notes are reprinted in slightly less cryptic form in H.R. Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries,* pp. 155–156, where 11 to 11:53 a.m. is given as the time. The President's Daily Diary gives the time of the meeting as 10:45 to 11:49 a.m. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files)

[2] See Document 259.

[3] Document 260.

—R and L reiterated their various arguments several times. R saying if decision made he'll of course support it—but feels all these decisions are made w/o adequate consultation & he doesn't like it.

After meeting—P told K to suspend order for 24 hours—cable Abrams & get his true views and recs [recommendations]—convene mtg of group tonite to review again.[4] Said he's committed to *two* operations, will consider an alternative to COSVN—*if* Abrams recommends.

P made clear he understood basis of both R & L positions in mtg. R playing against move in reaction to Sen[ate], estab[lishement] press, etc. L trying to figure P's position & be with it w/o his prerogatives cut. K pushing too hard to hold control.

K said afterwards Helms warned him *he'd* have to run the gov't if we did this because R wld [would] *not* back it. K takes whole deal as test of P's authority—and I think would go ahead even if plan is wrong—just to prove P can't be challenged. P recognizes maybe need another look—& that if we change plan—but still do two—his authority is maintained but we show we're willing to listen.

[4] The meeting was held on the morning of April 28; see Document 267.

262. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, April 27, 1970, 10:10 a.m.

MEETING OF WSAG PRINCIPALS

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Gen. Earle Wheeler, Chairman JCS
U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

SUBJECT

Cambodia

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

Johnson: We want a telegram to get the word on Parrot's Beak to Lon Nol. The enemy already knows.

Kissinger: How much warning will this be?

Wheeler: I think they'll start tonight.

Kissinger: Okay, send it. The best thing for Lon Nol to say is that he regrets it but he sees the necessity (Option D). We'll say it begins the 28th or 29th.

Johnson: I will send if all approve.[2]

[Dr. Kissinger left the meeting at 10:15, and returned at 10:40.][3]

Johnson: Bunker saw Thieu. The AK–47s will move tonight. They want radios for internal communication.

Wheeler: We are working on this.

Kissinger: Has Lon Nol given assurances on the Vietnamese?

Johnson: No, but he has agreed to a delegation. Thieu said OK.

Kissinger: We need to get assurances.

Johnson: They are working on this. Two GVN people arrived; the rest tomorrow. This is proceeding.

Kissinger: Are the carbines the same ones or additional?

Wheeler: In lieu of. Abrams will send these over from Saigon. Thieu might not agree to send others from his own stocks.

Johnson: He agreed to this. It's better politically the other way, but this will be OK.

Kissinger: These are the same 15,000 and will be delivered by the GVN?

Wheeler: Yes.

Kissinger: What is Indonesia doing?

Johnson: The Malik initiative is moving forward.[4]

Wheeler: Abrams has plans to move UH–47's to safe areas, but we need direct coordination with Cambodian authorities.

Kissinger: The President's understanding is that from 352 north, whether or not there is a ground operation, the time of execution is to be ordered to be phased into other things.

Wheeler: Do we hold off on the other areas than Parrot's Beak?

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[2] Not found.

[3] Brackets in the source text.

[4] Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik was organizing a conference of Asian states to support Cambodian neutrality.

263. Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Laird to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 27, 1970.

SUBJECT

NSDM 57—Actions to Protect US Forces in South Vietnam

Issues

I am concerned about two aspects of NSDM 57[2] and respectfully request clarification or modification of the NSDM, as appropriate.

First, the NSDM, in the last sentence, says "The Washington Special Actions Group is designated as the implementing authority for these steps." It was not clear to me what that provision meant. I understand there was no intent to alter the in-being operational channels, viz, from you to me, and thence to the field commands. I further understand the sentence will be rescinded,[3] and I am appreciative of that change.

The second aspect of the NSDM which concerns me involves the points incident to our meeting this morning.[4] The first point was that I had not properly fulfilled my role in describing, evaluating, and making recommendations on the two original options in General Abrams' March 30[5] submission on possible actions against base areas in Cambodia. The second point was that I was not prepared this morning to

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 145, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, April 1, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. On April 27 at 10:25 a.m., Laird telephoned Kissinger to complain about the WSAG being the implementing agency for NSDM 57. Kissinger suggested "coordinating" was a better word. Laird also told Kissinger that "regardless of what Wheeler tells you casualties will run at least as high as the iron triangle." Laird did not want the President to blame him when they reached 800. Kissinger stated that the President said this was the price he would have to pay and he felt "we are on a slow bleeding course now." At 1 p.m. on April 24, Kissinger called Laird to tell him the operations were being delayed for 24 hours. Laird admitted that he was not prepared for the meeting with the President on April 27 (see Document 261) and was surprised that the President was authorizing an attack against COSVN and the Parrot's Beak as well as base 704. Kissinger replied, "I am getting restive that people are implying the President isn't getting all the information." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Laird, April 24; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

[2] Document 260.

[3] See NSDM 58, Document 270.

[4] See Document 261.

[5] See the summaries in Documents 219 and 264.

discuss these options adequately. The reasons I was less than adequately prepared were (a) the materials I had been using for discussion purposes were prepared on the premise that either the Parrot's Beak or the Base Area 352/353 operation would be considered, but not both; (b) that the Parrot's Beak operation was the one to receive most active consideration; and (c) that, in any event, the decision on the operations had already been made by the time of our meeting this morning.

In view of our discussion, and developments since our meeting, I believe I should provide additional comments. In particular, I believe an operation against Base Area 352/353, using US or combined US/RVN Forces, would involve higher risks and costs than potential benefits. Assuming operations against Base Areas 367/706 in the Parrot's Beak will proceed on schedule, I believe ancillary operations in Base Area 704 are much to be preferred to operations in Base Area 352/353.

Background

There are underway at this time a number of military operations designed to protect US forces in South Vietnam, to provide the background in which Vietnamization and RVN self-determination can be effected, and to exert pressure on the NVA/VC to negotiate for a political settlement. These operations include:

- RVNAF cross-border operations in conjunction with Cambodian units.
- MENU strikes.
- Tactical air operations in Cambodia along more than 50 percent of the Cambodian/SVN border.
- Surveillance of shipping into Cambodia.
- Arms shipments to Cambodian forces.
- Facilitating the introduction of Khmer and tribal forces into Cambodia for use against NVA/VC units there.

The impact of this impressive array of military actions is not entirely clear. The actions are sufficient, in my judgment, to constitute a major plus. General Abrams reported on April 21:

"It cannot be determined at present the tactical effect of ARVN [cross-border] operations; however, if ARVN claims of enemy killed in action, and food and munitions caches captured are valid, the immediate VC/NVA situation within those areas penetrated is considerably less tenable."[6]

[6] Brackets in the source text. The origin of this telegram extract has not been identified.

Again on April 27, General Abrams reported on RVNAF cross-border operations for the period 18–26 April. Among the results were:

265	enemy killed in action
19	enemy detained
1013	individual weapons captured
46	crew-served weapons captured
70	tons (estimated) munitions captured or destroyed

The MENU operations against six NVA/VC Base Areas in Cambodia are continuing. This week MENU strikes are scheduled every night. More than 3,000 tons of ordnance will be dropped during the operations this week. More than 100,000 tons of ordnance have been expended on the six Base Areas during the past year. General Abrams has consistently made the points that MENU strikes:

- Produce outstanding operational results.
- Pre-empt and reduce enemy operations.
- Disburse and disrupt enemy supply, training and rehabilitation activities.
- Have a direct bearing on the success of Vietnamization.

The above recap highlights the two most significant categories of operations against the enemy in Cambodia. Combined with the other operations listed, it illustrates the substantial pressure being exerted against the NVA/VC forces there.

Prospective Additional Operations

The joint RVNAF/US operation against Base Areas 367/607 in the Parrot's Beak will be initiated on April 28, Washington time. This is part of Option 2 to which General Abrams referred, and which he outlined in detail, in his messages, MAC 4158 and MAC 4159, of March 30, 1970. I provided you a copy of those messages.[7] Included in Option 2, also, was an attack by ARVN forces on Base Area 704. Option 1 in General Abrams' planning message was an attack, principally by US forces, on Base Areas 352/353.

I had assumed, perhaps mistakenly, that Option 1 and Option 2, as outlined by COMUSMACV, were just that—options to be considered on an either-or basis, if the decision were made to proceed with sizeable cross-border operations involving US support or involvement. I had not contemplated nor assumed the two options, or any portions of the two options, would be conducted simultaneously. General Abrams' March 30 messages, as you may recall, treated the options, at

[7] Attached to Document 219.

least implicitly, in a mutually exclusive manner. He consistently compared the options, providing advantages and disadvantages of each, and inferring they were being made available for selection between the two.

As more serious consideration centered on operations in the Parrot's Beak Base Areas 367/706, therefore, I assumed at least a portion of Option 2 was the focal point for discussion. I realized that some messages had been exchanged in military channels on the implications of Option 1, i.e., operations against Base Area 352/353. But in the absence of National Security Council deliberations on Option 1, I concluded that the attention to the Parrot's Beak operation obviated Option 1. For those reasons I did not see the necessity for, or utility in, providing my views on any prospective ground operation in Base Area 352/353. I was surprised, as a result, by the tentative decision to move against those Base Areas, in accordance with the Option 1 plan, as well as against Base Areas 367/706.

In contemplating the introduction of US units into Cambodia, especially in sizeable force, it is impossible to postulate some near-term potential military and political advantages. The operations would further disrupt the supply, command and control, training, and rehabilitation areas of enemy forces. Some impact could be made on the combat strength levels of the enemy forces in Cambodia. The pressure might constitute some incentive for the other side to negotiate.

I do not believe the sum total of potential benefits of the contemplated US and US/RVNAF ground actions can be expected, even if the operations go according to plan, to be decisive in the conflict in Southeast Asia. The other side has shown the requisite flexibility in the past to adjust his base areas in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia against strikes by our side. Hanoi still retains the capability to replace combat losses, both in men and material. The requisite pressure to induce meaningful negotiations is an unknown. But given the overall uncertainties currently extant throughout Indochina, it is not reasonable to expect the projected operations to be sufficient to cause Hanoi to believe that now is the appropriate time to negotiate seriously.

In fact, Hanoi might use the projected actions, especially if the US is heavily involved on the ground, to arrive at an opposite conclusion. On the premise that added US ground involvement may arouse strong US popular and Congressional disapproval, Hanoi might retrench from any negotiating plans that otherwise would have been contemplated. The actions against Base Areas 352/353, which would place US military personnel on the ground in Cambodia, carry the following risks and costs:

• Put at risk the support of the American people for our operations in Southeast Asia.

• Constitute the beginning of operational patterns which, if continued, go beyond our budgeted resources.

• Provide the operational setting in which US combat deaths can, and probably will, exceed by significant amounts those of the past weeks and months. (The leakage of plans to the enemy, the lack of familiarity with the terrain, the size of the operations, and the stated enemy objective of protecting base areas point to such a conclusion.)

Alternatives

There are three alternatives readily available, as companion-pieces to the scheduled Parrot's Beak operations:

1. Initiate the ground attacks in Base Areas 352/353, as outlined by General Abrams in his original Option 1.
2. Initiate ground attacks in Base Area 704, as outlined by General Abrams as a component part of his original Option 2.
3. Initiate no further large-scale US or US/RVNAF ground operations at this time.

The principle advantages and disadvantages of each alternative, in my judgment, are as follows:

Alternative 1: Base Areas 352/353

Advantages:

a. Potential for destruction, or disruption, of the major enemy command and control headquarters.
b. Simultaneous pressure on the enemy across a broad front.

Disadvantages:

a. Substantial US ground presence required, far higher than that involved in any other alternative. US forces are involved in all contemplated options; but the degree of US involvement in this alternative, especially on Cambodian soil, is so much greater in this case as to constitute a difference in kind.
b. High US combat deaths to be expected. General Abrams, considering a scale of high, medium, and low intensity combat, concluded that both the Parrot's Beak and 352/353 operations "would fall into the High Intensity category." Given the relative US ground involvement in the latter operation, we would have to expect high US casualties.
c. Explaining in a credible way the type and degree of US involvement would be inordinately more difficult than for other alternatives involving a lower US profile, especially on the ground.

Alternative 2: Base Area 704

Advantages:

a. Provides added simultaneous pressure against the NVA/VC forces in Cambodia.
b. Is essentially an ARVN operation, especially on the ground.

c. Would involve fewer US casualties.
d. Has consistently been part of the Option 2 planning and therefore should constitute little difficulty in implementation.

Disadvantages:

a. Lessens opportunity for direct attack on COSVN. (It should be noted, however, we have the opportunity, and have been using that opportunity, to use MENU strikes against Base Areas 352/353. Because of the civilian Cambodian population involved, that option does not exist for Base Area 704.)
b. Increases the danger of non-combatant casualties, because of the relatively more populated area involved. (This can be ameliorated to some extent through coordination with the Cambodian government.)

Alternative 3: Do Nothing More Than Parrot's Beak

Advantages:

a. Lessens overall US involvement.
b. Simplifies planning and coordination.

Disadvantages:

a. Loses opportunity to make major impact on NVA/VC base areas, especially since the die will have been cast in principle in the Parrot's Beak operation.

Summary and Recommendations

Overall, I believe the level and type of effort we and the South Vietnamese, in conjunction with Cambodian forces, have been putting on the enemy have been productive towards achieving US goals. The prospective Parrot's Beak operation, with its relatively low US profile, should add to that pressure.

If we are to proceed with other sizeable ground attacks against enemy base areas in Cambodia, I recommend you authorize the operation against Base Area 704, i.e., Alternative 2 above. I believe the lower US profile involved, the prospects for lower US combat deaths, and the alternatives using air assets against Base Areas 352/353, make preferable the Base Area 704 operation. The increment of potential value to be achieved by operations involving large US forces on the ground in Cambodia would not, in my judgment, justify the added risks and costs ancillary to such operations. In addition, you should know that General Abrams has been having difficulty getting agreement from the South Vietnamese for their share of participation in any 352/353 operation. Such South Vietnamese reluctance would make it even more a US operation.

I believe we should continue with operations as planned, plus an ARVN attack on Base Area 704, and withhold involvement of sizeable US ground forces on Cambodian soil. The totality of our current and

prospective military operations is significant. It seems prudent to me to defer involving US personnel on Cambodian soil, at least until the overall military and political picture in Southeast Asia is clearer, the potential US benefits from such involvement are greater, or the risks and costs attendant to such US actions are less.

Melvin R. Laird

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264. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, April 27, 1970.

SUBJECT

Ground Attacks on Base Camps in Cambodia

Attached at Tab A[2] is a brief summary of the two options for ground attacks on enemy base camps in Cambodia submitted by General Abrams on March 30. In developing plans for potential operations against enemy base areas, General Abrams was asked to consider two possibilities:

—An attack against targets of high military priority which could involve the use of US forces if necessary.
—Any other operation which would reduce the necessity of the involvement of US forces.

With respect to military priority, MACV considered an attack on Base Area 352/353 (COSVN Hq) to be the most lucrative. He made the following significant points about this base area:

—In addition to the main enemy headquarters (COSVN), the area contains a large complex of troop and logistics facilities, ammunition storage areas, hospitals, prisoner of war camps and command/control headquarters for one division and six regiments.
—To insure success under Option 1, a preponderance of US participation would be required.
—There is minimal risk to noncombatants in attacking this base area. There are also no known Cambodian units in this area.[3]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Personal File, Box 58, Speech File, NSC, Ground Operations in Cambodia. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. Sent for information.

[2] Tabs A–D are attached but not printed.

[3] The President underlined the phrases: "minimal risk to combatants in attacking" and "no known Cambodian units in this area."

—The plan would take three to four weeks to conduct.

—The enemy is well-entrenched with an estimated strength of 4,000 men and a reserve of approximately 8,000 others who could be sent to the area in event of attack. Casualties to US/ARVN units would probably be of high intensity.

In considering operations which would emphasize ARVN participation, MACV felt that attacks on the Parrot's Beak and Base Area 704 would be preferable. MACV pointed out the following considerations concerning operations in these areas:

—Compared with the option of attacking COSVN (Base Area 352/353), these operations have the advantages of shorter duration, more favorable terrain and the probability of fewer US/ARVN casualties.

—Some US involvement would be required in both cases. However, US participation in attacks on Base Area 704 would be limited primarily to air and naval support. US ground forces were considered necessary for attacks on the Parrot's Beak.

—Attacks in the Parrot's Beak area involve substantial risk of noncombatant casualties because of the density of the civilian population. In Base Area 704 noncombatant civilian population is light.

—Base Area 704 contains troop cantonments, medical and logistics facilities and headquarters elements. Enemy strength is estimated to be 1,000.

—The Parrot's Beak area contains base camps and training sites, storage areas, prisoner of war compounds, hospital dispensaries, and triangular strong-points. Estimated total enemy strength is 5,830.

MACV concluded that from a military viewpoint the probability of success would justify execution of either option under the plan and recommended that the operation be carried out in April due to weather considerations.

It is important to remember that under the original MACV plan, the second option calls for combined US/ARVN operations in the Parrot's Beak and ARVN ground units alone in Base Area 704. US ground forces have not been operating in IV Corps where Base Area 704 is located and MACV did not suggest employing units in this swampy area. Under the currently approved plan for operations in the Parrot's Beak Area scheduled to commence early on the 29th, only ARVN ground units are involved. Therefore, if it is decided to attack Base Area 704 also it will probably be necessary to replace some ARVN units currently slated for the Parrot's Beak Area with US forces and use the ARVN units in the attack on Base Area 704.

The full MACV plan submitted on March 30 is at Tab B, and a map showing options 1 and 2 is at Tab C. A brief precis of the currently approved plan for an all-ARVN operation in the Parrot's Beak is at Tab D.

265. Backchannel Message From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker)[1]

Washington, April 27, 1970, 1806Z.

WHS0033. Greatly regret necessity for inconvenience this message must entail for you and General Abrams. However, President has instructed that I obtain, on a most urgent basis, your combined views on the proposed operation in Base Area 352/353. (I recognize that it will be necessary for you to contact General Abrams immediately at this inconvenient hour in order to have a response here in Washington by the close of business today Washington time.)

Please furnish your combined answers to the following questions. General Abrams will, of course, be best able to respond to those of a purely military nature.

1. With respect to overall desirability, do you and General Abrams recommend implementation of the combined US/ARVN attack in Base Area 352/353 on its merits in relation to:

A. Other base areas?
B. Other comparable military efforts which could be made elsewhere in South Vietnam?

In other words the President is anxious to learn whether or not you both favor an attack on COSVN headquarters as a first choice among the base areas available or, whether you favor any attack by U.S. forces on Cambodian sanctuaries in light of the effect such an attack would have on your overall security posture in South Vietnam.

2. With respect to timing, would you prefer to withhold implementation of the operation until the ARVN operation in the Parrot's Beak has been completed or to launch it now given all of circumstances, including difficulties imposed by simultaneous operations, impending rainy season, the overall military and psychological impact achieved by near simultaneous operations?

3. What are your respective views on what this operation can be expected to accomplish militarily and politically?

4. In light of General Abrams' message of March 30th and in light of the operation against the Parrot's Beak, would General Abrams

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 84, Kissinger Office Files, Country Files—Far East, Cambodia (covert). Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

prefer, if he had the choice, to conduct the operation against Base Area 704 rather than Base Area 352/353?

You should know question has been raised here whether General Abrams really wants to conduct this operation on its merits or whether he favors it only because he assumes it represents the President's wishes. The President, therefore, wants yours and General Abrams' unvarnished views on the foregoing questions and will be heavily guided by them. Please show this message to General Abrams.

5. What is your best estimate of friendly casualties to be expected from operation in Base Area 352/353 based on current intelligence?

Best regards.

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266. Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Vietnam (Bunker) to President Nixon[1]

Saigon, April 27, 1970, 2222Z.

251. Eyes Only Henry A. Kissinger. Ref: WHS–0033.[2]

1. General Abrams and I have considered carefully questions raised in reftel. Answers follow:

1A. General Abrams feels that combined US/ARVN attack in Base Areas 352/353 is most desirable in relation to any other base area.

1B. General Abrams also feels that attack on Base Areas 352/353 is relatively of greater value than other military efforts which could be made elsewhere at this time.

We both agree that attack on this area should have maximum unsettling effect on the enemy who has considered until now his sanctuaries immune to ground attack. Conversely it should have beneficial effect on both our own and ARVN forces who have long felt handicapped by this restriction. The political effect in Viet-Nam should be a distinct plus. As General Abrams points out, Base Area 352/353 has consistently been an area of maximum enemy activity and we both feel that hitting him there will have the maximum effect both militarily and psychologically.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 410, Backchannel Messages, Southeast Asia, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only; Flash. Received at 2308Z in the White House Situation Room.

[2] Document 265.

We do not feel attack on any other base area would have as great an effect on the overall security posture of our forces in South Viet-Nam. We believe that the attacks on the Cambodian sanctuaries as now planned will improve the security posture of our own and Vietnamese forces.

With regard to timing, General Abrams' view is that the closer the operations in the Parrot's Beak or on Base Area 352/353 can be coordinated, the greater will be the impact on the enemy. Forces and resources available are adequate to support simultaneous operations. There is not much time remaining before the beginning of the rainy season, consequently the operation should be initiated as soon as practicable.

3. The Parrot's Beak has been the base for enemy operations directed at Saigon and the Upper Delta over the past two years. The Base Area 352/353, as stated above, has been a focus on enemy operational, logistical, administrative, and command and control activities for a long time. General Abrams and I feel therefore that the attacks on the Parrot's Beak and Base Area 352/353 would have greater significance militarily and politically than attacks on any other areas.

4. In our estimation 704 does not rank in importance with Base Areas 352/353 or the Parrot's Beak.

From Abrams:

It is my independent view that these attacks into the enemy's sanctuaries in Cambodia are the military move to make at this time in support of our mission in South Viet-Nam both in terms of security of our own forces and for advancement of the Vietnamization program.

5. With respect to friendly casualties in 352/353, both our own and Vietnamese, every effort will be made to keep these to an absolute minimum. The pre-attack preparations will be as heavy as we can make them, all in the interest of holding casualties in the attack to the minimum.

6. Best regards.

267. Memorandum of Meeting[1]

Washington, April 28, 1970.

PRESENT

The President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Attorney General

SUBJECT

Cambodia/South Vietnam

The subject meeting was held in the Oval Office of The President on Tuesday, April 28, 1970, commencing at 10:20 a.m. and lasting for approximately twenty minutes.

The President stated that the purpose of the meeting was to advise those present of the decisions he had reached with respect to the developing situation in South Vietnam and Cambodia. The President further stated that he had had the subject under constant consideration for the past ten days and had taken into consideration all of the information provided by the Director of Central Intelligence, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Admiral McCain and his staff at the briefing in Hawaii. The President further stated that, in arriving at his decision, he had taken into consideration the positions taken by the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense in opposition to the use of U.S. Forces in Cambodia and the fact that Dr. Kissinger was leaning against the recommendation of such use.

The President further stated that the previous day he had made certain inquiries of Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams. The Pres-

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Office Files, Box 3, Memorandum for the President, Beginning April 26, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Kissinger describes this meeting in *White House Years,* p. 502, and prints it on p. 1485. On April 27 at 5:34 p.m., Kissinger told the President that it was Mitchell's view that Laird and Rogers had to know that the President was considering the attack on COSVN, noting that Laird waylaid Mitchell and warned against it. Nixon asked if Kissinger had talked to anyone besides Mitchell. Kissinger replied he had talked to Helms and Wheeler who would support the move into the Parrot's Beak. The President then stated that Rogers briefed him on his testimony before Fulbright: "One thing certainly happened: Rogers is selling the Parrot's Beak to the Senators since we moved into the COSVN thing." Kissinger agreed with the President that they would "take heat" for the decision. The President responded: "You take the heat if you don't do anything. You take it for the Parrot's Beak, COSVN. Rogers and Mansfield will attack us for COSVN. If we lose the whole thing, what will they say?" Kissinger replied that "Vietnamization is a failure." Nixon replied: "We are not going to lose that way." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, April 27; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

ident read his communication to Ambassador Bunker and the Ambassador's reply received late Monday evening.[2]

The President further stated that, based upon his review of the general Cambodian situation, he had decided not to change the current U.S. position with respect to military assistance to Cambodia or his authorization for the ARVN operation in the Parrot's Beak. The President further stated that he had decided to confirm the authorization for a combined U.S./GVN operation against COSVN headquarters in Fish Hook in order to protect U.S. Forces in South Vietnam. The President expressed the opinion that the COSVN operation was necessary in order to sustain the continuation of the Vietnamization Program and would possibly help in, but not detract from, U.S. efforts to negotiate peace.

The President further stated that he had taken into consideration, in arriving at his decisions, the probable adverse reaction in some Congressional circles and some segments of the public. The President further stated that, in order to establish the record of the events leading to his decisions and the advice he had received concerning the subject matter thereof, the previous evening he had dictated a tape which included the contrary recommendations of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense.[3]

At the close of the President's statements he left the Oval Office to attend another meeting in the Cabinet Room. There was no discussion of the subject matter of the meeting by the others in attendance during the presence of the President.

JN Mitchell

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[2] Documents 265 and 266.

[3] Not found.

268. Memorandum From John Holdridge of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, April 28, 1970.

SUBJECT

ONE Estimate of Hanoi's Strategy in Cambodia

In response to my request the Office of National Estimates has prepared an assessment of Hanoi's strategy in Cambodia.[2] The paper has not yet been cleared by Mr. Helms. The paper discusses the following topics:

I. Cambodia's Role in the War

ONE states that Cambodia's role in the war is vital to Hanoi for the following reasons:

—If Hanoi could not use Cambodia for sanctuary, infiltration, and supplies, it would have to reassess its ability to continue the war in South Vietnam along present lines.

—Hanoi's immediate concern would be the loss of sanctuary areas, particularly opposite III Corps and IV Corps.

—Hanoi also needs the base areas, which "provide the foundation upon which rest Communist expectations of maintaining an effective military/political apparatus in southern South Vietnam while the U.S. withdrawal proceeds." The southern base areas have grown rapidly in the last two years.

—The base structure also supports infiltration, handling an estimated 65,000 NVA personnel in 1969 (about 60 percent of total NVA infiltration that year).

—Cambodia has long been an important source of supply, mainly rice. These supplies could probably be replaced.

—The port of Sihanoukville is also important to Hanoi, enabling it to ship ordnance to its forces in South Vietnam. An estimated 2,000 tons of ordnance passed through Sihanoukville between October 1968 and January 1970, amounting to about one half of the Communist supply requirements during this period in II Corps, III Corps, and IV

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 507, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. IV, 24 April 1970–7 May 1970. Secret. Sent for information. Kissinger initialed this memorandum, and a stamped note reads: "HAK has seen."

[2] Not found.

Corps. However, the loss of Sihanoukville would not be critical so long as overland trails are available.

II. Hanoi's Assumptions

ONE believes that Hanoi now makes the following assumptions:

—That there is little likelihood of renewed arms shipments through Sihanoukville.

—That the U.S. will bomb the sanctuaries, bases, and routes in sparsely populated northeast Cambodia.

—Most seriously, Hanoi fears allied plans regarding the frontier. A loss of effective control of the bases and the territory surrounding them would be a setback of critical proportions. It would have great psychological impact as well as military impact. It must appear imperative for Hanoi to hold the key bases in Cambodia and assure their security.

—Hanoi probably assumes that the southern bases will be increasingly subject to allied encroachments, harassments, and limited air attacks. Hanoi does not fear Cambodia actions against those bases as much as ARVN attacks. It will be determined to show its readiness to try to hold key bases.

III. Anticipated Hanoi Actions

On the basis of this assessment, ONE believes Hanoi will take the following action:

—To establish Communist controls along the border and further west to a depth consistent with military needs.[3]

—To protect the bases against attacks, but not to drop them except as a result of major allied efforts.

—If allied efforts are not sustained, to re-establish the bases and to change the entire character of the Cambodian sanctuary with new bases being developed in areas less accessible to the allies.

—One cannot exclude the possibility of a more aggressive course such as a move against Phnom Penh, but it is uncertain that Hanoi would want to undertake such a risky and costly campaign. The thrust of Hanoi's policy since mid-1968 has been to limit risks and conserve resources to concentrate on getting the U.S. out.

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[3] On April 28 Holdridge sent Kissinger a second memorandum reviewing and listing North Vietnamese attacks in Cambodia beginning on April 13 and extending through April 24. Holdridge prefaced his annotated list with: "We are painfully aware of the difficulties in following the fighting in Cambodia because of inconsistent and fragmentary reporting." The memorandum indicates Kissinger saw it. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 507, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. IV, 24 April 1970–7 May 1970)

—It is also possible that Hanoi will still try to make a deal with Lon Nol.

—There may be a reduction in VC/NVA activities in Vietnam, particularly in the Delta, but there might be stepped up activity in I and II Corps when Communist capabilities are not likely to be affected and where Hanoi might want to draw our forces.

—It is unlikely that Hanoi will move toward early negotiations.

IV. Conclusion

ONE's conclusion is that current developments in Cambodia will bring at least temporary advantage to the non-Communist cause but that over the longer run the Communists will probably cope with the degradation of their sanctuary by reorganizing their supply lines, relocating their bases, and adjusting their combat tactics. In the meantime, Cambodia will have suffered a debilitating internal struggle, with large areas lost to Communists and "the seeds of eventual Communist control spread widely elsewhere in the country."

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269. Notes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, April 28, 1970.

WSAG PARTICIPANTS

Kissinger, Packard, Wheeler, Karamessines, Johnson, Green, [Ziegler]

HAK—President wants absolutely the minimum of publicity. Statements to be adhered to. No backgrounders—all other questions—no comment. Any further explanations to be referred to the President's speech in which he will report on situation in Cambodia. Emphasized. All reviewed draft statements and approved. Scenario—

Johnson: will get cable to Saigon–Bunker—texts of approved statements being sent to MACV.

—he can use texts of statements to judge Thieu's statement. We want Thieu's statement not to emphasize US involvement

—we want text of Thieu's statement—want to issue as soon as possible

—no further comment or discussion by anyone.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Principals, 4/28/70. No classification marking. The notes were apparently handwritten by Kennedy of the NSC staff.

The study should present the advantages and disadvantages of alternative strategies concerning the U.S. approach to convoking or participating in a conference, of the various types of international forums for a conference, and of proposals which the U.S. might put forward or endorse.

The President has directed that this study be prepared by an ad hoc group chaired by a representative of the Secretary of State and including representatives of the addressees of the memorandum and of the NSC staff. It should be undertaken on a priority basis, and presented to the NSC Review Group not later than June 10, 1970.

Henry A. Kissinger

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306. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 25, 1970.

SUBJECT

Situation in Cambodia

Attached are two cables[2] from General Haig describing the military and political situation in Cambodia, his conversations with Cambodian leaders and recommendations for actions which should be taken to shore-up the Cambodians.

Haig reports (Tab A)[3] that the military situation is not bright and that:

—Most of the Northeast is under NVA/VC control and the enemy is infiltrating west across the Mekong. Only in the south has the situation stabilized as a result of ARVN cross-border operations.

—The Cambodian army is faced with conducting a war while at the same time developing a command and control structure, training existing forces, and equipping and training additional forces without a source for logistics.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VI, 23 May 1970–4 June 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Umbra. Initialed by Kissinger.

[2] The attached cables were undated and retyped.

[3] Tab A was a summary of the military situation as of May 23.

—The inexperienced Cambodian army:

• consists of some 60 battalions of which about 2/3 are marginally effective.
• critically needs tactical communications equipment, small arms, and trucks.
• has an extremely weak intelligence capability, logistic system and training capacity.

Although political weaknesses exist the situation is not as immediately threatening as the military one. Haig reports (Tab B)[4] that:

—There is no solid political opposition yet. The pro-Hanoi movement has not gotten off the ground. However, there is potential for conflict between younger reformers and the older political leadership, as well as the potential for factionalism within the army.

—Few individuals in the government realize that the war will be long and there is false optimism that massive American help and a few months training will allow the Cambodians to route the invaders.

—Cambodians at all levels distrust the Vietnamese.

—The basic political deficiencies stem from uncertainty of purpose and inexperience in governing.

As a result of his meetings with Lon Nol, General Pokse (Nol's Chief of Operations) and with General Matak and his assessment of the military and political situation (Tab E),[5] Haig believes that:

—The situation is grave but not altogether hopeless.

—We must recognize the seriousness of the Cambodian plight with an even greater sense of urgency.

—We should take the following steps:

• Move Colonel Ladd to Phnom Penh as soon as possible to assist the government of Cambodia in establishing priorities for shipments of additional equipment, to coordinate with MACV and a representative of the GVN who should be sent to Phnom Penh, and to serve as our liaison with a combined coordinating staff from donor Asian states.
• Begin shipment of light weapons and individual equipment up to a total of 30,000 and ship all remaining 1,000 man packs immediately.
• Begin tactical and B–52 sorties in North East Cambodia (Lon Nol would warmly welcome this and the area for the most part is sparsely settled).
• Commence periodic GVN convoys and patrols along the Mekong River to Phnom Penh.

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[4] Tab B was the political assessment contained in the first telegram which also contained the military situation.

[5] Tab C was an account of Haig's separate meetings with Lon Nol, Pakse Mon, and Sirik Matak on the morning, afternoon, and evening of May 23.

• Expedite the rehabilitation of Cambodian T–28s and urge Thailand to furnish up to 10 T–28s on a loan basis with a US replacement guarantee. The planes could initially be based in Thailand.

• Urge the South Vietnamese and Thais to send as many Khmer battalions as possible.

• Provide an observation aircraft for the US Defense Attaché in Phnom Penh.

• Send a high level US delegation to friendly Asian capitals to urge increased military and economic assistance.[6]

On the basis of his trip thus far, Haig concludes that:

—Without all or most of the above recommended steps the Lon Nol government's chances of surviving are dim at best.

—The Cambodian government can be expected to fight the NVA/VC to the best of its limited capability.

—The enemy appears to be taking a desperate gamble designed to offset blows to his sanctuaries by setting up a liberated area in the northeast or by liberating the entire country. The enemy is undertaking a campaign without prepositioning supplies or utilizing pre-established political cadres and political themes to motivate its forces.

—The enemy will remain inactive for an extended period in II, III and IV Corps. We should complicate his problems in Cambodia by helping the Cambodian government as much as possible while we press in South Vietnam to take advantage of the improved security situation.

—The conflict in Southeast Asia has changed fundamentally. Hanoi's deep involvement in Cambodia has seriously weakened its capacity to exert main force pressure on the South Vietnamese.

[6] Nixon highlighted the lists of recommended steps and wrote the following notes: "K—go ahead" and "K, follow up on all these items."

307. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 26, 1970.

SUBJECT

Conversation with Lon Nol

Attached is a report from General Haig of his two-hour conversation with General Lon Nol.[2] During the discussion the Cambodian leader stressed that:

—The Cambodian people are behind him and ready to make sacrifices, but he must demonstrate an effective resistance to the enemy. It is imperative to expand the Cambodian government's presence throughout the countryside.

—Cambodia must have the wherewithal to resist, and it can't wait too long.

—Cambodia critically needs:

- light arms to equip 50,000 troops;
- additional air support;
- assistance in equipping and training Khmers in South Vietnam and Thailand (the Thais have promised to form one brigade and two regiments);
- help in keeping the Mekong River open.

—His government is definitely in the anti-communist struggle and will gladly enter the US bloc of nations if necessary.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VI, 23 May 1970–4 June 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. A stamped notation on the memorandum reads: "The President has seen." Nixon sent Haig to Cambodia and South Vietnam from May 19–26 to discuss with Lon Nol, Sirik Matak, Thieu, and other Cambodian and South Vietnamese officials the issue of U.S. and South Vietnamese military aid to Cambodia. (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 1010, Haig Special File, Vietnam/Cambodia, Haig's Trip, May 19–26, 1970) On May 19 Rogers telephoned Kissinger to ask about Haig's trip and whether "we are making representations to Lon Nol" and if the President was sending Lon Nol a letter. Kissinger replied that only one letter would be sent that introduced Haig, who was going to provide "some estimate of the situation, military effectiveness and what the problems are. A fact-finding mission." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) For a critical account of the mission, see Shawcross, *Sideshow*, pp. 161–165.

[2] Attached was a "near verbatim text" of the conversation between Haig and Lon Nol which took place on May 23 at 10 a.m. in Lon Nol's office in Phnom Penh.

In his brief assessment of this conversation General Haig concludes that:

—The Cambodian leadership has burned its bridges completely and is resolved to hold firm.

—The leadership is badly shaken, if not desperate, and we must move promptly with more concrete manifestations of US support.

—Lon Nol is emotional and not very realistic (towards the end of the conversation he broke down). It would prove fatal to his government if he were to continue to expect a massive infusion of US assistance.

—Our most urgent task is to get the Cambodians to launch a realistic action program with essentially short-range goals designed to retain the support of the Cambodian people.

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308. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 26, 1970.

SUBJECT

Report of Conversation with Sirik Matak

Attached is a report from General Haig of his conversation with First Deputy Prime Minister Sirik Matak.[2] During the course of their conversation Matak indicated that:

—there is an urgent need for an armed force sufficiently strong to oust the enemy from Cambodian territory;

—Sihanouk is finished in Cambodia and the people are just now realizing the role that Sihanouk played in collaborating with the enemy;

—Cambodia wishes to seek neutrality but would want to consult again with the United States on the question of neutrality if the situation reaches a state of emergency;

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VI, 23 May 1970–4 June 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. A stamped notation on the memorandum reads: "The President has seen."

[2] Attached was a "near verbatim text" of the conversation between Haig and Sirik Matak which took place on May 23 at 6 p.m. in Matak's residence in Phnom Penh.

—Cambodia has agreed to forget past difficulties with the South Vietnamese, but the potential for trouble exists. One aspect that complicates the problem is VC/NVA infiltration into groups of Vietnamese inhabitants;

—US air attacks in northeast Cambodia would be warmly welcomed;

—Sihanouk has managed to project a false image of Cambodia to Senators like Mansfield and Fulbright. Cambodia was not a peaceful oasis; its soldiers were being killed by the VC every day long ago, but it was not publicized. The leadership merely closed its eyes while the fabric of the country was being destroyed;

—According to captured documents, the North Vietnamese planned to keep Sihanouk as long as he was useful to them and then to liquidate him.

General Haig observes that Matak appears to be the moving force in the Cambodian government although willing to give full deference to Lon Nol for the present. Although Matak accepts the value of continuing with an ostensibly neutral stance for Cambodia, he feels (as does General Haig) that this posture may not survive and that flexibility should be retained on this issue in the longer term.

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309. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 26, 1970.

SUBJECT

Conversation with President Thieu

Attached is a report from General Haig of his conversation with President Thieu on May 26.[2] In the course of the conversation, President Thieu:

—outlined his plans for future operations in Cambodia, which appear to be consistent with US guidelines;

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VI, 23 May 1970–4 June 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. A stamped notation on the memorandum reads: "The President has seen."

[2] Attached was an account of the conversation between Haig and Thieu and Bunker in the President's Palace in Saigon on May 26.

—discussed his broad strategy for the war after June 30, which is also entirely consistent with your desires. His plan includes maximum effort on pacification and concentration on destruction of enemy forces remaining in South Vietnam, new emphasis on control of the borders, and maximum effort against enemy infiltration of men and supplies;

—stated that the most important benefit of the Cambodian operation has been the fact that the enemy is now deprived of the security and freedom of movement he previously enjoyed in Cambodia;

—expressed complete understanding of Cambodian sensitivities and stated that he had already issued instructions to impose stronger control of GVN forces in Cambodia;

—suggested that we urgently consider improving Cambodian communications so that they can better control their forces and be aware of the battlefield situation;

—emphasized that a senior US military adviser is badly needed in Phnom Penh;

—said that he agrees with the assessment that Hanoi is hoping to topple Lon Nol quickly and cheaply, and that the answer rests with the will of the Cambodian people to resist until their forces can be rebuilt on a sounder footing.

In commenting on this meeting, Haig noted that:

—the issue of gravest consequence which should be receiving primary attention is what the GVN and US should do in the event NVA/VC forces make an all-out attack on Phnom Penh and the Cambodians urgently request help;

—it is essential that US spokesmen take an ambiguous and somewhat threatening position concerning future operations of the GVN.

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310. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, May 27, 1970, 0937Z.

8218. Ref. A. State 070781; B. State 077899.[2]

Subject: Meeting With President Thieu, May 26, 1970.

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER. Top Secret; Nodis; Khmer.

[2] Documents 285 and 301.

1. General Abrams and I had detailed discussion with Thieu covering subject of reftels evening of May 26. Thieu found no problem with our presentation and agreed that guidance outlined should govern future actions.

2. As reported in my Saigon 7986,[3] Thieu reiterated that it is not the GVN purpose to remain permanently in Cambodia. In GVN view, the main objective of the Cambodian operations is to assist and accelerate Vietnamization, to facilitate cleaning out remaining VC strongholds within Viet-Nam, and to destroy VC/NVA forces within country. It is not GVN purpose to take over either Cambodia's battle or its territory.

3. Thieu made the following additional comments:

—While he expects that all GVN forces will be out of Cambodia by 30 June, there may be some few caches which would need to be cleaned up.

—He hopes to work out arrangements with Cambodian Government which will permit limited cross-border operations to prevent enemy from rebuilding bases in Cambodia border area to preclude movement of forces across border from Cambodia into SVN and to prevent movement of enemy forces from SVN into Cambodia. Thieu believes that this latter move very likely to occur. He emphasized the fact that VC/NVA forces in III and IV Corps are now isolated and there is now opportunity to eliminate them.

—Since accelerated pacification program is to begin July 1, it is important that Vietnamese troops be in South Viet-Nam at that time.

—The GVN will study ways in which it can provide material support to the Lon Nol government to as great an extent as possible.

—It is important to keep the Mekong open to Phnom Penh but this does not appear to require strong military presence on the river.

—The GVN must do what it can to protect South Vietnamese residing in Cambodia. In this connection, access to Phnom Penh via Mekong important in case further evacuation necessary, but Thieu hopes it would be possible for Cambodian Government to maintain adequate security for ethnic Vietnamese.

—He feels that GVN must retain flexibility in regard to situation which could arise in case of a serious emergency such as an attack on Phnom Penh and a request for assistance from the Cambodian Government. He feels that we should try to arrive at a coordinated position on what action should be undertaken should such an emergency arise.

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[3] Dated May 23. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

4. Thieu plans to review situation with his military commanders today to go over situation concerning operations in Cambodia and to alert them to requirements for accelerated pacification program to begin July 1. I shall try to secure read-out on this.

Bunker

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311. Editorial Note

No minutes have been found for the Washington Special Actions Group meeting of May 27, 1970. The briefing memorandum for the meeting from John Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to Presidential Assistant Henry Kissinger, May 26, provides a list of the items to be discussed. They were: "legal restrictions on our ability to supply U.S. arms and equipment to third countries; declassification of the Presidential Decision on aid to Cambodia; the possibility of sending Thai troops into Cambodia until they can be relieved by the two Khmer regiments; FARK request for assistance in Northeast Cambodia; CIA's proposals to augment irregular forces in South Laos; Indonesian military assistance to Cambodia; and legal restrictions related to the proposed Church–Cooper amendment under consideration in the Senate." The question of declassification of the Presidential aid determination was at Senator Fulbright's request and the Departments of State and Defense were prepared to declassify the actual determination. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, 5/27/70) In the briefing memorandum for the June 2 Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, Holdridge reminded Kissinger that, "At the May 27 WSAG Meeting Ambassador Johnson pointed out that the only legal way he could see for the U.S. to support the introduction of the two Thai regiments into Cambodia was to identify them with the Black Panthers [Thai forces in Vietnam] as part of a program of 'fighting the Vietnam war in Cambodia.'" (Ibid., 6/2/70) According to Holdridge's May 26 briefing memorandum, the Cambodian request for reinforcement of northeast Cambodia by two Khmer Krom battalions raised a number of questions relating to feasibility, strategic advantage, and consultation. As for the CIA's alternatives for south Laos, the WSAG Working Group on Cambodia had been assigned the task of preparing a study. The issue did not need to be raised until it was complete. Indonesian military assistance had been promised, but had not been as yet delivered. (Ibid., 5/27/70)

312. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Issues for the May 31 Meeting

I have enclosed three papers addressing issues for discussion at the meeting on 31 May 1970.[2]

1. Troop Withdrawals (Tab A)

—The issue is whether we should speed up troop withdrawals.

—Secretary Laird's position is that there should be withdrawals in addition to the 50,000 presently scheduled by October 15.

—General Abrams prefers to limit withdrawals this year to 50,000 and has agreed to complete that withdrawal by October 15.

—My view is that the risks more than outweigh whatever small advantage could be gained by a speed-up of withdrawals. Since no timetable has been announced a speed-up would have little impact.[3] We should withdraw enough forces to calm public opinion but we should do so slowly enough to give Hanoi an incentive to negotiate and to avoid risks to our forces.

—I recommend that you support General Abrams' recommendation that withdrawals this year be limited to 50,000 to be accomplished by October 15. I also recommend that you approve phased withdrawal of 100,000 after January 1 with the terminal date for the withdrawal to be determined at a later date based on your assessment of the situation and enemy reactions.

2. ARVN Operations (Tab B)

—The issues are what limits we should try to put on ARVN operations in Cambodia and what support we should give to such operations.

—This question you will recall has already been discussed in the NSC[4] and the following four principles for continued support have been established:

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, 5/22/70. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

[2] Attached but not printed.

[3] Nixon underlined this sentence.

[4] At the restricted meeting of May 22; see Document 302.

1. withdrawal of most ARVN forces by June 30 without precluding their reentry;
2. continued ARVN operations in the sanctuaries after June 30 to (a) remove supplies and (b) help prevent the re-establishment of caches;
3. a flexible ARVN posture which would deter but not serve as a pretext for wider enemy attacks in Cambodia; and
4. U.S. logistic and artillery from the South Vietnamese side of the border and tactical air support where necessary for ARVN operations in Cambodia.[5]

3. Air Activity Rates in Southeast Asia (Tab C)

—The issue is the level which should be established for air activity rates.

—Laird is pressing for the reduction of air operations on the basis of the following chart:

	Current Sorties	*JCS Proposal*		
		7/70–12/70	*1/71–6/71*	*7/71–12/71*
B–52	1,400	1,000	1,000	900
7th AF	14,000	10,000	10,000	8,750
FWF	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
Navy	3,600	2,700	2,700	1,800
Marines	3,300	3,300	3,300	0

His major arguments are budgetary and cost-effectiveness.

—My view is that maintenance of the rate at least at present levels for the next few months will be important. We want to take advantage of the success of our Cambodian operations to keep the enemy's bases and logistic routes disrupted, and to attack his units in South Vietnam. We have authorized tactical air in Cambodia, are using it importantly in Laos and may provide some support to ARVN operations in Cambodia. Moreover, we should not decrease air activity in a way which could have the effect of lessening Hanoi's incentive to negotiate.

—We need to take a hard look, however, at where the money will come from to support the air activity rates and the effectiveness of our air activity.

—I recommend that air activity rates be maintained at present levels pending your review of a study to be done on an urgent basis of the financial aspects and effectiveness of air activity in Southeast Asia.

[5] The President underlined "tactical air support where necessary" in this sentence and placed a question mark in the margin.

All agree. (Ziegler present)—Let Henkin play by ear—if necessary statement but not until after Thieu and not until necessary. [illegible–Rpts?] to be held until after Washington.

HAK: When arty [artillery] and air?

W[heeler]: arty probably right away; air may be held off. Air controllers in now.

HAK: Radios.

W: Still checking in. Probably won't take US people but is checking.

J[ohnson]: AK–47s delivered!

W: Getting some AK–47 ammo—Army has contract 1 million rounds per month.

All agreed to send to Cambodia via GVN.

Green will msg [message] Rives—working on radios and ammo.

HAK: Do we tell Lon Nol that 10,000 carbines on way?

W: Rather wait till we're sure where we stand.

J: What is follow on to carbines?

W: 1,000-man packs.

K[aramessines]: Have 1 in Saigon, 9 more ready, can be in Saigon in 3 or 4 days.

J: Should alert Rives & attachés to this & get estimate whether need.

W: Will do.

HAK: Raises ammo needs for US weapons (Phnom Penh 597).[2]

W: Will follow up and advises what we can do & report tomorrow.

Re 352/353

W: Begins Thursday between 7–9 pm.

HAK: Emphasize security.

W: Briefs plan.

HAK: Who commands?

W: CG 1st Cav.

HAK: Public affairs.

—President speaks at 1000 pm
—backgrounder at WH about 4 pm.

Pack[ard]: At what point how much detail can we give on operations? Probably want to give details—press will know quickly.

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[2] Telegram 597 from Phnom Penh, April 21, contained a list of U.S. origin weapons, munitions, and equipment which FANK needed and which were either in critically short supply or non-existent. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970)

HAK: Pres wants to give the maximum possible credit to SVN. Wants pictures of weapons, caches, captured plans, etc. Will tie all together.

Pack: Wants to get over story how serious this has been [illegible—to our?] Vietnamization program.

J: Secy [Rogers] was asked what has changed in Cambodia?

Pack: Threat all time but reluctant to move over Cambodia.

HAK: Willing to pay price as long as enemy stayed in bases in Cambodia, but now he has gone beyond. Alex [Johnson] & Green to draft paragraphs. President wants to tie as much as possible to Vietnam.

J: May want to postpone Bunker return.

Note: 1625—HAK leaves—[to see] President.

W & K: Believe we should say we are going in for limited objective & will withdraw.

Pack: Vietnamization was [making] good progress but now the enemy has mounted strong effort against it—we have to get bases out of the way to continue to make progress.

We are [illegible, reminding?] them they cannot expand their control or bases throughout Cambodia. It's a concept at [illegible] if not stopped it can expand operations against SVN at will.

Pack: Should be careful not to look like taking on commitment.

K: Should President use maps for presentation. What should President say about Paris Peace talks?

J: Shouldn't suggest we can make progress soon.

G[reen]: Poats suggests an approach to Indonesia to buy Cambodian rice [illegible] and also to provide [illegible] to Cambodia. A telegram going out to see [if] this might work.

Return 1645 HAK: President feels he has to do this raid—convey to Hanoi we are prepared take more steps—they've got to [illegible] even. This should characterize what we should say to others. A stiff note through Habib?

1650 President comes in; 1655 President leaves.

HAK: Consultations when?

J: Best if it could be before [illegible].

HAK: By Thursday am can give you the word. Green to provide quote.

J: Will send over to WH circular telegram.

HAK: Will give the group maximum info on speech. Who needs to be informed? J[ohnson] to provide scenario on consultation & outline of what will be said. What about speech at UN by Secretary?

Ziegler [?] W and K: [illegible] good idea—does it stir up debate?

J: Will think over and comment tomorrow.

G[?]: [illegible] can take line which shows NVN we are exasperated which may lead to negotiations.

HAK: [illegible, I?] will talk to large group of Congress.

Meet—tomorrow 1010 AM.

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270. National Security Decision Memorandum 58[1]

Washington, April 28, 1970.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Attorney General
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Actions to Protect U.S. Forces in South Vietnam

I hereby rescind National Security Decision Memorandum 57[2] and substitute therefor the following instruction which I am promulgating to protect U.S. forces operating in South Vietnam:

—Authorization for attacks on identified North Vietnamese/Viet Cong base areas in Cambodia up to a depth of 30 kilometers. Primary responsibility for these attacks, whenever possible, should be with GVN forces with U.S. support where necessary. Combined U.S./GVN operations are also authorized. Under this specific authorization, combined U.S./GVN operations, with the exception of the already approved operation against base area 352/353, will be submitted to me for approval on a case-by-case basis.

—Authorization for the provision of U.S. tactical air/helicopter and artillery up to a depth of 30 kilometers in all base areas north of and including 352/353.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Principals, 4/28/70. Top Secret; Sensitive; Principals Only. A copy was sent to Wheeler.

[2] Document 260.

—This directive does not affect GVN operations inside of Cambodian territory which have been previously authorized.[3]

The Washington Special Actions Group is charged with coordinating these activities.

Richard Nixon

[3] In telegram 5812 to McCain and Abrams, April 28, Wheeler informed them that the President had approved "certain military actions to protect U.S. forces operating in South Vietnam," and repeated the authorizations as outlined in NSDM 58. Wheeler noted that his message was "an execute directive" and that the operation should commence not later than early on Friday, May 1, Saigon time. Wheeler also asked McCain and Abrams to advise when coordination with the JGS of ARVN had been completed. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 590, Cambodian Operations, Chronology, Vol. III, Nodis/Khmer, HAK)

271. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, April 29, 1970, 10:35 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President
David Packard, Deputy Secretary for Defense
Gen. Earle Wheeler, Chairman, JCS
Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence
U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Thomas Karamessines, Central Intelligence Agency
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Pacific Affairs

SUBJECT

Cambodia

Wheeler: The Parrot's Beak operation got off on time. It's been excellent for the ARVN. They have used US gunships. Resistance is light so far. The main problem has been maintaining radio contact with the advance units.

Johnson: We have a cable from Phnom Penh. The attaché is asking about the attack.[2]

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] Not found.

Kissinger: Are there any pressures in the Departments about the Vietnamese announcement?

Johnson & Packard: None yet.

Packard: DOD is holding off.

Wheeler: On the actions that were to be done:

—1000-man packs. We sent details of the contents to the attachés and request them to advise immediately. State sent parallel messages.[2]

—The carbines: 3000 M–2 and ammo are ready to deliver in VNAF aircraft. State has notified Phnom Penh.[3]

[All agreed to send the execute message.][4]

Wheeler: It was recommended to buy AK–47 ammo. We can get it by August. State told Rives we are investigating.

—The Khmer: Abrams informs us the South Vietnamese are ready to transport 2100 Khmer. State has informed Phnom Penh. We are preferring to move them in VNAF aircraft.

[It was agreed to send the execute message to move them to Phnom Penh.]

Wheeler: 2000 more AK–47's will move tonight.

Johnson & Green: Galbraith thinks Malik and Suharto are receptive but they are not clear on what the Indonesians do know.

Johnson: With respect to the President's speech,[5] we should get to Malik fast to head off a reaction because of a conference.[6] Hopefully before he gets on.

Kissinger: We would like your suggestions on the topics of the speech and the language. It'll be a 15 minute speech. If we could have it by 5:00 p.m. I will have more word on the thrust of the speech by noon tomorrow. It'll be hard. We've done everything we can.

Green: We'll give you quotes from COSVN on inflicting casualties on allied forces.

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[3] In telegram 064225 to Phnom Penh, April 29, 1430Z, the Department informed the Embassy about the 3,000 carbines and stated that the Embassy was authorized to discuss with Cambodia arrangements for the Khmer Krom irregulars to be airlifted by the GVN to Cambodia. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

[4] All brackets in the source text.

[5] The President's speech of April 30 is printed in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* pp. 405–410.

[6] In telegram 064560 to Djakarta, April 29, 0044Z, Green asked Galbraith to assure Malik that the Cambodian operations in no way meant that the United States did not welcome Indonesia's initiative for an Asian conference on Cambodian neutrality. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

Wheeler: On the list of ammo and communications, this is what can be done:

—Radios. It would take $18 million. We can't identify all of it and we don't have all of it anyway. It's a problem of technical capability.

Johnson: Can we send a signal officer from Bangkok or Saigon? We don't want to put a mission in to operate.

Packard: Commercial equipment might be found.

[All agree we should send someone in.]

Wheeler: We will work with CIA to see what equipment is available and we'll send a signal officer.

Johnson: We will work out the scenario for informing. Most of it would be done by telegram.

Kissinger: We will have something fairly firm by 7:00 p.m.

The President wants a firm line with the French.

He has decided not to send Habib to see the North Vietnamese. I have reported the unanimous view to the President that the UN is not a good idea.

When will Lon Nol be informed?

Johnson: I will put it in the scenario. It'll be fairly shortly before the operation.

Kissinger: We'll meet tomorrow morning.

Johnson: We will get over some ideas on the speeches and scenario this afternoon.

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272. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, April 30, 1970, 2:55 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director, Central Intelligence Agency
Thomas Karamessines, Central Intelligence Agency
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
General John A. Vogt, USAF
Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Brigadier General, Alexander Haig, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Colonel Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

SUBJECT

Cambodia

[The meeting began with General Haig in the chair.][2]

[All agree on the need to put the traffic on the existing operations in front channels. Wheeler is sending a message implementing.]

Helms: It is okay to go with one 1,000-man pack. We will see how this goes and what they can do with them. A man will go along to work with the Defense Attaché. It will be ordered today. Johnson will alert Phnom Penh.

Johnson: We should bring Bunker and Habib back. This should be well publicized. They are scheduled to arrive Washington on the 6th.

Packard: I agree.

Green: I suggest he might come back a day early.

[All agree we can wait and see how to play this.]

Haig: About the speech.[3] The speech will be at 9:00. There will be a briefing for Congressional leadership and Cabinet at 8:00 p.m. with the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State and General Wheeler. Dr. Kissinger will brief the press. Concurrently, there will be a briefing on the Hill at 8:30 by Packard and Richardson.

Have there been any reactions from the others?

Helms: TASS raised hell about escalation of the war.[4]

Johnson: The Chinese said that the Indochinese war entered a new phase, but the rhetoric was not strong. The British made a good statement. Lon Nol made a good statement. The Indonesian reaction was good. Malik understands our actions. He probably will ship equipment after the conference and will go ahead with the conference on the 15th and 16th of May.

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[2] All brackets in the source text.

[3] Nixon's Address to the Nation on Southeast Asia, April 30; for text, see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* pp. 405–410.

[4] The Soviet Chargé handed Kissinger a protest note on April 29 stating in part: "Moscow would like President Nixon to be clear about our definitely negative attitude towards United States interference into the internal affairs of Cambodia." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 507, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. IV, 24 April 1970–7 May 1970)

Packard: We are shipping about as much as they can handle.

Wheeler: We are sending a signal officer to Phnom Penh to survey communications requirements. Ambassador Johnson will advise Rives.

Haig: Dr. Kissinger and the President are concerned that statements not cast aspersions on South Vietnam. Also he wants information out quickly.

Packard: We have pictures. What about the scenario?

Haig: We will get a scenario to Ziegler and recommend that Ziegler, Henkin, and McCloskey have a meeting.

Johnson: We want a transcript of Henry's briefing and a summary of the speech to get to the posts quickly. It should have the key points. We will do special letters to Schuman and Stewart from the Secretary.

Haig: How about Thant?

Johnson: Treat him like the other posts. Yost will see him hopefully before the speech.

Haig: Lon Nol?

Johnson: He needs to be given the general lines of the speech.

Haig: We will get a summary of the speech to all of you.

[At 1530, Mr. Ziegler arrives. He reviews Packard's game plan. He will contact Henkin and McCloskey.]

Wheeler: We need a psy war operation to get the Viet Cong defectors.

[All agree.]

Helms: Should we think about a senior negotiator? To give them the idea we are willing to talk?

Johnson: I don't think it is time. If they evidence any interest, then we can consider it.

Packard: I agree with Alex.

Johnson: We will send Habib back with instructions to take a firm line. Then see what their reaction is.

[Dr. Kissinger arrived at 1545.]

Kissinger: This is the speech. We are going into Vietnamese occupied territory in Cambodia for purpose of protecting American lives. Their concentration of main force units is in the base areas while their guerrillas are operating in South Vietnam. We are committed to Cambodian neutrality.

The speech describes the sanctuaries and points out what is in them. He says that recently they have taken guerrilla actions and their concentration is in the base areas. There is one contiguous base area which could be supplied from the sea.

We had three choices: One is to do nothing. This is an unacceptable risk after the next troop withdrawal. The second choice is massive

military assistance. That would be too late to do any good. We shall do our best in concert with others. The third option was to clean out the major sanctuaries.

Therefore, in cooperation with South Vietnam, attacks are being launched to clean out the major base areas. We are going into Parrot's Beak. In the other areas it's a joint operation. We have no intention of staying in these areas.

He will say he has warned Hanoi. He has done everything—cut forces, reduced air attacks—and has warned them. This situation is intolerable. We are willing to negotiate. All our offers stand and the channels are open. He warns again.

There will be no more briefing after the speech for 24 hours.

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273. Telegram From the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer) to the Commander in Chief, Pacific (McCain), and the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Abrams)[1]

Washington, May 1, 1970, 2239Z.

C6037. Subj: Attack of Additional Base Areas in Cambodia.

1. The President met with the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff this morning to outline his objectives for the next 30 days.[2] It is his desire to employ maximum feasible military strength against the remaining base areas in Cambodia which you consider important to enemy operations and which can be attacked with available US and RVNAF forces. He desires that this program be carried out

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 590, Cambodian Operations, Chronology, Vol. III, Nodis/Khmer, HAK. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Drafted by Paul Kearney, Administrative Assistant to the Chairman of the JCS.

[2] Nixon, accompanied by Kissinger and Ziegler, met with the Joint Chiefs, Laird, Packard, and other JCS and Department of Defense officials from 8:41 to 10:25 a.m. at the Pentagon. (Ibid., White House Central Files, Daily Diary) After leaving the meeting, Nixon engaged in an informal conversation with Pentagon employees which was taped by a reporter. The President said: "You see those kids out there [troops in Vietnam]. I say 'kids.' I have seen them. They are the greatest. You see bums, you know, blowing up the campuses. Listen, the boys on the college campuses today are the luckiest people in the world, going to great universities, and here they are burning books, I mean storming around this issue—I mean you name it—get rid of war; there will be another one. Out there [Vietnam] we've got kids who are just doing their duty. I have seen them. They stand tall . . . ." (*Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* p. 417)

through a bold and aggressive approach. The objective is to hit the enemy the hardest blow possible and to destroy as much of the enemy's base areas in Cambodia as is militarily feasible.

2. While he desires the operations to be conducted initially within 30 kilometers of the border, he will consider further extensions if you consider this necessary or desirable. He considers these Cambodian base area operations to be the number one priority now for our operations in Southeast Asia. You are authorized to prepare the plans without restrictions on the use of U.S. or ARVN forces, including air assets, for this purpose. You are requested to use your judgment in allocating resources and to advise higher authority if our forces in South Vietnam are jeopardized in any way by this guidance.

3. In order to maintain the initiative, higher authority desires an outline plan for attack of an additional base area as soon as you can submit it, but, hopefully, no later than 2400 Z, 2 May. I am aware that you have done additional planning with the RVNAF, and that other operations have been planned. You are requested to complete arrangements for an attack into one additional base area, either with RVNAF forces, or with combined forces, to begin the earliest possible time next week. Please advise when this planning has been completed and submit your proposed date for initiation of operations.

4. In accordance with the desire of higher authority to attack effectively as many base areas as is militarily feasible within the next 30 days, you are further requested to provide a plan ASAP for operations into additional base areas of your choice. This plan should provide for as much of the destruction of the remaining enemy base structure as is possible within your resources and capabilities. Again, in your planning for these operations you are to consider all resources available to you. This outline plan for remaining operations is desired ASAP, but in any case in time to insure that there is no major break in operations following the next operation scheduled in accordance with paragraph 3 above.

5. As I have indicated above, higher authority desires a hard hitting campaign to be carried out using imagination and boldness. The enemy should receive the hardest blow we are capable of inflicting in his Cambodian sanctuary areas. If you need increased air assets for the next 30 days, let me know immediately. Warm regards.

274. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, May 1, 1970, 11:35 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence
Thomas Karamessines, Central Intelligence Agency
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Acting Chairman, JCS
General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman, JCS
General John A. Vogt, USAF
Amb. U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Colonel Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

SUBJECT

Laos; Cambodia

Kissinger: Is there press pressure for more information?

Johnson: The question is: are we delivering American arms? Rives has asked. I suggest we say yes, we are giving some Americans small arms and they are going into South Vietnam. We should ask Saigon first.

Packard: Small arms in limited quantities.

Green: Is this ARVN arms?

[All Agree. We should ask Saigon. Johnson will do it.][2]

Helms: We have been asked to raise a third Thai battalion for Laos to allow them to move Laos troops back to Southern Laos. Vang Pao has asked.[3] The Ambassador has not endorsed this. Souvanna has not asked.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, Principals, 5/1/70. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] This and all substantive brackets are in the source text.

[3] Vang Pao made this request to the Chief of Station who was visiting Long Tieng on April 29. Vang Pao suggested the Thais could replace Meo (Hmong) irregulars manning the defensive line northeast of Sam Thong and northwest of Tha Tam Bleung, thus freeing the Hmong to dislodge the North Vietnamese from Ban Na area and denying the enemy a forward logistics base. (Telegram 066623 to Vientiane and Bangkok, May 1; National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 LAOS)

Kissinger: Is a third battalion ready?

Karamessines: Yes.

Kissinger: Let's get a sensible assessment from Unger and Godley.

Johnson: I will do it.[4]

Packard: The intelligence assessment is that the NVA have enough to mount on attack after the rainy season begins. This is contrary to our earlier assessment. We need a new assessment.

Helms: I will get an assessment.[5]

Kissinger: I will tell the President we are looking into this and will hold for 24 hours.

[Dr. Kissinger leaves at 11:45.]

Johnson: Let me raise the subject of the Khmer Krom. We need to clarify our status vis-à-vis the GVN and the Cambodians. We have said that basic logistics are the responsibility of Cambodia except for "peculiar support." I refer to Phnom Penh 692.[6] Who is going to pay them?

Packard: It'll be good if we can.

Johnson: I agree, but the problem is "mercenaries." It's a political problem.

Green: The mission is now different—to protect Cambodia.

Johnson: Could we pay? It would be good for morale.

Helms/Packard: DOD pays it now.

Packard: We can't get to them in Cambodia.

Johnson: Put all supply actions into regular channels rather than Nodis/Khmer. I have a draft cable. It's consistent with the Defense guidance.

Helms: The question of small arms delivery. In the future, they should submit the questions in regular channels.

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[4] In telegram 3113 from Vientiane, Godley reported he was informed of Vang Pao's request. Godley reviewed the military situation and then agreed that a third Thai battalion was needed in Long Tieng. (Ibid.) In telegram 5342 from Bangkok, May 2, Unger reported that he expected the Thai Government would be prepared to send a third battalion because they had initially offered a regimental combat team. (Ibid., POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

[5] According to a May 2 memorandum from Helms to Kissinger, Johnson, Packard, and Wheeler, the Station Chief in Laos did not believe that the North Vietnamese would be able to launch a major offensive in MR II after the first week in July. The North Vietnamese were currently fighting a three-front war—South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos—and northeast Laos was the lowest priority front. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 146, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, May 1, 1970)

[6] In telegram 692 from Phnom Penh, May 1, the Embassy reported that Cambodian authorities asked if the United States intended to continue to pay Khmer Krom troops and, if so, for how long? (Ibid., Box 589, Cambodian Operations (1970), Cambodia, Nodis/Khmer (Vol. I))

Packard: Dick [Helms] has a point. It avoids flagging the issue. We can protect it long enough to do what is needed.

Helms: Straight Nodis would do.

Packard: Okay.

[All agree to a cable.]

Johnson: The Secretary doesn't want to expedite Bunker's return. He says we should let him come on the 6th as planned. Also we did *not* send a special message to Paris. We decided it was best to let the French think about it. We did send one to Stewart.

Moorer: I want to arrange a Market Time operation along the Cambodian coast. We will tell Lon Nol to work it out.

Johnson: Could we get a draft?

Packard: How about reconnaissance in north Laos? We have a proposal.

Johnson: I want a reading on what we know.

Packard: We need to know what is going on. The question will be what is the impact on China?

Johnson: I will be in touch on that.

Packard: [*3 lines of source text not declassified*]

Johnson: It's a necessary evil.

Helms: We don't have a mechanism in Cambodia to pass the pay to them.

Packard: Could we turn over the money to the Cambodians?

Johnson: Would it ever get to the Khmer Krom?

Vogt: Use the Battalion Commander to pay them and make him responsible. We have supply arrangements—we use one airplane every two nights. We could pass the pay this way.

Green/Packard: The pay could be on the same basis as now vis-à-vis the South Vietnamese Army.

Johnson: Can we find out specifically what they are paid, by whom, etc.?

Helms: I'll check.[7]

Johnson: The cable doesn't say we need to. It just asks whether we do.

Helms: The Cambodians are broke.

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[7] In a May 2 memorandum from Helms to Kissinger, Johnson, Packard, and Wheeler, Helms reported that the MACV was handling payment of the Khmer Krom since they were part of the U.S. Special Forces CIDG troop complement, but that once they went to Cambodia they were the responsibility of the Lon Nol government. (Ibid., Box 507, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. IV, 4/24/70–5/7/70)

Vogt: We have to pay them if they are to be effective.

[All agree.]

Johnson: What public posture should we take? If there are direct questions, we should say yes, they are ethnic Cambodians who wanted to return to fight for their country and South Vietnam let them go.

[All agree to going to Saigon/Phnom Penh with this line.]

Green: How do we supply logistic support?

Vogt: By GVN aircraft to Phnom Penh—maybe drops. There will be no U.S. advisors.

Green: Go out with suggested press guidance to Phnom Penh and Saigon.

[All agree.]

Packard: It makes a sonic boom. They'll know something is going on. It doesn't seem provocative.

Johnson: Let it go on.

Packard: Our drones are improving. We may have a capability soon.

Johnson: In the Far East we had no problems in the official reactions. Malik deplored it. He changed it to regret—but he told us he would. The Russians—we've heard nothing since. The Chinese made another blast. Lon Nol said he had no advance warning, but he was clearly not angry. He had harsh words for the VC.

Packard: Can't we get him to use North Vietnamese instead of VC?

Green: We should try to do this.

Johnson: We will get a message out to Rives.

Helms: They'll get 100,000 rounds on 3rd, and the pack within a day or two.

[At 12:30 the President comes in with Dr. Kissinger.]

[At 12:45 the President leaves.] Dr. Kissinger then reviewed the foregoing discussion with the principals. The following was agreed:

—Okay to Market Time.
—Okay on the SR–71.
—Dr. Kissinger will let all know tomorrow the reactions on the third Thai battalion.[8]

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[8] In a separate summary of conclusions, May 1, the following decisions were noted: "1. A Market Time operation along the Cambodian coast was approved. 2. A SR–71 flight over Laos was approved. 3. We should get an assessment by tomorrow of the need for raising a third Thai battalion for Laos to allow them to move Laotian troops back to South Laos." (Ibid., NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Principals, 5/1/70)

275. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, May 4, 1970, 11:15 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence
Thomas Karamessines, Central Intelligence Agency
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
General John A. Vogt, USAF
Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Colonel Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

SUBJECT

Cambodia

Johnson: The Secretary wants to know how we carry 1,500 KIA when only light contact has been made.

Packard: Much of it is from the air.

Johnson: How solid are these figures?

Packard: I don't know.

Karamessines: One hundred and thirty-three were seen killed. There must be some contact. We aren't stressing KIA. The primary objective is supplies.

Packard: Our casualties have been very low.

Karamessines: The prisoner total is high.

Johnson: [Reviewed the COMINT summary.][2]

Vogt: That suggests much confusion and serious disruption. COSVN's effectiveness has been cut. They can't control their units. The enemy is making some effort today to regroup.

Johnson: Is there any evidence we are taking pressure off the Cambodians?

Vogt: We have taken the pressures off Svay Rieng.

Green: How far west of Svay Rieng will they go?

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970, 5/4/70. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] All brackets in the source text.

Vogt: They are staying there.

Kissinger: Alex, how about the foreign reactions?

Johnson and Green: Malik is going ahead with the meeting. Ten have accepted. They will come up with resolutions supporting Cambodia's neutrality, calling for a reactivation of the ICC, some UN presence for Cambodia, and he invited the other Asians.

Johnson: I would like information to the posts on air action in the North.

Packard: Defense is making a statement today.

Kissinger: This phase is terminated but we want to keep our options open.

Packard: A statement has been carefully avoided. We've called it "reinforced protective reaction."

Moorer: They were effective strikes. We caught them by surprise.

Packard: We have lost two U.S. planes.

Kissinger: Dave, be sure the statement is given to State.

Johnson: McCloskey will be in touch with Henkin.

Kissinger: How about Rives (Phnom Penh 717) cable?[3]

Johnson: What does this mean?

Vogt: There are many enemy fire bases in the area of Takeo.

Kissinger: Just behind 704?

Vogt: Abrams isn't pushing but he wants to move against 704. He would need air controllers on the ground for the air. Probably some Americans would be needed. They could get VNAF controllers, but they are scarce.

Johnson: If we could mount an attack on 704 by sun-up, it would be better.

Vogt: It would include also a Riverine operation. The operation would have some Americans but mostly ARVN.

Johnson: It is appropriate to go to Phnom Penh and say we recognize the problem and are working at ways to help.

Green: It's appropriate to keep up their spirits but we don't want them to rest on their oars.

Vogt: We will send the execute on 702 this morning.

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[3] In telegram 717 from Phnom Penh, May 3, the Embassy passed on a request from the Cambodian military for U.S.–ARVN air strikes on North Vietnamese positions around Takeo and U.S. air lift of Khmer Krom from South Vietnam to the Takeo area. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, May 4–8, 1970)

Kissinger: How long will 702 take?

Vogt: Seven–ten days.

Kissinger: Nothing is authorized yet but 702.

Johnson: Shouldn't we authorize 704, Riverine and the other as soon as possible?

Kissinger: Can't we get ARVN to take a positive attitude, not condescending?

Green: Go to Rives. Say we are working out ways to be helpful.

Johnson: They were asking for American action, thus Rives' views seems right.

Kissinger: No, that is right, but we have to keep their spirits up. The general strategy is to relieve pressure by actions against the bases.

Johnson: We are not going to get U.S. helicopters in there. We should tell them so and tell them they should move Khmer Krom.

Kissinger: I agree, but let's keep our answers to specific requests.

Packard: We tell them it's important for the Cambodians to keep their forces pressing inside Cambodia.

[At 11:45 Dr. Kissinger left.]

Nutter: We have some of these T–28 parts.

Green: Can't we put an Air Attaché on this in Phnom Penh?

Johnson: Can't we authorize the Air Attaché to find out where this stands and if it's not in train, ask Udorn to ship them down? We should go back out to Rives and (1) verify his needs, and (2) see if the stuff is not coming and to authorize the Air Attaché to get it from whatever sources available.

Packard: We will send one to the Attaché also.

Johnson: On Khmer Krom pay: I would like to hold the pay in escrow, making payments—family allowances—where needed.

Packard: Do we have contact with their families?

Johnson: I don't know, but we need to find out if it's feasible.

Leave it up to the Cambodians to pay a subsistence allowance. We take the posture that they are off our payroll if they are Cambodians.

Helms: We need to find out who commands them.

[At 11:55 Dr. Kissinger returns.]

Johnson: No one knew they were under direct U.S. command. All of us were under the same impression that they were nominally under the South Vietnamese.

If we pay them direct, we will have mercenaries and we can't say there are no U.S. forces in Cambodia.

Kissinger: How do they get paid in Cambodia?

Johnson: The Cambodians pay subsistence.

Nutter: Congress will ask how they are normally paid.

Johnson: We will have to say they were paid by U.S. Special Forces but we are not paying them in Cambodia.

Helms: If they don't get paid, they will sour. I don't know whether Cambodia can pay.

Packard: We are still subject to criticism if we put it in escrow.

Johnson: Can't we shift their pay to South Vietnam?

Packard: This is better.

Kissinger: We could say that when they went over, they transferred to the South Vietnamese.

Let's send messages to Bunker and Abrams. I suggest our first choice is to transfer them to South Vietnam—we compensate them about $150,000 a month—and our second choice is the escrow idea.[4]

How about the T–28/A–1?

Packard: I will check and report tomorrow.

What about A–2 liaison?

Vogt: It seemed impractical because of the confused situation on the ground.

Packard: Okay. I agree not to send it.

Johnson: We want to be sure to get out to Lon Nol to inform him ahead of time before the operations begin. We will inform him promptly on 702.[5]

Packard: We will set up a procedure to inform State in advance.

Kissinger: What is the press guidance on 702? Does MACV announce this routinely?

Moorer: We will announce it routinely in Saigon.

Helms: Can we delay this announcement for a day or so?

Kissinger: Let's get guidance. Can MACV restrain themselves for a few days? We want to get guidance—we can call attention to the SecDef's statement and this is a continuation. We will say nothing until asked, and then low key.

Packard: We will coordinate this.

Johnson: We would like five hours notice.

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[4] Done in telegram 67434 to Saigon, May 4. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

[5] Done in telegram 67369 to Phnom Penh, May 4. (Ibid.)

Packard: Moorer will set this up to include a description of the operation which is meaningful to Lon Nol.

Kissinger: It would be helpful if we can get an operation concluded and we could announce it. I don't want to press this, but if we could show limited operations, this would help us stay longer in COSVN. Maybe even announce that some have been withdrawn when they are.

Moorer: On the Riverine operation, I have asked Abrams for a time schedule. We will try to put all three out at roughly the same time.

Kissinger: I will tell the President there can be no tac air strikes because we would have to put controllers on the ground. I am not in favor of helicopter lift.

Let's discuss Thai Bien.

Johnson: Is it clear this is a temporary operation during the dry season, with the forces to be withdrawn in wet season?

Packard: We can't tell.

Moorer: The North Vietnamese may have stocked for operations in the rainy season.

Helms: There is no talk yet about withdrawing.

Johnson: Unger raises the question of equipping and training additional Thai forces. They will push for increased training and/or equipment or withdraw their forces from South Vietnam. If this is an indefinite deployment, we should begin to determine our position on more training/equipment and withdrawal from South Vietnam. We have a whole RCT we thought of as a reserve. Do we need to move the SGU battalions back south?

Helms: We are training three new units of SGU in the south but they won't be ready until June, July, August. The assessment is the NVA won't attack in the north during the rainy season.

The units won't stay in the north anyway. They don't like it there.

Kissinger: What is the view of this group about a third battalion?

Johnson: The Chinese can give us a time if they beefed up their forces along the road they are building. It's a logical move for them to make.

Packard: That is the biggest danger of all.

Johnson: They can't say this was triggered by this battalion.

Packard: They have alerted their intelligence but haven't found anything yet.

Johnson: A move like this would scare the Thai and would scare the United States.

Helms: The fall of Laos would be a headache for us. I think the battalion is needed.

Packard: We should advise the President we might have to do more for the Thais.

Green: Should the CIA give an estimate on the Chinese?

Kissinger: We will get word this afternoon.[6]

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[6] In a separate summary of conclusions, May 4, the following decisions were noted: "1. The execute on 702 would be sent this morning. 2. U.S. helicopters should not go into Cambodia. The South Vietnamese should be told this and that they should move the Khmer Krom. We should keep our answers to specific requests. 3. Messages should be sent to Bunker and Abrams indicating that our first choice was to have the South Vietnamese pay the Khmer Krom for which we would compensate them about $150,000 a month. Our second choice was to hold the pay escrow making payments (family allowances) where needed. 4. There could be no tac air strikes because we would have to put controllers on the ground." (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meetings, May 4–8, 1970)

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276. Editorial Note

On April 27, 1970, and with revisions on May 3, Senior Military Adviser Brigadier General Haig sent Vernon Walters two messages through their special channel requesting that he contact the North Vietnamese in Paris on Monday, May 4, and pass to them an oral message. The revised message reads:

"My government has reviewed fully the implications of our last meeting and considers that these discussions as well as recent events underline the need for new approaches which might favor a continuing constructive dialogue in this forum. Guided by this attitude and the desire to bring an early end to the conflict on a just basis, my government proposes another meeting between Dr. Kissinger and Minister Xuan Thuy and Special Advisor Le Duc Tho. Dr. Kissinger stands ready to be in Paris for such a meeting any weekend from May 16 onward to suit the convenience of Minister Xuan Thuy and Special Advisor Le Duc Tho." (Telegrams from Haig to Walters, April 27 and May 3; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 853, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. V)

On May 8 Walters sent Haig a letter describing his meeting with Mai Van Bo. Walters stated that, "While delivering the letter to my friend, he was extremely cordial and though I had delivered the message he insisted that I remain for tea which he had ordered." Walters reported that Bo was "completely non-committal as to the message saying he would deliver it to the Minister [Xuan Thuy]. (Letter from Walters to Haig, May 8, also sent via telegram WH00593, May 15; both ibid.)

On May 25 Walters received a telephone call from Mai Van Bo who asked to meet him on May 26 at the usual place, the North Vietnamese villa on Rue Jules Lagaisse in Vitray, a Paris suburb. Walters met Bo who told him that he would be leaving Paris soon and introduced him to Tran Viet Dung, Counselor of the Delegation General of the DRV in France. Bo told Walter that if Dung had any message for Walters, he would contact him using Bo's code name, André. Bo stated that he would be in Hanoi for several weeks and wished to be sure that the contact was maintained through Dung. Bo made no mention of Walters' message on May 4. (Memorandum by Walters, May 26; ibid.) In sending a copy of this memorandum to Kissinger, Richard Smyser of the National Security Council staff noted that, "What is most striking about this message is that it does not turn off the channel despite other developments. In fact it goes to great lengths to make sure that our contact's departure from Paris is not misinterpreted by us." (Memorandum from Smyser to Kissinger, May 26; ibid.)

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277. Editorial Note

On May 4, 1970, at approximately 4:45 p.m., the President told Kissinger: "At Kent State there were 4 or 5 killed today. But that place has been bad for quite some time—it has been rather violent." Kissinger suggested that the Nixon administration would be blamed for the killings and he noted that thirty-three university presidents were appealing to the President to leave Vietnam. The President asked about the student strike, observing: "If it's peaceful it doesn't bother me." Still, Nixon worried if the students were "out of classes they'll be able to raise hell." Kissinger thought they would hold teach-ins and possibly march on Washington. Nixon hoped "we can get some people of our own to speak out." Kissinger stated that "The university presidents are a disgrace," to which Nixon replied: "They still get an inordinate amount of publicity, like the students. We have to stand hard as a rock. Everybody's been through this—de Gaulle, Marcos . . . If countries begin to be run by children, God help us." Kissinger suggested that "of course, student disorders hurt us politically." The President responded: "They don't if it doesn't appear we caused them." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, May 4; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

The reaction at American colleges and universities to Cambodia and the killings at Kent State continued to grow over the next few days.

The effects of anti-war demonstrations are not often cited in official documents, but as Chief of Staff Haldeman makes clear in *The Haldeman Diaries,* they had a profound impact on the state of mind of the President and his advisers. (pages 158–164) On May 6 Kissinger met from 3 to 4:15 p.m. with eleven students and five faculty members of Stanford University in the White House Situation Room. The students and faculty members attempted to convince Kissinger that U.S. policy in Southeast Asia was not legitimate, especially the attack on the Cambodian sanctuaries. Kissinger attempted to explain the rationale for the decision. Neither made much progress with the other. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 340, Subject Files, Stanford University, May 1970) Kissinger recalls in *White House Years* (page 510) that he met with ten student groups about Cambodia during May 1970 alone. The bulk of the memoranda of conversation of these meetings are in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, CL 268, Memoranda of Conversation, 1968–1977, December 1968–November 1970.

On May 6 from 10:41 to 11:36 a.m., President Nixon met with six Kent State students who were against the war in Vietnam. In addition, William Stanton, Congressman from Ohio, and Thomas Ball of the Kent State University Alumni Association of Washington, D.C., attended. Press Secretary Ziegler, Chief of Staff Haldeman, and Assistant to the President Ehrlichman accompanied the President. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) On May 7 the President met with eight university presidents who were members of the Association of University Presidents to discuss the demonstrations and violence on American campuses. The college presidents were William C. Friday of the University of North Carolina; Fred H. Harrington of the University of Wisconsin; G. Alexander Heard, Chancellor of Vanderbilt University; Charles C. Hitch of the University of California (Berkeley); Edward Levi of the University of Chicago; Malcolm Moos of the University of Minnesota; Nathan M. Pusey of Harvard University; and W. Allen Wallis of the University of Rochester. (Ibid., White House Special Files, President's Office Files, Box 81, Memoranda for the President, May 1970) Kissinger's discussion with the Stanford students and professors and Nixon's discussions with the university presidents are published in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, volume I, Documents 65 and 66.

On May 7 Secretary of State Rogers and Kissinger discussed student demonstrations, with Rogers stating: "These student protests are greater than any of us anticipated. 136 universities are now closed. If one could talk individually with them, we could change their minds." Kissinger responded: "I have been talking to student groups, but when the faculties are present, it is impossible." Rogers stated: "I had some students and faculty members from Grinnell in. The faculty had all the

credentials of erudition and thoughtfulness, but they are more emotional than the youngsters. Most of it is psychological—it's all mixed up with what Agnew said, the President's unfortunate statement about bums, their worry that they will be drafted." Kissinger responded that the Provost of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology called him to say that "he wishes he could find it in his heart to say we caused it, but we gave the pretext. MIT was ready to blow anyway." Rogers agreed that "It (the Cambodian incursion) was just the spark—it was present anyway." After Rogers suggested that "we will have to stick behind him [the President]," Kissinger suggested that "After another week or two when the troops come out, it will be better." (Transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Rogers, May 7; Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

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278. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, May 5, 1970, 11:50 a.m.

WSAG MEETING

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence
Thomas Karamessines, CIA
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
General John A. Vogt, USAF
Amb. U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
B/General Alexander Haig, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Col. Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

SUBJECT

Cambodia

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970, 5/5/70. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

Kissinger: [Briefed the group on the meeting of the President with the Armed Services Committees this morning.][2]

We will get a sheet showing a summary of the results to date to the Secretary of State today at 1300.

Can we complete the Parrot's Beak operation by the middle of next week?

Wheeler: I will ask Abrams.

Kissinger: How about 704?

Wheeler: That will begin on 9 May.

Kissinger: Has it affected any other operations?

Wheeler: No.

Johnson: Will the 704 be done by ARVN?

Wheeler: Mostly ARVN.

Johnson: The Riverine?

Wheeler: Mostly ARVN.

Kissinger: Johnson to be informed five hours in advance.

Vogt: The procedure is all arranged.

Kissinger: How about the Khmer? [He reads the Saigon cable.][3]

Johnson: I think we should turn over the pay problem to Helms. We take the position that they are off our payroll—they resigned and we paid off—and the Cambodians are now responsible.

Helms: O.K. We need the funds to be transferred from DOD.

Packard: We will work it out.

Helms: We will work out the arrangements.

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[2] All brackets in the source text. The President and his staff briefed the House and Senate Armed Services Committees during breakfast and then the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at 5 p.m. According to *The Haldeman Diaries,* p. 160, these briefings covered military progress and emphasized the material captured. ("P. really pushing to get this out.") Haldeman wrote that Nixon answered questions, many of them hostile, and while he did not change many minds, "at least he told his story."

[3] Reference is to telegram 6853 from Saigon, May 5, received 6:28 a.m. Washington time. In it Berger and Abrams stated that their guiding principle was that Khmer troops in Vietnam would join the Cambodian Army and would no longer be supported by MACV (except for ammunition, weapons, and some spare parts). As volunteers they were free to leave the CIDG program any time and South Vietnam would not accept them into ARVN. All Khmers leaving South Vietnam for Cambodia were paid off in full plus bonuses prior to their departure. Their dependent families were either melting into South Vietnam or returning to Cambodia, so funding of dependents was impossible. Berger and Abrams realized that Cambodia was short of money, but if they did not pay the Khmer troops they would not fight. Abrams and Berger suggested paying the Khmer Krom troops by reallocating CIDG funds as directed by the OSD. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

Johnson: About Phnom Penh 750,[4] I suggest we have a MACV officer in civilian clothes to Phnom Penh to get with the Attachés and Cambodians to brief them on what we are doing and find out what they are doing. They'll be there to establish operational liaison, but not as advisors.

Kissinger: If all agree, we'll do as quickly as possible.

[All agree.]

Wheeler: We will get out the message.

Green: We must remember the French advisors and the position of our own military attaché.

Helms: Another aspect of the problem is: we send things but nothing happens. There is no organization in the Cambodian government. They keep asking for more. How are we going to handle this? Lon Nol seems to have no idea of what's going on and what he needs. Someone who knows what is needed should be sent to get to Lon Nol and help them.

Wheeler: An officer?

Kissinger: How about an Ambassador?

Johnson: We can't do it overnight. We need to give clear guidance to Rives and the attachés what we are and are not willing to do.

Kissinger: General Wheeler, can you get the name of an officer?

Wheeler: Yes. I will call this afternoon.

Kissinger: It would help if we had someone there who could tell them that the requests don't make military sense.

Johnson: Yes, but the Embassy needs guidance.

Helms: We should determine that here.

Johnson: We will draft a general guidance message.

[All agree this is a good idea—we will consider it tomorrow.]

Johnson: We haven't heard from Saigon or the UN yet. Phnom Penh is O.K.

Kissinger: The Indonesian Ambassador asked yesterday whether we still support neutral buffer states. We agreed yes, Suharto will not embarrass us. We will provide the Memcon to Johnson.

Wheeler: Can Johnson query Rives? What is Lon Nol doing with the Khmer and the equipment?

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[4] In telegram 750 from Phnom Penh, May 5, Rives passed on a suggestion from the Cambodian military that MACV send an officer to Cambodia to coordinate military policy in the Parrot's Beak and Fish Hook operations. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 146, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, May 1, 1970.)

Johnson: The man from MACV can get information and have a dialogue.

Kissinger: The cable should reflect the dialogue idea, and don't send a man until Moose and Lowenstein leave.

Johnson: The Thai battalion—Souvanna has been told. Godley says they probably have to stay indefinitely. This points up Unger's view that the Thai may come to us for more training and equipment.

Kissinger: Do we need to take any action about the Moose–Lowenstein report?

Johnson and Packard: It's not too bad a report.

[All agree no action is needed.]

Kissinger: How about A–1s and T–28s?

Vogt: They're not available.

Packard: Could we divert them from VNAF? We have 120—they only need 10 for Cambodia. T–28s are not available.

Kissinger: How about 10 A–1s?

Wheeler: We will have to short the Vietnamese.

Vogt: There is some doubt they could use them or maintain them.

Wheeler: We'll ask Phnom Penh Attaché to look into it.

Kissinger: Uniforms. Can we do this, and how many?

Packard: Probably we could divert them from Saigon.

Kissinger: Let's find out from Rives what he has in mind.

Johnson: We'll ask Rives. Caution him against any figure like 200,000.

Wheeler: A 1000-man pack will have uniforms.

Packard: We will determine what we can do.[5]

Kissinger: We'll meet again tomorrow.

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[5] In a separate summary of conclusions, May 5, the following decisions were noted: "1. A summary of the results to date would be delivered to the Secretary of State by 1300 today. 2. The 704 operation conducted primarily by ARVN would begin 9 May. Johnson was to be informed five hours in advance. 3. The funds to pay the Khmer Krom should be transferred from DOD to CIA. 4. In executing Phnom Penh 750, a MACV officer in civilian clothes would brief the attachés and Cambodians in Phnom Penh. They [attachés?] would act as operational liaison, not as advisers. 5. A general guidance message indicating what we were and were not willing to do should be sent to Rives and attachés. A draft message will be considered tomorrow. 6. No action was needed on the Moose–Lowenstein report." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, May 4–8, 1970)

279. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 5, 1970.

SUBJECT

Proposal for Attacks on Additional Base Areas in Cambodia

In order to destroy other areas which provide logistic support essential to enemy attacks in South Vietnam, MACV has proposed six additional operations against enemy base camps in Cambodia (Tab C).[2] The plan exploits the momentum generated by operations now underway in the Parrot's Beak and Fish Hook areas and the operation which began in Base Area 702 at 10:00 p.m. (Washington time) on May 4. MACV has proposed the following additional operations over the next 30 days.[3]

Base Area	*Location*	*Date Commences*	*Forces*	*Duration*
350	III Corps	6 May	Combined	5–7 days
354	III Corps	8 May	Combined	7–10 days
351	III Corps	8 May	Combined	Until weather forces termination
Mekong River	IV Corps	10 May*	Combined	Throughout period
704 & Nui O Mountain	IV Corps	12 May*	ARVN (US support)	7–10 days
701	II Corps	Timing as forces become available		

*May be one to three days earlier. [Footnote in the source text.]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 507, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. IV, 4/24/70–5/7/70. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. A notation on the memorandum reads: "The President has seen."

[2] Tab C is a retyped copy of MACV telegram MAC 5996, May 4, Abrams to Wheeler and McCain, attached but not printed.

[3] In a May 5 memorandum to Kissinger, Haig reported that he had spoken to Wheeler who informed him that Abrams had authorized the first three of these operations (against bases 350, 351, and 354) under authority already granted previously. Wheeler was concerned because there was no formal approval and it was too late to stop the operations. Henceforth, Wheeler asked Abrams to obtain approval for future operations.

A brief precis of each of these operations is at Tab A. A map indicating the locations of the base areas is at Tab B.[4]

In proposing these operations, General Abrams commented that:

—maximum pressure on the enemy in South Vietnam will be maintained throughout the campaign. Since security of the areas in South Vietnam vacated by forces operating in Cambodia will be decreased, some compensatory adjustments will be necessary and greater responsibilities given to territorial forces. This, however, is an acceptable calculated short-term risk.

—the principal risk attached to the plan is a possible major enemy attack in I Corps which could require the curtailment of operations.

—weather is a crucial factor bearing on the success of the plan and has figured heavily in the selection of areas to attack. Weather may well force termination of operations before attacks on all base areas selected can be completed.

—the South Vietnamese general staff concurs in the plan and detailed planning is proceeding on an urgent basis.

General Abrams also requested:

—authority for overflight of Cambodia, including Thai-based aircraft, in order to insure optimum use of available aircraft.

—selected release of some war readiness matériel, especially ground and air munitions, for use if necessary, and the maintaining of a capability to provide 81 additional transport aircraft in order to insure maximum logistics supporting capability and flexibility.

Operations in the Parrot's Beak and Fish Hook will continue until base areas in these regions are destroyed. MACV estimates that on about 20 May certain units assigned to these operations will be available for redeployment into some of the base areas listed below. The operation against Base Area 702 is scheduled to commence at 10:00 p.m. (Washington time) on May 4. The following details pertain to that operation:

—*Base Area Description.* Base Area 702 is a major logistical and troop staging area for enemy units operating in South Vietnam. It is contiguous to Kontum Province in II Corps. The headquarters of the 24th NVN Regiment is believed to be in this area, as well as an enemy reconnaissance battalion. Total estimated enemy strength in the area is 600 to 900.

—*Concept.* Ground attacks would be preceded by B–52 and tactical air strikes.

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[4] The map was attached but is not reproduced. The base areas cited in this map correspond to those in the map in Kissinger, *White House Years,* p. 248.

—*Friendly Forces.* The US 4th Infantry Division and one ARVN infantry regiment will be utilized.

—*Duration.* The estimated duration for the operation is 7 to 10 days.

The following information pertains to operations proposed by MACV.

I. Base Area 350.

—*Description of Base Area.* This area, which is located in III Corps, serves as a logistics storage area and sanctuary for enemy troops. Trafficability is marginal during the next 30 days in the higher elevations and may become impassable if heavy rains occur in mid-May. Troop movement will be extremely difficult except along established trails due to the dense undergrowth. The northern portion of the area is mostly multiple canopy forest; the southwestern portion of the area has some open areas. It is believed that elements of the 7th NVA Division and Rear Service Group 70 are located in this area. Total estimated enemy strength is 1500 to 1700.

—*Time of Commencement.* 6 May.

—*Concept.* A combined attack will be led by the US 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, augmented by ARVN units. The direction of attack will be along the axis of Base Area 352, north along Route 7, east along Route 13 and into Base Area 350.

—*Friendly Forces.* The US 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment and ARVN units which have not yet been designated will be involved in this combined operation under the command of the Commanding General of II Field Forces Vietnam.

—*Duration.* Estimated duration is 5 to 7 days.

II. Base Area 354.

—*Description of Base Area.* This area, which is located in III Corps, is a training center, personnel infiltration point and sanctuary. The northern two-thirds of the area is covered with dense undergrowth which would hinder the movement of tracked vehicles. The southern area is mainly under cultivation and the rice fields are currently passable. Civilian population in the area is relatively light. It is believed that units of the Headquarters 9th VC Division and the 95C NVA Regiment are located in this area. Estimated enemy strength is 1200.

—*Time of Commencement.* About 8 May.

—*Concept.* The base will be entered from the east by elements of the US 25th Infantry Division and ARVN units.

—*Friendly Forces.* Units of the US 25th Infantry Division and ARVN units yet to be designated will participate under the command of the Commanding General of the 25th Infantry Division.

—*Duration.* Estimated duration is 7 to 10 days.

III. Base Area 351.

—*Description of Base Area.* This base area, which is in III Corps, is a supply complex which provides logistical support and personnel infiltration to War Zone D and supports operations of the 5th VC Division in northern Phuoc Long Province. Large-scale munitions shipments have been noted in the area, which is characterized by dense vegetation and steep slopes which will impede traffic considerably. Thundershowers could cause flooding over much of this area within the next 30 days. It is believed that the following enemy units are in the area: Rear Service Group 86; the 174th Regiment of the 5th VC Division; and a number of units of enemy Military Region 10. Total estimated enemy strength is 2500.

—*Time of commencement.* About 8 May.

—*Concept.* A combined attack will be initiated into the base area and the region to the northeast with elements of the US First Cavalry Division and ARVN units.

—*Friendly Forces.* Elements of the 1st Cavalry Division and ARVN units still to be designated will participate under the command of the Commanding General II Field Forces Vietnam.

—*Duration.* This operation will last until the weather forces termination.

IV. Mekong River Operation.

—*Objective.* The Riverine force is to interdict enemy use of the Mekong River; seize a suspected enemy transhipment point at the junction at Highway 1 and the Mekong River, provide transportation for refugees, protect Cambodian merchant shipping, and assist in keeping Route 1 open.

—*Concept.* The Riverine Force, consisting of a South Vietnamese amphibious force and supported by several US vessels and helicopters will proceed up the Mekong River from South Vietnam to an area in the vicinity of a ferry at the juncture of Highway 1 and the Mekong River.

—*Time of Commencement.* About May 10. (MACV is trying to move this date up from one to three days.)

—*Friendly Forces.* The Riverine Force will consist of South Vietnamese Amphibious Task Force 211, one South Vietnamese Marine Corps brigade and one Ranger battalion; and five US vessels, all under the command of Commander Task Group 94 (a US Naval officer).

—*Duration.* Throughout the campaign.

V. Base Area 704 and Nui O Mountain.

—*Description of Base Area.* Within Base Area 704 are 12 base camps, or training sites, 4 hospitals or dispensaries, 6 storage areas, one pris-

oner of war compound, 2 triangular strongpoints, and 11 other unidentified installations. The area, which is characterized by swamps, open areas and rice paddies, is generally unfit for vehicular traffic by mid-May and subject to inundation in June/July. The following enemy units are estimated to be within the base area: the 511th and 512D Local Force Battalion, elements of Military Region 2, and the 295 Main Force Infantry Battalion. Total strength is estimated to be 700 to 1000.

Nui O Mountain. This area is a secondary sanctuary and storage area for units operating in the Seven Mountains and possibly for units of Military Region 3. It is surrounded by low, flat areas subject to inundation. The following units are believed to be located in the general area: elements of the 95th North Vietnamese Regiment and the 1st North Vietnamese Division, and the 196th Transportation Battalion. Estimated enemy strength is 1000.

—*Date of Commencement.* On about 12 May. (MACV is trying to move this date up from one to three days.)

—*Concept.* Four South Vietnamese Cavalry squadrons will attack from the western part of Base Area 704 southwest to the Nui O Mountain area.

—*Friendly Forces.* The four South Vietnamese Cavalry squadrons will be supported by US Air Cavalry, air mobile support for troop insertions and troop support for supplies and artillery.

—*Duration.* Seven to ten days.

VI. Base Area 701.

—*Description of Base Area.* This area, which is located in II Corps, is a major logistic and troop staging site with excellent lines of communication into South Vietnam. Enemy activity has always been at a relatively high level. The jungle canopy provides concealment for the enemy base camps and storage areas. It is believed that the following enemy forces are in the area: units of the Hq 66 NVA Regiment; Hq of the 250th Transportation Regiment; the Binh Tran South (B-3 Front), and the K 1st North Vietnamese Infantry Battalion of the 95B Infantry Regiment. Total estimated enemy strength is 2450.

—*Commencement Date.* The operation will commence when forces become available.

—*Concept.* A combined attack will be initiated into Base Area 701 as a follow-on to the attack on Base Area 702. The base area will be entered generally from the north and the east.

—*Friendly Forces.* The Commanding General of the 1 Field Forces Vietnam and the Commanding General of II Corps will be in command. Specific units have not yet been designated.

—*Duration.* To be determined.

280. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Washington, May 6, 1970.

[Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Country Files, Far East, Laos, Vol. V, 1 April 1970–11 August 1970. Top Secret; Umbra. 3 pages of source text not declassified.]

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281. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, May 6, 1970, 11:33 a.m.

WSAG PRINCIPALS

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman, JCS
General John A. Vogt, USAF
Amb. U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Col. Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

SUBJECT

Cambodia

Kissinger: Bus [Wheeler],[2] can you provide a comparison of the results of the operations to date with previous clearing operations?

Wheeler: I will. Abe [Abrams] asked for authority to conduct tactical air photo reconnaissance up to 60 miles. I gave him the okay but it had to be unarmed beyond the 30 kilometers presently authorized depth and not over Phnom Penh.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, May 4–8, 1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] All brackets in the source text.

Packard: We've noticed river traffic from Laos. That's another reason for reconnaissance.

Kissinger: I agree we should do it.

Wheeler: The river area won't be covered by the 60 miles. We will submit a separate request.

Johnson: Should we notify Lon Nol? Should we share our information with him?

Kissinger: We can tell him we will do it. We can decide what we give him.

Helms: We don't want to scare him.

Kissinger: We control the information we give.

Johnson: We will express it in broad terms to Lon Nol. We'll tell him just eastern Cambodia.

[All agree.]

Johnson: Should we do overflights by tacair from Ubon?

Packard: How important is this?

Kissinger: We don't want to give Lon Nol the idea we are using Cambodia for our purposes.

Wheeler: Let's go out and ask Abrams how important this is. We are reluctant to open the Cambodian operation more than it is now.

Packard: He might consider a transfer of assets from Thailand for needs in South Vietnam.

Johnson: Market Time. We'll add a sentence to say it's aimed solely at NVA/VC seaborne traffic.[3] To make clear we are not after third country traffic. We would go only to Kompot—a little over 30 kilometers—and directly related to the sanctuaries. Could we limit it to South Vietnamese? Shouldn't we note that we will withdraw Americans from the operation when we complete the base area operation?

Packard: It would be almost entirely South Vietnamese.

Johnson: They'd better have American commanders in the early stages.

[At 1146 Mr. Nutter arrives.]

Johnson: If we announce the Market Time operations at the same time as the riverine and other operations in the South, it would be smothered.

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[3] The telegram asking the Embassy to discuss with the Lon Nol government the plan to extend Market Time operations to prevent seaborne Viet Cong and North Vietnamese infiltration into Cambodian waters was 068509 to Phnom Penh, May 6. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB)

Kissinger: Any objection?

Helms: Let's do it while the heat is already on.

[All agree. No objection.]

Johnson: There are two international law principles that could possibly apply here. One is customs; the other is blockade. This is neither one. The rationale is and would have to be "self-defense."

Kissinger: If we are not stopping Chinese and Soviet equipment, what do you stop?

Wheeler: Only small ships. Market Time has chased the Soviet and Chicom trawlers away from South Vietnam.

Johnson: We don't want to get involved in intercepting third country traffic.

Vogt: It's limited to stopping trawler-type activity—junk, etc. transfer. The harbors in the areas to be covered won't take ocean-going ships on shallow draft.

Packard: Shouldn't we make sure it doesn't reach third country and fishing fleets?

Kissinger: We should get precise rules of engagement. I want them for the WSAG tomorrow. We can go ahead with the general approach.

Do we have a legal opinion?

Johnson: It's not a very legal opinion. It's a self-defense thesis, for defense.[4]

Packard: We should keep it under U.S. control in the early stages.

Helms: We made a mistake yesterday. There were no uniforms in the packs.

Green: We had sent a cable saying they were in.

Johnson: We will go out and clarify it on the 10 packs. We want a judgment on the nine packs after they see the first.

Kissinger: Don't we have additional AK–47 arms now, from captured stocks?

Wheeler: We should send this instruction to Abrams.

Kissinger: Particularly on ammunition.

Helms: It costs $176,000 a month for the pay of four Khmer battalions.

Kissinger: How about uniforms?

Wheeler: We have asked Abrams and Rives—no reply yet.

Helms: They are trying to work out a way to handle it.

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[4] Reference is to a memorandum from Eliot to Kissinger, May 4, "Legal Aspects of our Action in Cambodia." (Ibid.)

Johnson: We have not told Lon Nol yet whether they will be paid.

We need to inform Rives of what we do. Thieu is going to make a statement.

We need to advise him.

Helms: We will advise him as quickly as possible.

Kissinger: Is there any answer from the Air Attaché yet on the A–1s?

Wheeler: No answer yet.

Johnson: Rives welcomes a MACV liaison man. Let's call MACV and Phnom Penh to work out the arrival after Lowenstein and Moose leave.

Wheeler: We will make sure he is French-speaking and we'll make sure it is for recurring liaison, not TDY.

Kissinger: I asked the President about sending a military man to Embassy Phnom Penh. The President thinks it's a good idea.

Johnson: What status would he have?

Wheeler: I assume he'll be CIA, available to make recommendations and to advise.

Johnson: In relation to the Attaché and MACV liaison?

Kissinger: To give competent advice to Embassy and Cambodians.

Helms: As special advisor to the chargé with credentials from a cabinet officer?

Wheeler: We want to try to avoid "involvement," or misleading the Cambodians.

Johnson: Advice brings responsibility.

Helms: He has to have credentials. He can be sent by the Secretary of Defense to see how they are doing with our assistance.

Green: We might wait until we see how the liaison goes.

Johnson: Can we have somebody working for them?

Packard and Wheeler: We will look into the legal status of a retired officer and report tomorrow.

Helms: We know where there are 18 T–28s on the market. We will advise Packard. We'll report tomorrow on this.

Johnson: We have Phnom Penh 764,[5] liaison arrangements with South Vietnam and a request for a South Vietnamese armored column and clearing area. Lon Nol is attacking with Khmer. Have we anything from Saigon?

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[5] Dated May 6. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 589, Cambodian Operations (1970), Cambodia, Nodis/Khmer (Vol. I))

Wheeler: Nothing from Abrams. Probably he will be reluctant to launch an armored column. His operation against 704 and the riverine begins 9 May into the same area.

Kissinger: Why not tell Lon Nol we are considering his request?

Johnson: We can inform him.

Kissinger: This is a good example of why we need someone there.

Wheeler: We could ask Abrams' comments. We will do it. I assume the South Vietnamese II Corps commander met with the Cambodians. What about IV Corps liaison? [He refers to a cable.]

I didn't know about it but I see no problem.

Johnson: Another reason to have a man there.

We should not give a negative to any combined operation with the Cambodians.

[All agree.]

Kissinger: Where do we stand on the Thai battalion?

Wheeler: It's all in train.[6]

Johnson: We will have a broad guidance telegram tomorrow.

Kissinger: Let's discuss Thai air support for Laos tomorrow.

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[6] In a separate summary of conclusions, May 6, the following decisions were noted: "1. We should inform Lon Nol that we would conduct photo reconnaissance by air over eastern Cambodia. 2. The Market Time operations should be announced while the enemy was already pressed by the riverine and other operations in the South. We should not give a negative response to any combined operations with the Cambodians." (Ibid., NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, May 4–8, 1970)

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282. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, May 7, 1970, 2:30 p.m.

WSAG MEETING

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

Lt. Gen. Robert E. Cushman, Jr., Deputy Director, CIA
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman, JCS
Gen. John A. Vogt, USAF
Amb. U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Col. Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

SUBJECT

Cambodia

Wheeler: We have a cable from Abrams saying the ARVN has shown a good performance and plans.[2]

Are we operating on a 21 mile limit or 30 kilometers?

Kissinger: 21 miles.

The operations should be good for ARVN morale.

Wheeler: Yes.

Packard: There may be trouble in Saigon—some infiltration.

Johnson: There's a spate of stories on the riverine operation from Saigon. They referred to a river operation to Phnom Penh.

Kissinger: We told Ziegler to say we don't comment on operations that aren't taking place, and the rules of engagement and depth rules still apply.

Wheeler: This is the plan for the river operations on 9 May: They would go up to the ferry sight which is 20 nautical miles from the closest point on the South Vietnamese border. Only four American ships and 75 ARVN ships—with 75 US advisors on the boats—with 12 choppers supporting, under U.S. command.

Johnson: Did Abrams recommend using more Khmer?

Wheeler: Abrams recommends using Khmer with US and GVN advisors until 30 June in Parrot's Beak. There are about 2,000 Khmer now in the program. They would turn it over to the Cambodian Army on 30 June and withdraw all advisors then.

[All agree this is a good idea.][3]

Kissinger: Can't we get the Khmer out of Phnom Penh?

Wheeler: They were sent out as an assault force.

Kissinger: How about overflights of Cambodia?

Wheeler: Abrams does not see a need for it at this time. If he needs it he'll ask again.

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[2] Not found.

[3] All brackets in the source text.

Kissinger: How about rules of engagement for Market Time?

Vogt: We are working on these. They have been oriented entirely to infiltration. We will have them tomorrow. We'll clear them with Johnson.

Johnson: What's the PR plan for the river operation?

Wheeler: MACV will make a low-key announcement, that it's predominantly ARVN after the operation begins.

Kissinger: We should wrap Market Time into the same announcement.

What about American civilians in Cambodia?

Johnson: I saw that cable.[4]

Kissinger: I don't think we should have them.

[All agree.]

Kissinger: How about the Thieu statement on the Khmer?

[All agree to a message to Thieu on the Khmer. Johnson will send.]

Johnson: About the press conference. What do we say about Paris? Should the President say we are going back?

Kissinger: Yes. Please send over some Q's and A's for press conference.[5]

What about the uniforms?

Wheeler: We have no reply from Rives yet.

Kissinger: The aircraft maintenance problem?

Vogt: Abrams is putting a parts package together. They will fly from Saigon to Phnom Penh. The air attaché believes they can support and maintain a squadron of 20 airplanes, T–28 and A–1.

Kissinger: Can we get a fix on the best mix?

Packard: It is illegal to give them. We can get planes. We would take some T–28s from Navy and try to replace. We want to get together with Alex Johnson to see how we can do it.

Johnson: We will be in touch. I will put people on it.

Helms: The third Thai battalion will be in place on line on 10 May.

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[4] In telegram 582 from Phnom Penh, April 21, Rives recommended consideration of evacuation of the Embassy staff or reduction of staff and dependents in light of the fear that the capital would fall. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 4/24/70) Johnson is either referring to this cable or a subsequent one in which Rives recommended evacuation of U.S. civilians.

[5] Nixon's press conference of May 8, in which he responded to a question about pursuing the Paris Peace Talks with as equal fervor as the Cambodia operation, see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* p. 421. The full text of the conference is ibid., pp. 413–423.

Johnson: What about the message on Laos? There are possibilities of Chinese intervention.

Kissinger: How about a retired officer?

Packard: We can't do it legally, but we could have him work for a contractor.

Johnson: But this might be disclosed if we paid any part of the cost.

Kissinger: Why not as an advisor to Rives?

Johnson: We said we weren't going to have advisors and take on responsibilities.

Green: Can't we try the MACV Liaison Officer route for a while?

[All agree this should be tried.]

Kissinger: Thai battalion support. Should we discuss this today.

Green: We are drafting a reply.[6]

Kissinger: Then let's discuss it tomorrow.

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[6] In a separate summary of conclusions, May 6, the following decisions were noted: "1. It would be a good idea to turn the Parrot's Beak operation over to the Cambodian Army on June 30 and withdraw all US and GVN advisers at that time. 2. We should not have American civilians in Cambodia. 3. A message should be sent to Thieu regarding Khmer participation. 4. The President should say we are going back to Paris. 5. We should send a MACV liaison Officer to Phnom Penh to advise our Embassy and the Cambodians." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, May 4–8, 1970)

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283. Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between Secretary of State Rogers and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, May 8, 1970, 12:55 p.m.

R: Two things I wanted to mention. One, a couple of projected plans they have I think would be dangerous from a public relations view. One is the incursion into Takeo by South Vietnamese forces at the request of Lon Nol. I am afraid it would be quite contrary to what the public understands.

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File. No classification marking.

K: No Americans are going beyond the line the President gave.

R: If we do anything at the moment to respond to the request by Lon Nol it would be inconsistent to what we said. Takeo has been so clearly defined in the public mind with Cambodia. Another thing is the amphibious landings.

K: I called Mel. I had never heard of the thing and nothing could be done without the President's approval.

R: They have it on their desks. I told Mel don't do anything that is inconsistent with what we said we were going to do. Just that simple.

K: I am not even aware of these plans. It is an impossible situation for the military to organize pressures on the White House of proposals that haven't even reached the White House.

R: I expressed my view to him.

K: I talked to the President this morning. No American will go beyond the limit he set—20 miles [*21 miles/30 kilometers*] or whatever it is. Secondly, no operation can be started without Presidential approval.

R: Good. The other is pretty well except for this riverine thing, pretty well underway. This is the last one. Another one that they haven't projected. Near the border a hill area in a sanctuary. I don't see anything wrong with that. But Takeo and the amphibious landing I think would be very serious mistakes. I am not being bureaucratic. I want to touch every base so it doesn't fall between the chairs.

K: It isn't that the White House has cooked up something you haven't heard about.

R: I am worried about when the President goes over and he tells the military something and they take it and run with the ball and they tell Mel that's what the President indicated.[2] I want to be sure the damn thing is directed by one person and that is the President.

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[2] On May 7 at 7:45 a.m., Laird called Kissinger and stated: "you know that the President has really come over here and given the military the greatest license they have ever had and I am going to step in on a few things because if we let this get out of hand, they will use all American troops. We have got to keep the pressure on them to use South Vietnamese troops. The next thing they will be doing is requesting more Americans in South Vietnam. McCain would like to put the Marines back. We can't do that." Kissinger agreed. Laird continued: "They have the idea that they have carte blanche and I have got to be a son-of-a-bitch to keep some pressure on them." Kissinger responded: "There is no argument here. There is no question on principle in putting in new troops into Vietnam. There is no question at all." Laird suggested that "If we are to keep maintaining the President's credibility, we must insure withdrawal." Kissinger again assured him there "was no thought of authorizing more troops." Laird stated that the military "have the idea that the President will probably allow it if they really need it." Kissinger asked "what do you want them not to do?" Laird answered, "What I want to do is keep the pressure on to use South Vietnamese forces and it is going in the other direction now and I am trying to turn it the other way." (Ibid.)

K: I will make sure nothing of this sort happens without all the Cabinet being consulted.

R: I think once we finish the riverine we should clean up and get out as soon as we can in consideration of the safety.

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284. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, May 8, 1970, 11:45 a.m.

WSAG MEETING

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Lt. Gen. Robert E. Cushman, Jr., USMC, Deputy Director, Central Intelligence Agency
Thomas Karamessines, CIA
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
General John A. Vogt, USAF
Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Col. Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

SUBJECT

Cambodia

[The meeting began in the absence of Dr. Kissinger who was with the President.][2]

Johnson: We have to have guidance on the Market Time extension. I suggest we not refer to Market Time. It's not really an extension; it is just similar to it.

This is supporting the move on the sanctuaries.

[All agree that there should not be an announcement. We should have guidance for use *only* if asked.]

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] All brackets in the source text.

Vogt: Secretaries Laird and Rogers agreed to this of having no announcement, at their meeting this morning. The execute message will go out.

[At 11:50, Dr. Kissinger arrives.]

Vogt: The "city complex" is confirmed. We found very large caches.

Packard: Rocket and mortar attacks have averaged 6½ rounds per operation over the past five weeks. We have captured enough rocket and mortar ammo for 719 such attacks.

Kissinger: Johnny [Vogt], reduce this type of data to the average enemy expenditure. How many weeks of enemy attack does this represent?

Nutter: Can we equate these figures to American deaths saved?

Vogt: Will do. We can say that as of this morning there are more Vietnamese than US forces involved in the operation.

Johnson: Henry, the rules of engagement have been agreed. We all agree that there should be no announcement. We came up with this guidance for answers to questions—that it's in support of the move against the sanctuaries and not an extension of it. This is only if asked.

Kissinger: I agree. Where do we stand on the uniforms?

Packard: Yes, we have a reply from Abrams. We can provide 12,000 uniforms, boots and packs in small sizes.

Johnson: We will let Rives know of this.

Kissinger: What is the legal position on the airplanes?

Nutter: We must have a Presidential Determination for Sales and MAP and notify the Congress.

Johnson: Just what we did for Trinidad. Saying they are eligible for sales is one thing; for MAP another. Can't we sell for cash—bill them and not press for collection?

Packard: That is against policy. We can charge it possibly. Some people in Congress who would object to anything would object to this.

Green: Cambodia has claims against us—maybe we can use it as an offset?

Johnson: But earlier we said it would take congressional action to pay the claims.

Packard: [outlines the availability of aircraft.]

Johnson: We could transfer them from Thailand.

Nutter: There's a third-country MAP transfer problem.

Johnson: Can the Thai loan them and replace them from planes now in Cambodia and fix them later?

Kissinger: Let's look into this.[3] Can we have all the options on Monday?[4]

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[3] In a separate summary of conclusions, May 8, the following decisions were noted: "There should be no announcement on the Market Time extension. If asked, we should indicate that the operation provides support for the move into the sanctuaries. The 'city complex' was confirmed. Very large caches of rocket and mortar ammunition were found. We could provide 12,000 uniforms, boots and packs in small sizes. The question of providing airplanes to Cambodia was discussed, but no conclusions were reached." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–073, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, May 4–8, 1970)

[4] May 11; see Document 286.

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285. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Cambodia[1]

Washington, May 9, 1970, 1945Z.

070781. Ref: State 055340.[2]

1. For the guidance of yourself and such key members of your staff as you may desire, the purpose of this message is to give you in somewhat more detail the thinking here with respect to our objectives and role in Cambodia. As stated in our first message on this general subject (reftel Notal), we have seen our problem as essentially one of navigating between providing enough support and reassurance to the GOC so that it will have the morale and determination, as well as enhance its capability, to cope with the enemy; while at the same time not leaving the GOC with any misleading or false expectations as to the amounts and types of assistance that we are likely to provide. We entirely approve the way in which you have navigated between these shoals in your relations with the GOC, and you will have seen that we have sought to apply the same principles in our actions here.

2. We continue to draw the distinction set forth in the President's April 30 address between expanding the war into Cambodia and the

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER. Top Secret; Nodis; Khmer; Priority. Repeated to Saigon, MACV, and CINCPAC. Drafted on May 8 by Green and Johnson; cleared with Kissinger, in draft with Rogers, and in substance with Laird; and approved by Johnson.

[2] See footnote 2, Document 230.

actions we are taking to clean out the major VC/NVA sanctuaries in the Cambodian-Vietnamese border in defense of Americans in Viet-Nam and the Vietnamization program in SVN, even though it continues to be our hope that these actions will help relieve VC/NVA pressures on the Cambodian forces and thus indirectly support the GOC. The President has announced his intention to withdraw American forces as quickly as the operations against the sanctuary areas have achieved their objectives, which is primarily the destruction of supplies and facilities. As you know, the Congress has been assured that these operations will not extend deeper into Cambodia than sanctuary areas or up to about 21 miles and that it is expected that all of the forces will have been withdrawn to SVN in about six to eight weeks, or roughly by July 1. While these limits apply to a lesser degree to GVN forces, we would not like to see the GVN in a deep, substantial or prolonged extension of hostilities into Cambodia and would find it difficult to support if it did.

3. We will continue to supply small arms, ammunition and similar equipment to the GOC. We are looking into ways in which we can be helpful with T–28/A–1 aircraft and uniforms which Cambodia needs. We have enabled the Khmer Krom to come to Phnom Penh to assist the FANK. We are taking steps to facilitate the exchange of information between ourselves and the FANK. Additionally, we are working hard behind the scenes to urge other Asian countries to render material assistance to Cambodia, and it is our expectation that some will be prepared to act in limited ways quite promptly after the Djakarta conference.

4. In all these actions we want carefully to avoid getting ourselves into any "advisory" role vis-à-vis the FANK or the GOC with the responsibilities that would flow therefrom. It is also important to keep down the size of the mission to avoid the impression that we are "taking over" and committing our prestige within Cambodia in a major way. We do not wish to form anything in nature of a MAAG or AID office and wish to handle assistance and liaison needs within existing framework of mission with minimum increases in staff and with help of TDY personnel or liaison visits when necessary.

5. Within the foregoing guidelines, we want to continue to do all possible to maintain the morale and determination of the GOC. At the same time we believe it will be in the best interests of the GOC and the U.S. to discourage unrealistic expectations or requests. In addition to material assistance coming from ourselves and the GVN, we feel that the GOC should not underestimate the value of the initiative being taken by the Indonesians for the Djakarta conference. Moral pressure cannot be ignored, even by the other side, and Cambodia has a powerful moral case.

6. We will welcome any thoughts or comments that you may have with respect to the foregoing.

Rogers

86. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, May 11, 1970, 3:15 p.m.

ARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Thomas Karamessines, Central Intelligence Agency
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Colonel Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

UBJECT

Meeting of WSAG Principals on Cambodia

Johnson: I want to call your attention to these cables: Phnom Penh 37[2]—the Market Time extension to 103. Also Saigon 7132[3] on captured Cambodians. Then, Phnom Penh 842 and DAO 127[4]—the request for –28 munitions. And Phnom Penh 855[5]—Abrams says he cannot exeute the message.

[At 3:25 Dr. Kissinger arrives.][6]

Kissinger: The problem is the ARVN operations. We need to esablish the ground rules.

Moorer: Phase I of the Cuu Long operation goes like this. It beins Saturday night and ends on 31 May. It goes into Base Area 704,

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. he meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] Not found.

[3] In telegram 7132 from Saigon, May 9, the Embassy suggested that the Departnent would want to explore with the Department of Defense the question of legal and olitical issues related to the capture of Cambodians during U.S.–GVN operations against e sanctuaries. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 5/14/70)

[4] Telegram 842 from Phnom Penh, May 10, recommended that the Department of tate give attention and recommended supplying some of the requirements listed in SDAO 127 from Phnom Penh. (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 589, Cambodian Operations (1970), ambodia Nodis/Khmer (Vol. II), through 25 May 1970) USDAO 127 has not been found.

[5] In telegram 855 from Phnom Penh, May 11, Rives reported that Cambodian Genral Pok Sam An had requested that US/ARVN forces near Kompong Cham attack beeging VC/NVN forces to aid in the defense of the town. (Ibid., RG 59, Central Files 970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

[6] All brackets in the source text.

he Uni Al base area, and relieves the vicinity of Takeo and Kampot. The Takeo/Kampot portion is tied together with the Market Time operation.

Kissinger: How can we block it out for only a month? We have two types of operations—the one with ARVN with U.S. advisors must be approved by the President. And the other is ARVN operations without U.S. advisors.

Johnson: Can we defend this as a sanctuary operation?

Moorer: Yes, as an effort to destroy the LOC from Laos to the sea.

Johnson: The Secretary has some doubts.

Packard: There are strong reasons for doing it.

Green: Will they find caches?

Moorer: They will in the base areas and possibly elsewhere.

Kissinger: We will want the views of the Secretaries.

Moorer: Abrams told Thieu no on the move to Kampong Cham.

We have an operation against 701, to begin on Wednesday.

Kissinger: 701 is not an issue.

[All agree that 701 is going ahead.]

Moorer: There is a strike against the Sekong River at the Cambodia/Laos border.

Packard: We have approved this. Abrams will give 12 hours notice before the strike.

Kissinger: Do all of you agree?

[All do agree.]

Moorer: All U.S. forces from 702 are withdrawing on the 16th.

[All agree that we don't announce this until they are actually out.]

Moorer: We have an Abrams message on Lowenstein and Moose. They are pressing on the Khmer Krom.

Johnson: A telegram says that General Minh of the JCS of South Vietnam says the South Vietnamese delivery of AK–47s was all nonsense. It didn't happen. Johnson has had Ted Eliott call Carl Marcy [of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee] to straighten it out and also sent a cable to Sam Berger.

We have to have freedom of action to let others help without losing our aid. We have to have freedom of action for the Vietnamese to move farther than our limits. And we need freedom to continue to give them small arms.

Kissinger: When does this come up in the House?

Johnson: I don't know. The committee is in executive session today.

Packard: I don't know whether we can work out language we can live with.

[All agree we should try.]

Moorer: Abrams is ready to deliver the uniform items.

[All agree to execute.]

Kissinger: What is the legal situation on the T–28s?

Packard: We must have a Presidential Determination and notify he Congress.

Kissinger: Can we wait to decide or notify them later after the Congress?

Packard: We could decide later. But what about Cambodia's financial situation? We have to give support. I doubt we can.

Kissinger: What about the Green plan—the claim on the rubber plantations?

Green: It won't work. The Congress would sniff it out.

Kissinger: Can they use Thai and replace them?

Nutter: We can't exchange without a determination.

Packard: This is about the best approach.

Nutter: We can't permit the Thais to give them.

Kissinger: Even for trade?

Nutter: Yes.

Green: What about a repair team?

Nutter: It will take six months at least.

Moorer: That is why it is better to exchange.

Nutter: But the Thai won't be happy.

Green: Can Lon Nol buy it?

Nutter: Only if we have a determination.

Packard: My concern is that Congress might tie down the Presidential Determination authority. The Senate is talking about removing he President's Determination authority.

Nutter: It's a $25–30 million annual operating cost.

Green: There is $25 million in Paris tied up in an argument between the Vietnamese and the Cambodians. This is not applicable. But doubt we could use these funds.

Packard: The most effective would be GVN air support. We could ack them up in South Vietnam.

Karamessines: Has the President precluded U.S. tac air after June 0?

Kissinger: No.

Packard: Is it better to let the GVN do tac air than try to get into ircraft supply?

Green: We should ask Rives. The Cambodians are suspicious.

Packard: The Cambodians want planes.

Green: Can they buy them commercially?

Karamessines: Time is against this.

Green: Can the South Vietnamese air force come in and repair and help them?

Packard: The South Vietnamese have fair maintenance capability.

Kissinger: Ask Harlow what problems a determination would cause.

Moorer: We have to do it quickly if it's to be any use.

Kissinger: Let's see what South Vietnamese air support could do. Also what they do for maintenance.

Karamessines: What about the Thai Khmer? Support would cost $1 million per month for 3,000 of them.

Packard: We would have a problem with funds. We will have to ask MACTHAI whether there are funds available.

Kissinger: What about South Vietnamese extension of the operations without U.S. advisors? I think we should disagree.

Green: I agree we should discourage it.

Kissinger: The President's views are this. We should keep in that posture as a deterrent to, not as a pretext for, North Vietnamese operations against Phnom Penh. They should have general instructions that we don't rule it out but we should keep it as a deterrent. I think we should discourage them from taking off on operations on their own. They should not run off all over Cambodia. The idea is to keep it as a threat, but hold back.

[All agree.]

[Green will draft a message.][7]

[7] In a separate summary of conclusions, May 11, the following decisions were noted: "1. The operation against 701 would begin Wednesday. 2. There would be a strike against the Sekong River at the Cambodia/Laos border. Abrams would give 12 hours notice before the strike. 3. No announcement would be made regarding U.S. troop withdrawal from 702 on the 16th until the U.S. forces were actually out. 4. We should try to work out language acceptable to us and to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in order that (a) others could help without losing their aid; (b) the Vietnamese could move farther than out limits; (c) we could continue to give them [Cambodia] small arms. 5. Abrams should deliver the uniform items. The President's views were relayed to the group. We should discourage the South Vietnamese from extending operations without U.S. advisers. We should keep them in that posture as a deterrent to, not as a pretext for, North Vietnamese operations against Phnom Penh. The South Vietnamese should not run all over Cambodia. The idea was to keep it as a threat, but hold back. A message would be drafted to that effect." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 5/11/70)

87. Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, May 11, 1970, 5:40 p.m.

Pres: Isn't that Reagan something. He said the truth though.[2] All f this miserable mouthing about listening and communicating . . .

HAK: You did a superb job.[3]

Pres: We have just got to go to TV to get anything across. That is he only way.

HAK: I am convinced that we are facing something deeper than a ublic relations issue. There is a deliberate attempt to load the dice and talked to Packard and Moorer about the Saigon problem and they howed me the stuff they have handed out. They are doing essentially vhat we wanted them to do, comparing the figures. All of this stuff vhich one never sees in the papers. If it was Kennedy, they would have t all over.

Pres: The press, including news magazines, are trying desperately o make it appear that this thing . . . they are talking about the elusive nemy. I don't think we should be defensive about it. They are failing o play this up. I am going to do the same thing as before. On the 15th f June I will go on TV.

HAK: If the enemy stood and fought then they would really be creaming. We are not after the men.

Pres: What are the men going to do if we get all their guns. Of ourse we are not after the men.

HAK: I had a cable from Reeves saying there is a definite sign of lackening of pressure in many places in the last 36 hours.

Pres: Also, they must have a fear that we are moving around there nd that we may move in on them. We are in their rear.

HAK: There are two more operations that would wind it up that re planned for the South that are within the 30 kilometer limit. They re not all on bases but they are in the limit. They would start Saturlay if you approve them.

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[1] Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telehone Conversations, 1969–1976, Chronological File, May 10–20, 1970. No classification narking.

[2] Apparent reference to remarks by Governor Ronald Reagan of California in suport of the operation in Cambodia and against student demonstrations in opposition o it.

[3] Kissinger is apparently referring to the President's news conference of May 8 roadcast live on television. The text is in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970*, pp. 413–423.

Pres: Hell, yes. Are they ARVN?

HAK: All ARVN. No advisers.

Pres: Good, I approve.

HAK: We are starting one tomorrow night, 701. Two in the South which would relieve Takeo and that would be the end of it.

Pres: I don't think that this whole university thing has reached as many people as they think. We see the hysterical people. It was refreshing to hear Reagan.

HAK: I talked to some student radicals over the weekend and they were very disappointed because they thought the turnout wasn't much. There is no doubt that the economic community is deeply disturbed.

Pres: Let them take responsibility for keeping their campuses in order. Reagan of course sees everything in conspiratorial terms. But he may be right.

HAK: Yes, there are some things which I don't want to discuss with you over the phone which are pretty interesting.

Pres: Here in the government or outside?

HAK: Could I come up to see you?

Pres: Come on up to the Lincoln Room.

288. Memorandum for the Record[1]

Washington, May 12, 1970, 12:10 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence
Thomas Karamessines, Central Intelligence Agency
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Lt. General John W. Vogt, Jr., USAF, Director for Operations, Joint Staff
Amb. U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Dennis J. Doolin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (East Asia and Pacific Affairs)
Col. Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

UBJECT

WSAG Principals on Cambodia

Johnson: When do we go ahead with the additional 1,000-man ack?

Karamessines: There is no decision. We were to await recommen-lations from the field. We can ship one or more whenever we are ready.

Kissinger [to Helms]:[2] Do you need any formal approval to in-rease the river interdiction in southern Laos [referring to a memo from Helms]?[3]

Helms: No, we are doing it anyway—just increase level of effort.

Kissinger: Can we get an appraisal of the enemy situation in Cambodia?

Helms: No, we can't get anything solid. The Cambodians are nixed up. We have no hard information. We are working hard now to et good information.

Kissinger: What is the enemy using for supplies?

Vogt: He is capturing it and buying it.

Kissinger: We don't want to see them going into Phnom Penh.

Helms: That concerns me.

Karamessines: It's fair to say right now we haven't observed any eal move toward Phnom Penh.

Vogt: They have mostly moved up to the northeast, and come to he south and southeast. Those in the south are in trouble. Market Time vill make it harder for them.

Helms: I don't think it is probable that the NVA will launch a rontal attack on Phnom Penh.

Kissinger: Most of the population is in the south.

Johnson: Yes.

Karamessines: Sihanouk's plans for coming down were delayed. The situation is not right.

Johnson: Kosygin blesses him but doesn't recognize him.

Kissinger: Can we find out what the Cambodian Army is doing?

Vogt: The Khmers are doing the most. The others are not effective.

Kissinger: We approved more Khmers for introduction in the Par-ot's Beak earlier. Has this been done?

Karamessines: We still haven't worked out DOD financing for the ay of the Khmer.

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[2] All brackets in the source text.

[3] Helms' memorandum as described here has not been found.

Vogt: We will get out a message.

Johnson: The Church amendment will be a problem.[4]

Helms: It will be tough.

Nutter: We are working to see what we need to do to make that what we've already done is legal.

Johnson: State has drafted a memo.[5] We'll have it today to get to the President. Then we have to find the money.

Helms: What about the 1,000-man packs?

Johnson: Should we send more of them now? How many? We don't have specific recommendations from CIA now.

Helms: I think we should send in a few more but not so much that they don't use it or lose it!

Johnson: Should we send two more now?

All agree.

Johnson: I will notify Rives.

Vogt: We will forward them from Okinawa immediately.

Johnson: Did we send maps and air charts?

Nutter: We sent out a cable on the maps.

Vogt: I will check on the air charts.

Johnson: What about munitions for the T–28s?

Vogt: I will check on what is available.

Johnson: The Helsinki AK–47 ammunition.

Doolin: We have put on pressure for air delivery in August.

Kissinger: Market Time?

Vogt: We are not in it until the Vietnamese agree to our rules of engagement.

Johnson: Anything on the T–28s? Presidential determination.

Nutter: We were to explore VNAF support.

Vogt: I am clearing a message with Secretary Laird to ask Abrams.

Kissinger: Yesterday I thought the public relations and legal problems were serious. The public relations problem may be the worst.

Johnson: We need Presidential Determination—that it is important to the security of the US.

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[4] The Cooper–Church amendment under debate in the Senate prohibited the use of funds to retain U.S. forces in Cambodia, pay for U.S. advisers there, or provide air combat support for Cambodian armed forces unless specifically authorized by Congress. The amendment was adopted on June 30, the date announced by the President for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia. (Congressional Quarterly, *Congress and the Nation*, Vol. III, 1969–1972, p. 911)

[5] See footnote 4, Document 281.

Kissinger: Then where do we get T–28s and money?

Nutter: Paying out of MAP is a problem.

Johnson: We have two choices—FMS cash sale—and don't worry bout when we get paid. We could lose the bills.

Nutter: The Congressional reaction is a problem. They are trying o home in on what we have already given.

Kissinger: How can we get a judgment on whether it makes mil-tary sense to give them at all?

Vogt: I will get an assessment.

Kissinger: We want to make a decision on this tomorrow.

Johnson: We should decide whether we want to do it, then figure ut how to do it.

Kissinger: The 701 operation has been approved by the President. Iow about Phase II—Takeo?

Johnson: I am briefing the Secretary of State today on Takeo.

Vogt: A memo to Secretary Laird has gone up.

Kissinger: We will discuss it tomorrow.

Johnson: We have a draft on GVN extended operations. We have his dilemma. We don't want the ARVN too deeply involved and get s involved, but liaison between Cambodia and the ARVN is going vell. They can do a lot on their own without us which would be help-ul. The problem is coordination, consultation and maybe support.

Kissinger: We don't want them involved in a situation we have to ail them out of or let them suffer a defeat, but they have the threat.

Helms: Can we convey the idea to Bunker verbally?

All agree it should be in writing.

Johnson: I will try a redraft. I don't want to discourage too much.

Vogt: We want to be kept fully informed by the GVN.

Johnson: I will redraft it.

Nutter: We will make suggestions.

Kissinger: Have we found out whether MACTHAI support the hmer?

Karamessines: We expect the information soon.

Kissinger: We will meet again tomorrow.[6]

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[6] In a separate summary of conclusions, May 12, the following decisions were oted: "1. We should send in two more 1,000-man packs. 2. A redraft on GVN extended perations should be done. We had a dilemma. We did not want the ARVN involved in he situation where we would have to bail them out or let them suffer a defeat, but they ad [to remain] the [a] threat. The problem was coordination, consultation and maybe upport." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional iles (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 5/12/70)

289. Memorandum by Director of Central Intelligence Helms[1]

Washington, May 12, 1970.

MEMORANDUM FOR

The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

The Honorable U. Alexis Johnson
Under Secretary for Political Affairs

The Honorable David Packard
Deputy Secretary of Defense

General Earle G. Wheeler
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT

Appraisal of the Cambodian Situation

1. Our Station Chief in Saigon submits the following appraisal of the Cambodian situation as of 11 May 1970.

2. In mid-April 1970 the immediate Communist military objectives appeared to be confined to the protection of their base areas and lines of communications in areas immediately adjacent to the Cambodian/Vietnamese border. Since then they have expanded the scope of their operations. They have moved west toward Phnom Penh, cutting lines of communications, occupying strategic towns, and isolating Phnom Penh from major portions of Military Regions One, Two, Five and Six. The Vietnamese Communist/North Vietnamese Army (VC/NVA) have used their main force units selectively to date, and the participation of elements of the 5th Division in attacks on Kratie has been the exception to the general rule that most attacks on Cambodian targets have been by small VC/NVA units. Most large VC/NVA units are dispersed within Cambodia or are otherwise protecting themselves from Allied advances on their base areas. Nevertheless, so far the VC/NVA, no matter how they are used tactically, have been more than a match for the Cambodian National Army (FANK). The Communists are probably motivated to expand their activities westward into Cambodia by a definite decision that the Lon Nol Government is to be replaced with a more cooperative institution which will permit the Communists to freely use Cambodia as a base area. The speed of the Communist movement may be a direct result of the ease with which they are overcoming FANK resistance and, in the past week, of the pressure they may

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 508, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. V, 8 May 1970–22 May 1970. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

eel from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and the Amer-can advances, which are much deeper and more intense than they ould have expected. However, despite the apparent enemy capability o mount a military assault on Phnom Penh, there are no indications hat the enemy is now moving units needed for such an attack or oth-rwise preparing an imminent knockout blow against Lon Nol. Instead, is intention seems to be to maintain military, economic, psychologi-al and political pressure on the Lon Nol Government while building is own Cambodian power base with which to cloak his eventual at-empt to take over the country. The cloak may be Sihanouk's govern-nent in exile, the National United Front of Kampuchea (FUNK), with r without Sihanouk himself. This tactic will spare the Communists oth the expenditure of military effort needed to overthrow Lon Nol nd the international opprobrium which open Vietnamese Communist VC) aggression against the neutral capital presumably would bring. Of course, if the Lon Nol Government falls prematurely under its own veight or as a result of Communist pressure, the enemy would un-loubtedly move to exploit the situation.

3. At the same time the Communist control of surface access routes n Cambodia's Northern Military Region I has isolated Northeastern Cambodia. Communist control of this area, coupled with the recent ac-ions in Southern Laos, particularly the fall of Attopeu, appears to in-rease the potential Communist logistical access to South Vietnam's II nd III Corps from the Laotian Panhandle. It appears Hanoi wants to se the Sekong River during the 1970 rainy season for water transport f material from Southern Laos to Eastern Cambodia. Heavy use of this iver route could decrease the total impact of Allied interdiction capa-ilities in both Southern Laos and Eastern Cambodia and might in part ffset Hanoi's loss of access to Sihanoukville (Kompong Som).

4. The VC/NVA might be stimulated to move against Phnom Penh nore precipitously than the tactics described in paragraph two seem to all for if Allied operations into his base areas seriously threaten his bility to exist as a military force in Cambodia or drive him to seek sup-lies in Phnom Penh or beyond. However, while it is too early to at-empt to judge the final effect of Allied incursions into the base areas, he enemy probably is not yet driven to desperation moves. Allied op-rations are disrupting his total support structure, but his fighting units emain essentially intact, and the type of operations he is carrying on n Cambodia do not require elaborate logistic support. So far the fol-owing appears to be the net results of Allied actions in Cambodia:

a. For the time being the Communist sanctuaries have been ushed farther from their Vietnam target areas.

b. Communist logistical activities have been disrupted both ma-erially and administratively.

c. Nevertheless, the Communist command and control structure

over its fighting forces inside South Vietnam has not been significantly disrupted.

d. Communist capability to mount a major offensive in South Vietnam at the end of the 1970 rainy season has been appreciably reduced.

e. The Communists now can regard no area in Cambodia as their sanctuary and must devote more of their available resources to providing security for their base areas.

f. Only the 271st and 141st Regiments and three main force battalions have resisted Allied advances sufficiently to suffer serious casualties which have had an impact of reducing their unit integrity and ability to function as an effective combat force.

5. In the present situation the VC/NVA have several options; one of which would be to attempt a diversionary action within South Vietnam to ease the pressure on its base areas. However, significant potential for this exists only in Northern I Corps where he can, with little notice, launch division-size attacks across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) or from the western base areas across the lowlands against the population centers. The enemy is not now in an apparent posture to do this. Elsewhere he has little capability for any activity which would require a significant response by Free World military forces. The VC/NVA are capable of brief spurts of activity, characterized by widespread artillery attacks and limited sapper and ground probes. The enemy already has alerted his local forces in South Vietnam to attack exposed hamlets left unprotected by the dispatch of Allied forces into Cambodia. In addition, the VC/NVA have a limited capacity for publicity-grabbing terrorist and rocket attacks on Saigon and other major population centers. There are numerous reports that such attacks are already planned in connection with the current spring-summer campaign.

6. The effectiveness of Communist tactics in Cambodia, and to a large extent of Allied attacks on their base areas, will depend in part on the viability of the Lon Nol Government. Despite a boost in morale which was obtained from Allied support and attacks on Communist base areas, there is no doubt that the Lon Nol Government has grown weaker in the past two weeks and popular support has slowly eroded in the face of economic problems, governmental inefficiency, growing resistance to the draft and continued insecurity in large portions of the country. The Lon Nol Government continues to be dependent on foreign aid for economic and military wherewithal to exist. Its desperate needs from outside sources include money, communications equipment, and perhaps most importantly, ammunition. On the other hand there are no signs yet of dissension within the government and the army, while inept, still apparently is loyal to Lon Nol and remains the power base on which the government rests. As long as Lon Nol continues to retain this loyalty, and FANK does not disintegrate, it is unlikely the Communist could restore Sihanouk or any other government without continuing military effort.

7. On the diplomatic front, the Lon Nol Government is fast losing ny mantle of neutrality it may once have worn. It has done much of his itself through the avidity with which it has sought and welcomed Western aid. The Communists have helped to push the Cambodians nto a non-neutral stance. The formation of FUNK and the subsequent upture of relations between Cambodia and Communist China, the Demcratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and North Korea will pose probems for the Soviet Union, France and other governments which heretoore have finessed the recognition problem. The effect could be further nternational isolation of the Lon Nol Government. Furthermore, the ormation of FUNK and its consequences eliminate Communist China s a potential middleman in negotiations between the Cambodians and he VC and, for all practical purposes, appears to rule out the possiility of any negotiated settlement involving the Lon Nol Government nd DRV or the Provisional Revolutionary Government. The FUNK nd the Indochinese People's Front also provide a cloak of legitimacy which the enemy can spread over the presence of Communist Vietamese forces in Cambodia.

8. As a consequence, the upcoming Indonesian-sponsored conerence on Indochina assumes a major importance for Lon Nol. A successful conference which supports the position of his government could provide a needed international boost. A conference made up primarily f strongly declared anti-Communist nations, or the failure of the conerence to express significant support for the Lon Nol Government would severely affect the morale in FANK and in the civilian populaion, reduce the chances of the government getting much-needed inernational economic assistance and thereby decrease the government's hances of success.

9. The prospects of the Lon Nol Government surviving are really o better now than they were two weeks ago. In fact, Lon Nol's probems are becoming more complex with the passage of each day, for he as not gotten the badly needed economic and military equipment or he political support which he has asked of his Asian neighbors. This as weakened Lon Nol's confidence and the spread of war has started n erosion of his popular support. Prospects for Lon Nol's future are leak, particularly if the VC/NVA continue to keep the current level f military pressure on his government.

10. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] commenting on the bove information believes that the viability of the Lon Nol Governnent depends on what the Communists choose to do to it. He does ot believe that the government is weaker now than it was two weeks go, but remains the same. There does not appear to be any resistance o the draft and the vast majority of the populace in Phnom Penh are upporting the Lon Nol Government in its efforts to solve the problem f Communist military activity. Those who may not support it appear

o be standing down and giving it a chance to solve the deteriorating military situation. However, if Phnom Penh should come under attack, he believes the government would then be in serious trouble. The populace and possibly some high-ranking army officers then would become less charitable toward Lon Nol.

Dick

290. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

Washington, May 12, 1970, 12:10 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence
Thomas Karamessines, Central Intelligence Agency
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
General John A. Vogt, USAF
Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Dennis J. Doolin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (East Asia and Pacific Affairs)
Colonel Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

SUBJECT

Meeting of WSAG Principals on Cambodia

Johnson: I was asked by House members this morning whether a select committee to visit Saigon and Cambodia would be okay. They have in mind a group of 10–12 members.

[All agree this is a good idea.][2]

Kissinger: Are U.S. forces participating?

Moorer: No, but we have advisors on the South Vietnamese boats.

Johnson: What about the rules of engagement?

Packard: The GVN has agreed to our rules.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] All brackets in the source text.

Johnson: To 103/49 or just to 104?

Moorer: Only to 104.

Johnson: Is MACV changing its announcement?

Moorer: I will check on this.

Johnson: Has the execute message gone?

Moorer: It is in the Secretary of Defense's office.

Johnson: I discussed this on the Hill this morning. There were nany questions.

Packard: The plan says there should be *no* U.S. ships in Cambo-lian waters. U.S. ships will be only in international waters. South Viet-namese ships only will be in Cambodian waters, but they will have J.S. advisors.

Johnson: We have to stop Ky's statements on a blockade.

Kissinger: We have to assume that decisions agreed at the WSAG nust be carried out. If anyone objects, I will take it to the President.

What about the Takeo plan? Do we have a proposal with a ecommendation?

Nutter: It's with the Secretary of Defense now.

Moorer: It was sent to the Secretary on the 12th.

Kissinger [to Packard]: Can you get this over today?

Packard: The Secretary of Defense wants to know the Secretary of tate's view.

Johnson: The Secretary [of State] has been briefed. He says okay ut it must relate to the sanctuaries in Public Relations. It is *not* to sup-ort Cambodian forces.

Kissinger: Dave [Packard] and Alex [Johnson], you should pro-luce a carefully worded PR statement. We will get a formal proposal?

Packard and Johnson: Yes.

Kissinger: When will we have the guidance cable on ARVN?

Johnson: We haven't finished it.

Helms: We told Bunker he should get his views in.

Johnson: I answered on the Hill today that cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia and between Cambodia and South Vietnam s growing and helpful. No one on the Hill thought this was a bad idea. Did the President say to the Armed Services Committees that South Vietnamese forces would be coming out?

Kissinger: I did not hear him say this. He wants more flexibility or the South Vietnamese than for us in Cambodia; certainly he is in avor of shallow penetrations by the South Vietnamese and to keep the outh Vietnamese poised as a deterrent to an attack on Phnom Penh.

Green: Are the Market Times actions in Cambodia or in interna-ional waters?

Moorer: Only surveillance is in international waters.

Green: We won't stop to board third-country shipping?

Moorer: No, we will not.

Johnson: I want a copy of the rules of engagement.

Moorer: I will provide it.

Kissinger: The Khmer in Thailand.

[There was a long discussion of Khmer characteristics.]

Karamessines: There is a new development. The Cambodians and Thai have met. There is full approval of the plan, but it must be a joint Thai, Cambodian and U.S. operation. There should be two regiments, but not known as Khmer Serei. One regiment would be pure Cambodian, from Cambodia. One regiment would be purely Thai—some Khmer but not all. Training would be in Thailand. The operation would be covert. The Thai regiment is to be paid by the U.S. as in Laos. The Cambodian regiment is to be paid by the U.S. while training but by the Cambodian Army after their training.

Kissinger: The difference is on the Thai regiment. They want us to pay in Cambodia.

Johnson: This is out of the question.

Kissinger: I agree.

Packard: The training and equipment are service funded.

Kissinger: Is there no way to pay in Cambodia?

Karamessines: Have worked out with DOD payment for the Khmer Krom.

Packard: Can the Khmer Krom proposal be kept covert?

Helms: Yes.

Packard: Can we have the Thai units paid in the same way through the Cambodians?

Karamessines: The Thai won't agree.

Packard: This is the only way.

Green: Why can't the Thai pay themselves once?

Helms: Why don't we go back to the Thai and get them to finance some?

Johnson: I agree we should.

Kissinger: We should say we go along with the first regiment if they do the second. We will give them the equipment.

Johnson: What arguments do we use as to why it is not the same as Laos? Will they ask us to pay directly to them and then they pass it on? Don't use the U.S. political problem argument. Don't we have to keep this consistent with the pay of the Khmer Krom in Cambodia? I fully support the idea of equipment and training but they should pay their regiment.

Helms: We can handle the pay of the second regiment the same as or the Khmer Krom.

[All agree that we will go back to the Thai and tell them to pay or their own regiments. We will pay for the training.]

Karamessines: Two 1,000-man packs will move to Saigon today. They will deliver one to Phnom Penh on the 15th and one on the 16th.

Kissinger: How about the T–28 munitions?

Moorer: We can provide that from our stocks.

Johnson: Will they still use GVN aircraft?

Nutter: That will cost $2.3 million.

Johnson: We don't have to deliver it all at once.

Moorer: Send it as they need it.

Johnson: Lon Nol is asking for refuge for his family.

Vogt: There is a report that he is concerned about assassination groups.

Johnson: We will deliver the arms as needed.

Moorer: The problem of the T–28s is maintenance. The best way o solve it is contract maintenance rather than more planes.

Johnson: Can we get Thai maintenance help to Phnom Penh?

Nutter: Or take the planes to Thailand?

Kissinger: Thai maintenance people could help quickly.

Johnson: We should go out with messages to get the Thai involved.

Moorer: We will draft it and send it over to State.

[All agree this is the best move now.]

Kissinger: How about giving or selling them more aircraft?

Moorer: It is better not to do it now.

[All agree we should concentrate now on maintenance and not ive more planes now.]

Vogt: There is nothing yet on VNAF support.

Kissinger: What about the uniforms?

Nutter: They are all set to go but the legal problem should be esolved.

Kissinger: Let's do it now.

Thai air support for Laos. I see no pressure now.

[All agree. Green has a telegram draft, working with DOD.]

Johnson: On the legal issue, we need someone from here to work vith State legal people today.

Packard: Shouldn't we move on the excess stocks now?

Johnson: Yes, the excess program will be finished by the Fulbright mendments.

Nutter: We will do everything we can to cover what has been done out of excess.

Moorer: The strike on Cambodia and the Laos border goes tonight.

Johnson: We will tell Lon Nol at the same time we tell him about the 701 operation tonight.[3]

[3] In a separate summary of conclusions the following decisions were noted: "1. House members' suggestion that a select committee of 10–12 members visit Saigon and Cambodia would be a good idea. 2. The President's views were summarized. He wanted more flexibility for South Vietnamese than for us in Cambodia. He was in favor of shallow penetrations by the South Vietnamese poised as a deterrent to an attack on Phnom Penh. 3. We would tell the Thai to pay for their own regiments. We would pay for the training. 4. We should concentrate on maintenance of the T28s in Phnom Penh rather than send more planes. We should draft a message requesting Thai maintenance help." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 5/13/70)

291. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 13, 1970.

SUBJECT

Your Meeting with Secretary Laird, Admiral Moorer and Dr. Kissinger at 9:00 AM, May 14, 1970[2]

Purpose:

You have requested a meeting with Secretary Laird and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, for the purpose of expressing your appreciation to the Secretary of Defense for his responsive performance over recent days and to provide him with the benefit of your views on conduct of future U.S./ARVN military operations in Southeast Asia.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 507, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. V, 8 May 1970–22 May 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for briefing.

[2] The President and Haldeman met with Laird and Wheeler from 9:06 to 10:01 a.m. on May 14. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) According to Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries*, p. 166, Kissinger also attended this meeting. No other record of the meeting has been found.

Situation:

Since your decision to authorize ARVN and U.S. operations into Cambodian sanctuaries, we have conducted 8 operations against 11 enemy base areas.

It is probable that upon the completion of the operations in Cambodia the enemy's capabilities to conduct operations against US/ARVN forces in the III and IV Corps areas in South Vietnam will be considerably reduced.

To insure this, we should not over-pressure General Abrams to withdraw his forces from Cambodia prematurely but permit him to regulate his own schedule and insure the maximum destruction or disposition of captured material between now and July 1.

Talking Points:

—Compliment Secretary Laird for the outstanding manner in which his Department and the military have conducted the myriad of complex and difficult tasks associated with your Cambodian decision. Specifically:

(1) Mention the prompt and efficient implementation of your decisions for operations in Cambodia.
(2) Cite the high degree of security and discipline reflected throughout the defense structure thus far.
(3) Compliment Secretary Laird for the military success achieved thus far.

—Emphasize that we have already largely paid the price domestically and abroad for the decision to attack the sanctuaries and for the strikes against North Vietnam. Therefore:

(1) We must continue moving boldly to inflict maximum damage on the enemy between now and 1 July but with minimum U.S. casualties.
(2) We must continually bear in mind that the wisdom of the decision to strike in Cambodia will be judged not in terms of the immediate problems it has generated in the U.S. but rather in terms of the overall long term success it achieves.

—In the days ahead, it is essential that detailed planning be undertaken in the following areas:

(1) A plan for the timely and successful withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodian territory. The plan should also include recommendations for future ARVN operations in Cambodia. Within the limitations of weather, it should guarantee maximum damage to enemy supplies and facilities in Cambodia during the period between now and July 1.
(2) A detailed plan for the effective disposition or destruction of the vast supplies discovered during these operations.
(3) A detailed campaign plan for operations in South Vietnam to

commence immediately following the withdrawal of our forces from Cambodia.

—The plan should consider the most effective military steps required to maintain pressure on the enemy and to exploit the success achieved by the Cambodian operations.

—It should consider the respective roles of U.S. and ARVN forces.

—It should be prepared in the light of various possible outcomes of the situation within Cambodia.

(4) In order to inflict heavy damage on the weakened enemy force structure in South Vietnam, especially in III and IV Corps, U.S. troop withdrawal rates between now and next fall should be held down to the absolute minimum. Also, General Abrams will have to be in a posture in the weeks ahead to respond to strong enemy retaliatory attacks, especially in I or II Corps. Therefore, you would like to have the recommendations of General Abrams, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary Laird on the specific schedule for the withdrawal of 60,000 troops from Vietnam between now and the end of calendar year 1970.

—To maintain maximum pressure on the enemy during the remaining period of operations in Cambodia and during the period immediately following their conclusion, Secretary Laird should be prepared to conduct a higher level of air sorties against North Vietnamese supply routes in Laos and Cambodia. (This will require continuation of higher sortie rates than were programmed before the Cambodian situation developed.)

—Because the enemy may at any time escalate to an unacceptable level in South Vietnam, we must be prepared to conduct, on short notice, an intensified air offensive against North Vietnam and air assets must be retained in theater to insure this capability is retained for the immediate future.

Secretary Laird may also raise the proposed plan for the second phase of the operation against enemy base area 704 (Tab A)[3] which is scheduled to commence on Saturday. The objectives are to destroy the western portion of the Base Area 704, seize key road junctions in the area, destroy another enemy base area in the vicinity of Nui O Mountain (which is southeast of base area 704), and relieve pressure on the Cambodian cities of Kampot and Takeo. Briefly, the plan provides for:

—A coordinated air mobile, armored and infantry assault across the Cambodian border from its southern-most point to the Mekong River.

[3] Attached but not printed at Tab A was a May 13 memorandum from Laird to the President enclosing CM–5317–70, the outline plan for the phase II attack on base area 704.

—Conduct of the operation by the ARVN (with U.S. support) and South Vietnamese Regional Force units.

—Blocking with South Vietnamese naval units enemy escape from the Coast by sea.

Secretary Laird has raised two questions about the plan and has recommended that reassurance on these points be obtained from General Abrams prior to final approval:

—How many regional force troops will be involved in Cambodia?

—What will be the effect on pacification and IV Corps security of the proposed operations?

You should instruct Secretary Laird to proceed on schedule barring any additional unforeseen risks.

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292. Memorandum for the Record[1]

Washington, May 14, 1970, 10:23 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Lt. Gen. Robert E. Cushman, Jr., USMC, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
Thomas Karamessines, Central Intelligence Agency
David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Warren Nutter, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Acting Chairman, JCS
Lt. General John W. Vogt, Jr., USAF, Director for Operations, Joint Staff
Amb. U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Dennis J. Doolin, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (East Asia and Pacific Affairs)
Col. Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff

SUBJECT

Meeting of WSAG Principals on Cambodia

Kissinger: We need press guidance on the new operation.

Packard: It is just another base area operation.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

Kissinger: Leave out any reference to land and sea routes of transport.

All agree.

Packard: Secretary Laird is concerned about the number of ARVN involved. It cuts their ability to maintain control and pacification in IV Corps.

Moorer: Abrams has said this is not a problem.

Kissinger: It was mentioned to the President, who did not see a concern after the message from Abrams.

Market time—where do we stand?

Vogt: It is at 104°. US ships are *not* participating in Cambodian territorial waters, only advisors on Cambodia ships. US forces are outside territorial waters.

Kissinger: Are the public statements in line?

Vogt: We have sent an execute message limiting it to 104°. It was sent last night.

Johnson: There are no more public statements.

Kissinger: If any are called for, they have to be consistent. I agree we don't want to volunteer more.

Johnson: Let's find out what MACV has said.

Packard: I will double check.

Johnson: Then we can see what clarification might be needed.

Kissinger: Did we try to tone down Ky?

Johnson: We will work it into the guidance telegram.

Kissinger: The Takeo operation. Can we consider it approved? [Packard agrees.][2] The President said we shouldn't be as restrictive on the ARVN as on ourselves. They should be free to move on the sanctuaries in cross-border shallow operations. After June 30, they should also be in a position to be a deterrent against an NVA attack on Phnom Penh. He also feels they should make a major effort in South Vietnam after July 1.

Packard: We think ARVN should work hard on Vietnamization and in South Vietnam even before 1 July.

Johnson: The Cambodians have a dilemma. They need the South Vietnamese but are suspicious. They probably will be asking for help and will be working to some extent with the Vietnamese.

Green: The South Vietnamese and Thais are contemptuous of the Cambodians.

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[2] Brackets in the source text.

Karamessines: [*1½ lines of source text not declassified*]

Kissinger: The President is concerned that we put the South Vietnamese's maximum effort on cleaning up the guerrillas in South Vietnam.

I thought we approved recruiting the Khmers for the Parrot's Beak area.

Moorer: Abrams wants to get 1800. He would put them under the Cambodians not later than 30 June. We had approved the concept. Now he wants approval of the plan.

[All agree to approve this plan.][3]

Kissinger: Where do we stand on the Khmer in Thailand?

Karamessines: We have put two packs in already—two days early. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] The Thai accept the decision and the proposal for financing—that they pay for the second regiment in Cambodia. [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] Unger will discuss it with the Prime Minister. There is a cable coming in.

Green: How long for training?

Karamessines: [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*], two and one-half months for the Cambodians.

Kissinger: T–28 ammunition?

Moorer: We have two means to provide it—by US stocks in Thailand or in South Vietnam. We can ship them on the river or by air. We are still working on this.

Vogt: We have an interim response only so far on Thai maintenance. Maybe we can make it a Thai project. We are working to this end.

Karamessines: We should wait to see what Unger reports from his meeting with the Thai Prime Minister.

Kissinger: Where are we on uniforms?

Moorer: They are on the way.

Kissinger: On the Presidential Determination?

Johnson: We will have it ready today.

Kissinger: What about the timing of the submission?

Johnson: We should get the Determination as soon as possible but report later. There is a concern over the money.

Nutter: We may have enough in MAP to carry us through 30 June.

Johnson: We have to be sure we have money available to cover the amount of the Determination.

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[3] Brackets in the source text.

Packard: We should assess the need and see how best to handle it.

Kissinger: On prisoners?

Green: We sent a draft to DOD. We will look into it.

Kissinger: What is the policy going to be?

Johnson: It involves both prisoners and refugees.

Kissinger: I don't think we should keep Cambodian POW's.

[All agree.][4]

Johnson: I will check into this.

Kissinger: The President wants to use the rice to feed the refugees.

Vogt: They are doing this.

Green: How many refugees are there?

Vogt: Several thousand.[5]

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[4] Brackets in the source text.

[5] In a separate summary of conclusions the following decisions were noted: "1. Press guidance on the new operation should omit reference to land and sea transport routes. 2. The Takeo operation was approved. 3. The President's views were summarized. We should not be as restrictive on the ARVN as ourselves. They should be free to move on sanctuaries in cross border shallow operations. After June 30, they should also be in a position to be a deterrent against an NVA attack on Phnom Penh. They should make a major effort in South Vietnam after July 1. The South Vietnamese's maximum effort should be cleaning up guerrillas in South Vietnam. 4. A plan to recruit 1800 Khmers in the Parrot's Beak was approved. 5. We should not keep Cambodian POW's." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 5/14/70)

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293. Telegram From the Embassy in Cambodia to the Department of State[1]

Phnom Penh, May 15, 1970, 1100Z.

925. 1. At his request, I spent an hour May 15 with General Lon Nol at his residence. For first time, we were completely alone.

2. Lon Nol began conversation by asking me what I thought of present situation. In reply, I said that I assumed that GOC was encountering some economic difficulties, that I had found its diplomatic

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER. Top Secret; Nodis; Khmer; Priority.

actions most able, but that the main problem appeared be immediate military threat.

3. PriMin immediately jumped on last point and in large part repeated what he has said previously regarding desires of GOC to be able to equip sizable force for regaining control of Cambodian territory and defense of Cambodia in future.

4. He dwelt at some length on reorganization of FARK presently taking place under which brigades and divisions being formed. He stressed that these formations required more than light weapons presently being supplied by GVN and USG and asked again for artillery, tanks and aircraft. He insisted that, aside from needs of military, such weapons, especially the aircraft, would do much for the "morale" of the population in NVNA/VC occupied territory when it would see its own aircraft attacking the enemy.

5. In reply, I told Lon Nol that I intended to speak more frankly than I ever had before in order to dispell any doubts about USG policies and how far I felt that USG could go in assisting Cambodia. I informed him that President's decision regarding intrusion into Cambodia as a temporary and limited exercise was firm and that he should not expect further US troop involvement in Cambodian affairs. I told him that the President's declaration in his speech of April 30 regarding limited aid to Cambodia was also a serious one and not done merely for political reasons. While not wishing to discourage him, I wished to make quite clear that he should not expect tanks, heavy artillery, aircraft from US sources. I did reassure him that President Nixon's promise to help was sincere and that USG would provide assistance. Meanwhile, it was also to be hoped that other friendly powers would step in and help Cambodia, expecially once the Djakarta Conference was over.

6. Not unexpectedly, Lon Nol's reaction was a little startled and had a somewhat annoyed tone. He indicated that now that Cambodia had chosen its position vis-à-vis communism, he felt it had right to expect more than token assistance from the US. If such assistance not forthcoming, he did not see the use in continuing the struggle which involved Cambodian lives and property and would make very clear to the Cambodian people and others why Cambodia were forced to give in, if it does so.

7. PriMin continued by saying that GOC needed help and advice in planning what it should do regarding the formation and equipment of its troops. If the US were not to provide all appropriate equipment for new forces then perhaps it could advise Cambodia where to turn to obtain immediate equipment, either as a gift or through purchase. For instance, if so advised, Cambodia would turn to Indonesia or some other country in order to purchase helicopters and other aircraft.

(*Comment:* I did not ask where funds for purchases were to come from but suspect he foresaw some sort of indirect US assistance.)

8. I again reiterated to Lon Nol the intent of the USG to help but that he should not expect too much or that he would be disappointed. My suggestion that Cambodia would probably be receiving some of equipment captured during present operations, he brushed aside as a temporary measure since he could not in future count on an assured source of resupply. I also mentioned possibility of replacing some of his Cambodian grounded aircraft on loan basis while others being put into condition but was again repulsed by statement to effect that T–28s and A–1s were "too small" and that Cambodia wished to possess more important type of aircraft.

9. In the course of our discussion, I made particular point to re-emphasize to the PriMin that negotiation for a peaceful settlement in Vietnam and throughout area continues to be the President's primary hope and that it not our intent or desire to see war prolonged longer than necessary.

10. At the conclusion of our talk, I assured PriMin that I would pass on his feelings to my government and looked forward to further discussion.

11. *Comment:* From foregoing it is obvious that we are in for a less warm period in our relations with the Lon Nol government unless we can persuade other nations to play a role in the supply of equipment for the Cambodian armed forces. Nevertheless, I believe that our frankest discussion thus far did some good in bringing Lon Nol closer to earth as regards his expectations re US assistance and grandiose plans for Cambodian armed forces. One thing which I believe may be of assistance will be forthcoming visits of MACV officers who will be able discuss Cambodian military organization and perhaps offer some suggestions. In this, however, we shall have to be careful that USG does not become overly involved.[2]

Rives

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[2] Rives made this point in more detail in telegram 909 from Phnom Penh, May 14, stating that "I have the increasing feeling that US/ARVN effort in Cambodia risks getting out of hand despite its very real success to date. At times I feel Saigon and COMUSMACV losing control, though this is probably due my lack of full details plans and operations." Rives wondered what would happen to Cambodia after the ARVN and U.S. left, noting that the sanctuaries would undoubtedly revert to NVM/VC control because of Cambodia's inability to reassert authority. Rives also feared that Cambodia was becoming dependent on U.S. support and the United States was entering into a commitment without much prior thought. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 589, Cambodian Operations, Chronology, Vol. II, Nodis/Khmer, through 25 May 1970)

294. Memorandum From the Senior Military Assistant (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, undated.

Attached is Phnom Penh 925 which summarizes a conversation between Rives and Lon Nol on May 15.[2] While it is easy to understand the dilemma in which Rives has found himself, I am nevertheless concerned that he has conveyed U.S. policy to Lon Nol in stark black and white terms which cannot but have the effect of discouraging the Cambodian regime excessively. It is inconceivable to me that Rives did not draw Lon Nol's attention to the massive effort being made by U.S. and ARVN forces in the sanctuary areas and the impact this has had on enemy forces. There are, of course, other hints that could have been made with respect to future ARVN operations and possible US VNAF air action.

In fairness to Rives, however, it should be understood that he has a very poor feel for the President's real thinking on the subject and cannot therefore be expected to be much more encouraging when dealing with Lon Nol. All of this underlines the necessity to develop an updated policy position with respect to the future of Cambodia within the broad parameters already enunciated. It also underlines the need to have an individual on the ground in Phnom Penh who is fully abreast of the President's thinking and who would hopefully manifest a higher level of diplomatic skill than has Rives thus far. You have with you a CIA paper which deals at length with future policies and operations in Cambodia and Southeast Asia.[3] It is not a polished document but does outline a number of possible options. Dick Kennedy and I have reviewed the document and Dick is preparing a careful analysis of it.

In the meantime it is becoming increasingly evident that we are rapidly approaching a point where a finite Cambodian policy must be hammered out. This process is likely to be a painful one given all that has gone before. Despite this, however, we cannot expect the departments

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 589, Cambodian Operations, Chronology, Vol. II, Nodis/Khmer, through 25 May 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only. May 15 is handwritten on the memorandum.

[2] Document 293.

[3] This 12-page memorandum from Karamessines to Kissinger, May 14, provides "recommendations for a coordinated diplomatic, political, propaganda and military scenario to promote major American objectives in Indochina." Kissinger read it and made notes on it. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 530, Country Files, Far East, Indochina, Vol. I, 1970–71)

and our representatives in the field to perform adequately without the benefit of definitive guidelines from here. In this regard Alex Johnson is sending to us this afternoon a policy message on ARVN operations in Cambodia which we will forward to you with our comments as soon as it is received. This is unquestionably the key policy issue in the entire Cambodian package and should be most carefully considered by you and the President before it is dispatched.

I have spoken to Alex Johnson per your instructions and will also move through CIA channels.

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295. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Your Appointment with Ambassador Bunker

Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker will call on you at noon on May 19, just before returning to Saigon. He has been in the United States to receive the Sylvanus Thayer Award at West Point and has conferred with State and Defense and saw you on May 9.[2]

Ambassador Bunker will probably want to discuss the following topics:

Political Developments in South Vietnam

Background: The political atmosphere in Saigon has been heating up for some months, with indications of potentially increasing tension. The following particular problems have arisen:

—President Thieu has been accused of becoming more isolated from prevailing political currents and more dependent on a small group

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 146, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, May 1, 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. Bunker met with the President and Kissinger from 12:20 to 12:56 p.m. on May 19. (Ibid., White House Central Files, Daily Diary) No memorandum of conversation of their meeting has been found.

[2] The President's Diary has no record of Nixon meeting Bunker May 9–12. (Ibid.) A similar uninitialed May 8 memorandum from Kissinger to the President indicates that Nixon was scheduled to meet with Bunker on May 11 or 12 "depending on your precise schedule." (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 146, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, May 1, 1970)

of controversial advisers. He has taken a number of steps which have led to charges of dictatorship, such as the imprisonment of opposition deputy Tran Ngoc Chau, the use of the law on political parties to stifle the formation of new political groupings, as well as inconsistent and undemocratic handling of student and religious opposition elements.

—The growing economic problem has contributed to the sense of political uncertainty and has led to a restive mood among the civil servants and in the army. There are some signs that President Thieu considers us partly responsible for some of these problems because we have not responded as quickly as he hoped to his appeals for help. This may lead to political tensions between ourselves and Saigon.

—The elections for the Senate which will be held in August or September may lead to charges that the GVN is attempting to suppress the opposition and rig elections.

I suggest you:

—Ask the Ambassador for his views on the political situation, on Thieu's prospects for weathering the storm, and on the GVN prospects in the Senate elections.

—Discuss with the Ambassador the interaction between GVN political methods and U.S. domestic criticism of the regime.

The South Vietnamese Economy

Background: Growing economic problems constitute a severe challenge to the GVN. There are two specific problems:

—The economy, which has been booming for many years under highly artificial conditions created by the large American presence, is now running at an unacceptable inflationary rate of about 30 percent or more a year.

—At the same time, paradoxically, the beginning of U.S. withdrawals has led to recessionary influences, which will become much more severe as more of our forces withdraw and many of the artificial financial devices by which their presence has boosted the economy diminish. The immediate problem is to keep inflation in bounds and then to stabilize the recession which could well develop during the remainder of the Vietnamization period.

The GVN has asked us for help, and its request is now being staffed through the bureaucracy. But we have been holding back on any commitment of aid to the GVN until it takes some further steps to put its own house in order. The GVN's ability to do this is limited by disputes over the relative powers of the legislature and President Thieu in this field and by memories of the bitter political controversy and economic dislocations produced by President Thieu's unilateral proclamation of austerity taxes last fall (at our suggestion).

I suggest you:

—Ask the Ambassador for his views and recommendations on the economic situation and how he believes we should play our cards to

press Thieu into needed reforms without creating intolerable political risks for the GVN.

—Indicate that we want to be helpful and will try to provide whatever assistance is needed if we can be assured that it will be properly used.

—Ask the Ambassador his views on the desirability of augmenting our Embassy staff at the Deputy level with a highly qualified and well-known economist who can cut through the issues and deal at the highest levels with the Thieu regime.

Cambodia

Background: The GVN has been cementing relations with the Lon Nol regime. The ARVN has performed well against the Communist border sanctuaries. Thieu and Ky have indicated that they don't feel that future operations by the ARVN in Cambodia need be constrained by the same limits we have placed on U.S. actions.

I suggest you:

—Ask the Ambassador what he believes the GVN can and will do for Cambodia and whether he thinks it will be tempted to act independently of our actions.

—Ask the Ambassador's views on the risks that traditional Vietnamese-Khmer rivalry may pose to GVN–GOC cooperation.

Vietnamization and Pacification

Background: At present these appear to be less urgent problems than the political and economic issues. Pacification and Vietnamization are both going relatively well, despite questions about the future pace of Vietnamization, doubts about the solidity of our progress in some areas, and concern about the slackening of the rate of pacification. The land reform bill may help provide further peasant support for the government.

I suggest you:

—Express satisfaction at the passage of the Land Reform bill and ask the Ambassador's views on the program's implementation.

—Ask the Ambassador for his recommendations on whether we should boost pacification forward again at an accelerated pace or should continue consolidation for some time.

—Ask the Ambassador for his recommendations on the pace of U.S. troop withdrawals.

Negotiations

Background: The prospects in Paris remain bleak, although Hanoi's one-week postponement was a relatively mild reaction to our Cambo-

dian operations. Your April 20 remarks[3] about the principles of a political settlement generated some doubts within the GVN below the level of President Thieu.

I suggest that you ask the Ambassador's views on how we can best influence Hanoi to move toward a settlement and for his assessment of the Saigon attitude toward Paris.

Corruption

Background: This subject has come up again because a South Vietnamese Senator has accused several leading generals of corruption.

I suggest that you ask Bunker for a report on this problem and emphasize our desire for progress against corruption.

[3] Reference is to the President's Address to the Nation on "Progress Toward Peace in Vietnam"; see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970,* pp. 373–377.

296. Telegram From the Commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam (Abrams) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Moorer)[1]

Saigon, May 18, 1970, 1631Z.

MAC 6774. Subject: COSVN Headquarters. Reference: CINCPAC msg 170312Z May 70.[2]

1. Reference requested views on problem of precisely locating COSVN, the feasibility of targeting or capturing elements of COSVN, and the results which might be anticipated.

2. Highest priorty ARDF and special emphasis ground collection efforts on all terminals associated with COSVN headquarters have been employed during the planning phase and continually since the initiation of U.S. operations into Cambodia. The problem in precisely locating COSVN is dependent on the length of time he remains in an area before relocation and the time required to obtain ARDF fixes.

[1] National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. V, 8 May 1970–22 May 1970. Top Secret; Eyes Only; Immediate; Spoke.

[2] This CINCPAC message to COMUSMACV, May 17, is summarized in MAC 6774.

Relocation, coupled with the use of multiple transmitters, requires time to redevelop the disposition of COSVN's facilities for targeting. Essentially, the problem is a trade-off between waiting to acquire targeting data versus the probability he will move if we wait.

3. Of the five major elements of COSVN (political headquarters, military intelligence bureau, strategic intelligence bureau, ministry of public security, and headquarters South Vietnam) the three most lucrative targets are the political headquarters, headquarters South Vietnam, and the Strategic Intelligence Bureau. Neutralization of the political headquarters, including the capture of documents and medium-level personnel, probably would provide invaluable information for targeting the VC infrastructure and disrupting its activities over the next one to two years. Capture of headquarters South Vietnam would result in short-term disruptions of centrally coordinated military activity in the area it controls, with substantial recovery expected within thirty days. The capture of personnel and documents of the strategic intelligence bureau, which controls strategic espionage operations in RVN, could seriously affect espionage and penetration operations at the highest levels.

4. With regard to feasibility of targeting or capturing elements of COSVN, targeting of transmitters of different elements is feasible but constrained as indicated in paragraph 2 above. In addition to problems associated with achieving precise locations of targeting for B–52 strikes, target location may require further modification to avoid known civilian habitation.

A. 35 sorties on 11 May and 11 sorties on 17 May were targeted against suspected terminal locations of COSVN elements. Documents captured in area of 11 May strike indicate that the finance-economy section and the education-training section were among COSVN elements in the area. Hoi Chanh who rallied as result of 11 May strike was mail clerk for COSVN signal element and stated "heavy" casualties were taken in raid in addition to damage of bunker complexes and equipment.

B. As a consequence of U.S. operations, some results have been achieved against COSVN elements. There has been some disruption of communications from COSVN elements after B–52 strikes and various types and amounts of material have been captured during ground follow-up.

C. Best available information, as of 180111Z May, indicates that major COSVN elements are dispersed over approximately 110 square kilometers of jungle. As of this time indications are that transmitters of COSVN political headquarters are on the move. Although any opportunity of capturing COSVN will be exploited, the feasibility of capturing major elements appears remote at this time.

5. All major elements of COSVN are now near or beyond 30 kilometers of RVN border. Should intelligence develop which would give us reasonable assurance of striking effectively at these headquarters I will urgently request authority to take action beyond the 30 kilometer constraint.

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297. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, May 19, 1970, 2 p.m.

SUBJECT

Laos and Cambodia

PARTICIPANTS

Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Marshall Green
Tom Pickering

Defense
G. Warren Nutter
Dennis Doolin

CIA
Richard Helms
Thomas Karamessines

NSC Staff
John H. Holdridge
Colonel Richard Kennedy

JCS
Admiral Moorer

The meeting opened with a discussion of the impending operations against Base Area 740, which Admiral Moorer described as being primarily an ARVN affair. Dr. Kissinger asked if when the plan came over and the President decided what to do, this would complete the base area operations. Admiral Moorer notes that attack in Base Area 609 in the tri-border area had not been considered yet. Dr. Kissinger

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970, 5/19/70. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

said and all agreed that Base Area 609 was not included among those which were to be considered. Admiral Moorer said that then Base Area 704 would complete the program.

Dr. Kissinger turned to the question of the Presidential Directive on military assistance to Cambodia, and asked what its status was. Colonel Kennedy stated that it was with the Bureau of the Budget. He noted that the date of the first arms shipment was April 22, and that the date of the Cambodian request for assistance was April 14. Mr. Nutter thought that this first shipment was difficult to consider as U.S. aid because it involved AK–47s. Dr. Kissinger asked if it was the judgment of the group that the Presidential Decision should be transmitted to State as soon as possible after the President had signed it, so that Congress could be informed promptly. Ambassador Johnson said that there was no advantage in delaying the action, and that the deadline in fact was May 22. After asking again if there was any disagreement, Dr. Kissinger said that he would have Colonel Kennedy check with Bryce Harlow, and that subject to any different view on Harlow's part, the action would be taken as recommended. Admiral Moorer mentioned that Senator Fulbright had made clear during Secretary Laird's testimony that this issue had bothered him. Secretary Laird had indicated that the Presidential Determination would be coming forward.

Dr. Kissinger brought up the draft cable on guidance for ARVN operations in Cambodia.[2] Ambassador Johnson stated that he had received the NSC redraft and had sent suggestions back. He had also received a call from Mr. Packard saying that much more emphasis should be given to the South Vietnam aspects. Accordingly, he had tried to retain the same language as the redraft but had shifted the South Vietnam wording into an earlier part of the draft. What he had presented now represented the NSC draft plus changes. Dr. Kissinger declared that he had had the benefit of extensive Presidential directives, so he was clear in his mind as to what the President intended. We should stop the debate, and do what the President says. He wondered whether what was called for in paragraph 3 could actually be done. How could we stop doing things in Cambodia and still accomplish what the President wanted done? He referred again to the repeated Presidential directives, which the President had reiterated in his conversation earlier this same day with Ambassador Bunker.[3] What the President wanted was (1) more ARVN flexibility in operating in the base areas and in establishing a better posture to re-enter them, (2) use of the ARVN as a

[2] The cable as approved and sent is Document 301.

[3] See Document 295.

deterrent force against North Vietnamese pressures on Cambodia and (3) for ARVN to be in a position after July 1 to deter the NVA from reentering the base areas. The base areas had to be cleaned up, and if the ARVN needed to go back it should be permitted to do so. It should also have the capability of putting pressure on the North Vietnamese. There would be difficulties if the draft said that this should not diminish capability to operate in Vietnam.

Ambassador Johnson asked if the President didn't agree with the concept that the thrust should be to take advantage of the gains made? Dr. Kissinger replied that if this point was put positively, and if it was stated that the major thrust of the next phase should be pacification in South Vietnam, there would be no problems. Nor would there be disagreement on the concerns in Defense over the question of the ARVN running around in Cambodia indefinitely. Nevertheless the three basic objectives remained:

1. Cleaning up the base areas.
2. Deterring North Vietnamese attacks on Phnom Penh.
3. Maintaining pressures along the South Vietnam–Cambodia borders so that the enemy would not come back into the base areas.

Mr. Nutter said that Secretary Laird was concerned over the second point, since we had not been preparing Congress. He would need to go back if Defense's view was wanted.

(At this point, Dr. Kissinger was called from the room. He returned to say that Secretary Laird was issuing the execute order on the Base Area 740 operation. Ambassador Johnson asked if this had the President's approval, and Dr. Kissinger replied affirmatively. Admiral Moorer said that the operation would begin the night of May 20.)

Dr. Kissinger remarked that he did not believe it would be satisfactory to turn the WSAG members into drafters, to which the others agreed. Dr. Kissinger said that two drafts could be produced from which the President could make his choice, or another effort could be made to draw up an agreed draft. Vietnamization should be given high priority, but the present version was too sweeping in this respect. Ambassador Johnson wondered whether, as a fair proposition, rephrasing paragraph 2 in positive terms might provide a solution. Dr. Kissinger observed that there would be problems in paragraph 7 as well—we would want to give the Cambodians a chance to accomplish their own defense. He asked if the underlined parts in the draft were new, and Ambassador Johnson reiterated that the draft was basically the one which had been drawn up by the NSC with additions underlined and deletions lined through. Ambassador Green endorsed the thought that expressing paragraph 2 in positive terms would solve the problem. Admiral Moorer cautioned against quantifying ARVN operations in such a way as to stop its activities. Ambassador Green offered as an

acceptable concept the thought that "the major thrust in South Vietnam remains Vietnamization."

Mr. Nutter again said that he would need to check back. Secretary Laird was very strong on including language to the effect that what the ARVN did in Cambodia should not detract from progress in South Vietnam. Dr. Kissinger said that if Defense wanted such language, he would show it to the President. The matter was not for his, Dr. Kissinger's, decision.

Mr. Helms brought up a point which he felt was related: the area in Southern Laos touching on Northeast Cambodia was pretty much under VC control and was rapidly becoming a no-man's land. The Agency had road watch teams there, but did not really know what was going on. He wanted to draw attention to the fact that Northeastern Cambodia was now hitching up with Southern Laos. He did not know how to address the problem.

Dr. Kissinger suggested a paper setting forth the situation and the possibilities for dealing with it, such as bombing. Mr. Helms agreed.[4] Admiral Moorer mentioned that we had carried out thirty-two bombing missions in Southern Laos along the Se Kong River which had knocked out docks and staging areas. Ambassador Johnson suggested the possibility of bombing Northeastern Cambodia, to which Dr. Kissinger remarked that the President has desired, as a number of people present had heard, to hit targets in Cambodia beyond the 30 kilometer limit. A written directive would be needed, which they would have in the next day or two. Ambassador Johnson thought that Northeastern Cambodia could be dealt with in the same way as Laos. Admiral Moorer pointed out that we would need to identify suitable targets. In reply to a question from Dr. Kissinger on the whereabouts of the 40,000 NVA troops, Admiral Moorer expressed that we have a pretty good plot.

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[4] On May 20, the Chief of the CIA's Far East Division, Directorate of Plans, William Nelson, submitted to Helms a paper on South Laos and northeastern Cambodia in response to this request. Nelson suggested that there were at least three options. The first was to maintain the status quo of using current Lao forces to control the Mekong Valley and using the U.S. Air Force to interdict infiltration. The second was to augment CIA irregular forces on the Bolovens Plateau with a Thai regimental combat team and artillery responsible for defense of the plateau and harassment of the Sekong River, while continuing air interdiction, road-watching, and small scale harassment of North Vietnamese supply lines. The third option would be to add to the second option 5,000 Thai to be formed into 10 Special Guerrilla Units (SGU) responsible for defense of the Bolovens and interdiction of the Sekong River. (Central Intelligence Agency, DDO/ISS/IP Files, Job 75–424, 1 of 4, [*file name not declassified*] Incoming, Memos, Operations & Intelligence, Vol. 1, #2)

Dr. Kissinger stated that the President thought he had authorized air operations of the type discussed, but there evidently was a difference between his position and that of others. We would need to formalize this difference. Ambassador Johnson said that the guidelines we were operating under for air operations were that we did not contemplate using U.S. tactical air inside Cambodia in support of Cambodian forces. Dr. Kissinger stressed that the President wanted rules of engagement taken up for Northeastern Cambodia similar to those in Laos which would permit the defense of our forces while in Cambodia and anti-infiltration activities. The President had the idea, too, that if these operations ease the pressures on Cambodia this would be desirable. Ambassador Johnson pointed out that our forces would be in Cambodia only until July 1. What about aerial operations afterward? Dr. Kissinger declared that it was not in the President's mind to stop them. For the present, though, he had noticed, as in the case of Takeo, that the enemy might withdraw beyond the 21 mile (30 kilometer) limit and just sit.

If this was true, then we should hit. Mr. Helms remarked that COSVN had been acting in the same way. Dr. Kissinger said that he had been telling the bureaucracy daily to hit at enemy concentrations of this nature—what would he have to do to get this done? He asked Mr. Nutter to get back to him or telephone him if Defense had any problems.

Mr. Nutter mentioned that one question under review in Defense was the extent of Steel Tiger. A brief exchange between Ambassador Johnson and Admiral Moorer brought out that what was involved was the possibility of extending Steel Tiger into Cambodia, although it was difficult to identify targets. Admiral Moorer believed that it would be desirable to put people into Cambodia on the ground. These would not be U.S. forces but indigenous forces, as in Laos. Mr. Helms noted that this was an unpopulated area, a no-man's land; Ambassador Johnson suggested the use of Montagnards. Dr. Kissinger thought there would be no problem in using indigenous forces as road watch teams, and asked Mr. Helms to make a recommendation. Mr. Helms agreed to make an "all-purpose" recommendation on this issue.

Mr. Nutter asked if the RVNAF might help out? Admiral Moorer said that it was being used in Cambodia, but only against sanctuaries on the basis of hard intelligence, and south of the Mekong. It was very important to deny this area to the enemy. We were using U.S. air to the north and east of the Mekong. Mr. Helms said that whatever was used should be accurate, and this argued for the USAF as opposed to the RVNAF.

Mr. Nutter and Admiral Moorer discussed the nature of the targets which existed in this region, which Admiral Moorer felt would

more likely be moving targets than fixed troop concentrations. Ambassador Johnson referred to the possibility of making aerial photographs; in fact, we had told Lon Nol we would do so.

Mr. Nutter said that he would have no problem in extending Steel Tiger into Cambodia, and Dr. Kissinger proposed issuing a directive on this now. Ambassador Green argued that this would "raise a ruckus." He felt that we could do better by using Montagnards than we could by launching air operations in the rough area of the Annamite chain, which would be very difficult. If Montagnards could be gotten in to disrupt communications, we would be much more effective, and there would be no ruckus on the Hill. Ambassador Johnson agreed, saying that U.S. tacair operations after July 1 would certainly raise a ruckus. Admiral Moorer remarked that Secretary Laird had said several times in his testimony the previous day that he might recommend tacair operations, and had not been pinned down. Mr. Nutter spoke of the problem of populated areas, to which Dr. Kissinger made it clear that populated areas should not be hit.

Ambassador Green brought up the possibility of using SGUs against the Se Kong River. This area was exposed, they should be able to get in.

Mr. Nutter observed that another problem was the location of the 40,000 NVA troops. Ambassador Green reiterated that in Northeast Cambodia, we would be more effective by moving on the ground rather than in the air. Dr. Kissinger thought we might do both, and Mr. Helms urged that we put in everything that we could. Ambassador Green stressed that the Montagnards traveled back and forth in this region, had resources which people in the lowlands lacked, and would serve us better than highly visible air operations.

Mr. Doolin raised the possibility of establishing choke points, and Dr. Kissinger asked him if there was a proposal to do this. Admiral Moorer cautioned against oversimplifying the problems in establishing choke points. Dr. Kissinger declared that until July 1 there would be no objections to doing so; after July 1, if the President wanted to take the heat of conducting such operations, this would be his problem. Ambassador Green pointed out that there were no villages and the region was very wild; airdrops would be needed for the Montagnards. Once targets were located, aerial operations would be acceptable, but we needed to be very selective.

Dr. Kissinger said that he had no ideas of his own nor information on the maximum effectiveness of air power. However, he did have his instructions, which had to be carried out by all. It was his job to see that this was done. Any valid objections on the part of anyone concerned would be shown to the President. What was involved was the anti-infiltration campaign in Northeastern Cambodia and tactical tar-

gets beyond the 21 mile limit. Tactical targets of course had to be identified, but it was not the job of those present to decide what made a tactical target. Any mix of ground operations, road watch teams, and air operations would be acceptable. In addition to all this, the President would reach out for anything which could help the Cambodians. The President had taken enough heat in the previous three weeks to last him three months, and the only thing which would be a pay-off for him was results.

Dr. Kissinger turned to the question of repairs for the Cambodian T–28s. Was it correct that the Thais were not enthusiastic? General Vogt reported that our military in Thailand were working directly with the Thai Air Force on this question, to include the possibility of Thai teams going into Phnom Penh to look into the situation. Admiral Moorer confirmed that the Thai were not enthusiastic on providing maintenance. General Vogt said that things nevertheless were now being worked out through Air Marshal Dawee, even though the Thai claimed that they didn't have enough capability to take care of their own needs. The big problem would be in moving damaged aircraft. He was expecting a message in from MACV on this subject. Ambassador Johnson commented that we would also have a problem just in keeping the five operable Cambodian T–28s going.

Dr. Kissinger brought up the subject of training Khmer forces in Thailand. Ambassador Johnson digressed by mentioning parenthetically that Ambassador Unger had sent in a cable concerning a Thai desire to use some of the Black Panthers in Cambodia, to which he had reacted negatively.[5] Dr. Kissinger agreed. Dr. Kissinger then said that he had a 3:15 appointment and could not go into this particular issue any further at the present session. He proposed putting off the discussion until the following day. It was agreed that the group would reconvene on May 20 at 4:30 p.m.

[5] Not found.

298. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 19, 1970.

SUBJECT

Clandestine Psychological Campaign on Cambodia

Director Helms has given two progress reports on actions taken so far in the clandestine psychological campaign to muster support for the new Cambodian Government and to thwart efforts by Sihanouk and the Communists to upset the regime or to erode its posture of neutrality.[2]

[*1 heading and 4 paragraphs (17½ lines of source text) not declassified*]

—Success has been greatest in the Far East where the Cambodia issue is live [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]. In other areas the effort focuses on the relevance anywhere in the world of the plight of a small nation subjected to outside Communist force—non-U.S. involvement in the overthrow of Sihanouk is emphasized.

Director Helms is watching closely the responses to Cambodia's calls for help and plans to focus attention on the concept of "Free Asian Aid" for a neighboring victim of Communist aggression. He is providing background information to field regularly to keep up the momentum of this campaign.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Material, NSC Files, Box 588, Cambodian Operations, Clandestine Psychological Campaign on Cambodia. Secret; Sensitive. Kennedy sent this memorandum to Kissinger on May 15 with a recommendation that he initial it and send it to the President. A note on the first page of the memorandum to the President reads: "The President has seen, May 21, 1970."

[2] Apparent reference to Helms' last two progress reports to Kissinger, May 11 and 18. (Both ibid.)

299. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 19, 1970.

SUBJECT

Pressures on Hanoi

There are a number of indications that our Cambodian operations and the recent increase in tension throughout Indochina are generating pressures upon Hanoi and also between Hanoi and its allies. Some of these indications are the following:

—Hanoi's top party leader Le Duan spent three weeks in Moscow but left without any fanfare. This suggests that he and the Soviets did not reach a common understanding as to what to do at this point.

—The Soviet Union has still not recognized the Sihanouk government-in-exile.

—An "Izvestia" correspondent recently told a Japanese Foreign Office official that the situation in Indochina is "fluid," that Hanoi might be obliged to negotiate, and that the DRV is weakened by the long war and lacks "both the people and the material" to conduct "an expanded and protracted war." Soviet officials may have taken this line with Le Duan while he was in Moscow.

—On the other hand, the Chinese have almost overwhelmed Le Duan since he arrived in Peking on his way from Moscow. Mao Tse-tung, Lin Piao, Chou En-lai, and most other top Peking officials have seen him. China is apparently putting a lot of pressure on Hanoi to pursue the war.

—There have been no U.S. reconnaissance planes fired at over North Vietnam since the second of May.[2]

—Although Hanoi spoke very boldly of fighting "shoulder to shoulder" with the Cambodians before your April 30 speech, its rhetoric since that time has been more restrained. It speaks merely of increasing its "solidarity" with the Cambodians. Viet Cong organs and speakers, who are perhaps less concerned about the possible U.S. reaction to direct and overt involvement of their forces in Cambodia, still speak in very militant terms.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 146, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, May 1, 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information.

[2] The President wrote the following comment in the margin next to this sentence: "fly more flights."

—When Hanoi postponed last week's session in Paris, it did so in terms which clearly indicated that it did not want to disrupt the meetings completely. Moreover, the decision to postpone the session was not made until the very last moment although the President's speech and the bombing of North Vietnam took place five days before the meeting.

Hanoi Problems and Evaluation

These developments suggest that there are some real frictions between Hanoi and its allies and that the Hanoi leadership may have to review and evaluate recent developments before deciding what to do next.

Specifically, Cambodian developments have apparently created the following problems for the Hanoi leadership:

—They cannot now be certain what the U.S. will do under any given set of circumstances. They had not expected our move into Cambodia.

—They have lost a huge quantity of stores and valuable base areas. The loss will require considerable time to make up.

—If South Vietnamese and Cambodian forces can drive Communist forces out of the area south of the Mekong and the Parrot's Beak, Communist operations against South Vietnam will be much restricted.

—They are faced with an extension of the war at a time when they were already under pressure.

Hanoi Assets and Prospects

I do not believe we should exaggerate the problems which Hanoi faces all out of proportion. Obviously, the North Vietnamese still retain considerable assets:

—They have the best army and the best political organization in Southeast Asia.

—They probably also feel that recent demonstrations in the U.S. have placed some limits on our freedom of maneuver and that we may therefore not be able to react quite as firmly again.

—Despite conflicting pressures from Moscow and Peking, Hanoi may feel that ultimately both will have to fall into line with at least limited support for North Vietnamese efforts and policies.

—Last but not least, the Cambodian government is still very weak and the GVN is beset with severe political and economic difficulties.

Nonetheless, the developments of the last two weeks have probably complicated the options for Hanoi and compelled it to face some difficult decisions. It remains to be seen, perhaps in a month or two, what the leadership will decide to do.

300. Editorial Note

No minutes have been found for the Washington Special Actions Group meeting of May 20, 1970. The undated briefing memorandum for the meeting from Richard Kennedy and John Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to Presidential Assistant Henry Kissinger provides a sense of the issues to be discussed. Kennedy and Holdridge noted that since the meeting of May 19 (see Document 297) one additional 1,000-man pack had been delivered to Phnom Penh. According to the briefing memorandum the issues to be discussed at the May 20 meeting were support for Khmer forces recruited in Thailand, and policy towards Cambodian combatants and refugees captured by U.S. and South Vietnamese forces. If time permitted, Kissinger was encouraged to raise the matter of maintenance for Cambodian T–28 aircraft.

According to the undated memorandum from Kennedy, the question of support for two Thai Khmer forces remained unresolved after the May 20 meeting with most issues still pending. The same lack of progress apparently occurred for the other two issues as well. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 5/20/70)

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301. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Cambodia[1]

Washington, May 21, 1970, 2051Z.

077899. Joint State Defense Message. REF: (a) State 70781;[2] (b) Phnom Penh 909 (Notal);[3] (c) Saigon 7236 (Notal).[4]

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER. Top Secret; Nodis; Khmer; Priority. Also sent to Saigon, CINCPAC, and MACV and repeated to Bangkok. Drafted by Johnson; cleared by Kissinger, Doolin (OSD/ISA), and Eliot; and approved by Rogers. An attached note from Kennedy to Johnson indicates that this telegram was approved by the President.

[2] Document 285.

[3] See footnote 2, Document 293.

[4] In telegram 7236 from Saigon, May 11, Berger reported on a conversation that Thieu and General Vien had in Tay Ninh that morning. Thieu feared that Lon Nol's government was in danger of falling. He promised to take no action without consulting the United States, but wanted to know what could be done. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

1. This message provides supplementary guidance to that contained ref (a), with specific reference to actions in Cambodia of GVN forces.

2. Operations of ARVN forces must be consistent with the objectives of Vietnamization. In Cambodia, therefore, they should be limited to North Vietnamese occupied territory where enemy military activities threaten Vietnamization. ARVN forces must strengthen their capacity to fight the NVA/VC in South Vietnam. We should accordingly urge GVN to keep eyes on NVA/VC forces in South Vietnam and to focus effort on exploitation of opportunities to seriously damage those forces which destruction of supplies in sanctuaries now affords.

3. We want to encourage South Vietnamese to maintain a flexible posture concerning future operations in Cambodia, which would have principal objectives of (a) deterring enemy from reestablishing his previous posture in sanctuary areas threatening allied forces in South Vietnam and (b) deterring enemy from moving aggressively against Phnom Penh and the port areas of southern Cambodia by creating uncertainty about GVN reaction.

4. We want to make clear that restrictions which apply to U.S. forces after June 30 do not apply to SVN forces. We would favor short duration ARVN operations in sanctuary areas where required to protect ARVN/US forces and promote progress of Vietnamization. Fact that ARVN forces free to conduct such operations will serve as deterrent to enemy efforts to reoccupy and rebuild bases and sanctuaries and, should he attempt to do so, should permit their quick neutralization. We would be prepared to provide logistic and artillery support from the SVN side of the border and air support where necessary for such ARVN operations. We would prefer air support be provided by GVN but would not preclude U.S. air support if essential. We would not provide any other support or use U.S. advisors or other personnel within Cambodia.

5. On the other hand, we wish to discourage wide-ranging ARVN operations designed primarily to support Lon Nol government itself. We would not want to see ARVN forces involved in actions which would either (a) serve as pretext for an enemy attack on Phnom Penh to establish both military and political control over all Cambodia or (b) risk serious ARVN defeat. We want it made absolutely clear to GVN that we do not intend to fulfill ARVN's primary role of strengthening internal security in SVN.

6. At the same time, however, ARVN posture should be one which serves as deterrent to enemy assault on Phnom Penh or military effort designed to topple Lon Nol or to assert control over Cambodia. Accordingly, we prefer that no restrictions on ARVN operations be publicly stated. Actions should speak for themselves. Enemy should

perceive clear threat that, if he does move against Phnom Penh or increase level of his military pressure on Cambodia, ARVN forces will not be restricted in efforts to stop him.

7. We should encourage the GVN and ARVN to think in terms of assisting the Government of Cambodia in restoring its authority as far as possible in certain former sanctuary areas. Close liaison between GVN and GOC officials developed in the course of such efforts will improve Saigon–Phnom Penh relations and facilitate possible use of ARVN forces in these areas should that prove necessary.

8. Traditional Cambodian sensitivities regarding Vietnamese forces on Cambodian soil must be borne in mind. Although the South Vietnamese Government has exercised commendable restraint in its treatment of Cambodians in South Vietnam and in repatriating Vietnamese from Cambodia, there have been examples of excessively high South Vietnamese posture in Cambodia, which, if continued, could give rise to serious frictions. There is accordingly a need for South Vietnamese to maintain restraint and caution.

9. With foregoing guidelines in mind it is essential we be fully consulted by GVN concerning any future operations in Cambodia. GVN also should coordinate closely with GOC.

Rogers

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302. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Special NSC Meeting on Cambodia, 3:00 p.m., Friday, May 22, 1970[2]

The restricted NSC meeting on Cambodia is scheduled for 3:00 p.m. on Friday, May 22. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss:

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 5/22/70. Top Secret. Sent for information. On the copy of this memorandum (ibid., NSC Files, Box 1324, Unfiled Material, 1 of 11) is a stamped note that reads: "The President has seen."

[2] The meeting was held in the Cabinet room, lasted from 3:02 to 4:53 p.m., and was attended by the President, Rogers, Mitchell, Laird, Helms, Wheeler, and Kissinger. (Ibid., White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary) Apparently this meeting was so restricted that no one took notes; see Document 303.

(1) U.S. air operations in Cambodia, and (2) future South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia. I suggest you begin by calling on each of the following for about ten minutes each:

—General Wheeler for a rundown on sanctuary operations;[3]
—Director Helms for enemy reactions.

U.S. Tactical Air Operations in Cambodia

Issue: Should we conduct air operations against enemy tactical and logistical targets in Cambodia beyond the present 30 kilometer line?

Those who favor use of tactical air argue that there are profitable targets which can be identified. Attacks against enemy headquarters units, logistical facilities and infiltration routes in Cambodia would limit the enemy's ability to re-establish base areas or to threaten U.S. and Allied forces in South Vietnam. Such air attacks would keep the enemy off balance and by making clear that he cannot count on immunity from U.S. air, deter him from broadening his attacks in Cambodia.

Those who oppose tactical air attacks point out that accurate target identification will be difficult until ground reconnaissance and spotters can be introduced to supplement electronic and aerial surveillance. There is always the danger of some civilian casualties (but this can be controlled to a large extent). Unless present limits on MACV sortie rates are lifted, tactical air in Cambodia to some extent will be at the expense of effort elsewhere in the theater. There will be some adverse domestic public and Congressional reaction when such attacks become public knowledge—this reaction probably would be greater after June 30 than before.

Secretary Laird generally supports authorization for such attacks on selective basis. He doubts, however, the availability of many profitable targets. He also is concerned at the added costs which will further hurt his budgetary situation if sortie rates are increased to cover Cambodian operations. He believes that Congress has not been prepared to accept a wider use of U.S. tactical air, particularly after June 30.

Secretary Rogers probably will express reservations on the grounds of expected public and particularly Congressional reaction. He may also express concern over possible civilian casualties.[4]

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[3] Crossed out after this entry was: "Secretary Rogers for a résumé of diplomatic events." A new page reflecting the revision was inserted in the copy in the National Archives; see footnote 1 above.

[4] Kissinger and the President discussed this issue and the restricted NSC meeting in a telephone conversation on May 22 at 6:20 p.m. Nixon told Kissinger, "I was heartened by the meeting today in terms of the Rogers thing. Schultz and others were saying there was a credibility gap. . . . But Rogers, who is the most sensitive, said it was not

General Wheeler and Mr. Helms support tactical air attacks now to take maximum advantage of the disruption of enemy units and supply facilities caused by the sanctuary attacks and to prevent the enemy from re-establishing supply routes in Cambodia.

Your May 21 decision authorized:[5]

—U.S. tactical air strikes to be conducted against enemy tactical and logistics targets in Cambodia to limit enemy capability to resupply forces which could threaten U.S. and allied units in South Vietnam;
—Waived the 30 kilometer limitation; and
—Specified that care should be taken to avoid strikes in heavily populated areas.

Your decision was based on the need to attack these targets to protect American forces in South Vietnam. (General Haig confirms that General Abrams can identify targets and wants authority to attack them.) You might wish to confirm your desire that these attacks go forward without delay. (You asked Secretary Laird to submit a plan by May 22.) There is no need to decide now on our policy after June 30—this can wait for an assessment of results of the strikes between now and then and a clearer picture of enemy actions and intentions at that time.

ARVN Operations in Cambodia

There are two issues:

(1) What limits should we try to impose on ARVN operations in Cambodia?

(2) What U.S. support should be given to such operations?

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true." Kissinger noted that "Actually Bill [Rogers] agreed on bombing, which surprised me. It was Laird who disagreed." Nixon responded, "Yes. He also agreed with letting ARVN run loose. And that's exactly the right line. If they [the North Vietnamese] should take Sihanoukville, then we will let ARVN do the mining." Kissinger suggested that "someone will have to provide protection for them if the Russians decide to challenge them." The President felt "that was a long way down the road" and suggested that they concentrate on shaping up the White House staff and Cabinet and get them to realize that "we done something good." Kissinger agreed and noted that the debate was shifting to "what will happen to the ARVN after July 1." Nixon suggested that, "We can't object to Asians defending their own interests." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

[5] On May 21 the President approved a plan he had requested from Laird to conduct tactical and B–52 air strikes in Cambodia beyond the 30 kilometer limit. The undated memorandum indicating Nixon's oral approval is in the National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 335, Subject Files, Items to Discuss with the President, 1 May 1970–15 June 1970. Laird's plan is attached to a memorandum he sent to the President on May 22. Kissinger sent Laird a memorandum on May 23 that indicated Nixon's approval and asked that the plan be executed without delay. (Both ibid., Box 103, Vietnam Subject Files, Freedom Deal)

Issue 1—Limits on ARVN Operations:

Those who favor continued ARVN operations point out that if we severely restrict those operations in the base areas, we could lose much of the longer term benefit to Vietnamization of the current successes against the sanctuary areas. If we foreclose ARVN operations elsewhere in Cambodia, we would be giving the enemy a free hand to secure the southern ports, to use military pressure to bring down the Cambodian Government, and to re-establish supply routes and bases for actions in South Vietnam.

Those who oppose point out that if the ARVN becomes obsessed with Cambodia, Vietnamization and pacification could suffer. There would be the risk that the ARVN could get in trouble and face a serious defeat unless we were willing to bail it out. Continued ARVN operations beyond the border sanctuary areas, unless specifically requested by Cambodia, also would risk serious damage to Cambodia-South Vietnam relations (there is an historical ethnic enmity).

Secretaries Rogers and Laird support a position of flexibility but would prefer that ARVN operations after June 30 be limited to short duration operations in the border sanctuary areas. Both may express concern over the effect on public and Congressional opinion of the appearance of U.S. acquiescence in wide-ranging ARVN operations, seen to be primarily aimed at supporting Lon Nol. Secretary Rogers may also emphasize the suspicion and possible growing estrangement between Cambodia and South Vietnam if the ARVN stays on.

General Wheeler and Mr. Helms support continued operations in the sanctuary areas to keep the enemy from threatening our forces in Vietnam and the flexibility for deeper operations as a deterrent.

Your Decision:

To protect U.S. forces in Vietnam and enhance Vietnamization, you decided to support continued ARVN operations:

—To continue clearing out the base areas;
—To prevent re-establishment of the base areas; and
—To deter broader enemy attacks against Phnom Penh or Cambodia's southern ports.

It would be preferable if all ARVN forces were withdrawn to South Vietnam and new operations after June 30 began from there.

You want the ARVN to concentrate on Vietnamization. You want to discourage wide-ranging ARVN operations which could be the pretext for enemy attacks. However, we would not publicly state a restriction in order to keep the enemy uncertain.[6]

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[6] This decision is reflected in Document 301.

Issue 2—U.S. Support for ARVN Cambodian Operations:

Those favoring U.S. support say that it will be important, though not necessarily crucial, to ARVN success. Operations in the base areas can be conducted without direct U.S. involvement in Cambodia—artillery and logistics support could be provided from the South Vietnamese side of the border. U.S. tactical air support in Cambodia, however, could make an important contribution to the ARVN's success in some circumstances.

Those who oppose argue that any U.S. support will generate domestic criticism and will not contribute significantly to our objectives.

Secretary Laird probably prefers that U.S. support be very limited and that air support be provided only in case of the most extreme need. Secretary Rogers probably prefers that no direct support be provided and that, in any event, no air support be provided to ARVN in Cambodia after June 30. Both positions rest on concern for domestic public reaction.

General Wheeler and Mr. Helms prefer air support if needed and artillery and logistics support from South Vietnam to keep the sanctuaries clear.

Your Decision: You approved U.S. artillery and logistic support from the South Vietnamese side of the border and, if needed, tactical air support (primary reliance to be on the Vietnamese Air Force). These actions support the objective of protecting U.S. forces in South Vietnam by assisting ARVN in keeping the sanctuaries clear.[7]

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[7] As reflected in Document 301.

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303. Editorial Note

No minutes have been found for the Washington Special Actions Group meeting of May 22, 1970. The briefing memorandum for the meeting from John Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to Presidential Assistant Henry Kissinger, May 22, provides a sense of the issues to be discussed. Holdridge noted that since the meeting of May 20 (see Document 300) the fourth 1,000-man pack had been delivered to Phnom Penh; a logistical survey of Cambodian ports had been undertaken that discovered that the port of Phnom Penh could handle 150–330 tons per day including stripped T–28's; and the United States agreed in principle to Thailand training two Khmer regiments for service in Cambodia. The issues still to be discussed at the May 22 meeting were the results of the restricted NSC meeting of May 22, the possibility of sending Cambodian speaking Thai regiments to Cambodia

until they could be replaced by the Thai Khmer regiments undergoing training, and other countries' aid to Cambodia. According to the briefing memorandum for the May 25 Washington Special Actions Group meeting from Holdridge to Kissinger, May 25, "At the May 22 meeting there was a consensus that Thai troops should not be sent, although there was the feeling that it might be advisable to collect these forces together in Thailand for possible use as a 'shock brigade' in Cambodia if the Communists launch a real push against Phnom Penh and the Lon Nol Government." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, 5/22/70 and 5/25/70)

On the evening of May 22 at 6:05 p.m., Secretary of State Rogers discussed on the telephone with Kissinger the possibility of Thai Troops in Cambodia. Rogers stated: "On the Thai troop thing, I don't have any very strong views on it except that we ought to be thinking seriously about legal justifications for everything we do from now on. If, through carelessness or boldness, we do something contrary to law it will be a serious matter. There are lots of restrictions on uses of troops." Kissinger noted that "nothing should be shipped that hasn't been approved by the WSAG." Rogers countered that the WSAG wasn't necessarily concerned with legality. Both men agreed to highlight legal concerns at the next regular WSAG meeting. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

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304. Memorandum for the Record[1]

Washington, May 25, 1970.

SUBJECT

WSAG Meeting of 25 May 1970

PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Kissinger
Ambassador Johnson
Mr. Packard
Mr. Helms
Mr. Karamessines

[1] Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DDO/ISG/IP/ARP Files, Job 74–251, Box 5 of 5, [*file name not declassified*] Memoranda, #1. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

1. Dr. Kissinger called a rump WSAG at the close of the 40 Committee meeting.[2] He first asked DOD to draw up a plan to move captured communist equipment to Phnom Penh. He said the President was anxious to go ahead with this but that the plan should be phased so that there was some assurance that arms could be used and would not be recaptured by the enemy.

2. On the Thai–Khmer regiments, Dr. Kissinger asked for confirmation that the field had been instructed to go ahead on forming these and training. He was told that recruitment of these regiments was proceeding but that no decisions had been made on money. Ambassador Johnson asked whether CIA expenditure of DOD money came under the same restrictions as if DOD spent the money. The Director answered yes. It was public money and if Congress placed restrictions on its expenditure that applied to CIA as much as to any other Agency or Department. Ambassador Johnson also asked for confirmation that the Cooper/Church Amendment would apply to Agency funds which were expended in Cambodia. Again the Director replied in the affirmative. There was considerable discussion on the legal aspects of all of this and Ambassador Johnson said his legal people would be getting together with Defense legal people tomorrow to try to plot contingency stage not only on the current Cooper/Church Amendment but on other amendments pending before the Congress which would be even more crippling. Ambassador Johnson wanted the Working Group to consider various actions proposed in the CIA paper of 22 May[3] which would not immediately cost a lot of money. He also asked for consideration of arming and sending back into Cambodia the 3,000 FANK troops who had defected into Laos. There were some questions as to whether these FANKs would really be worth rearming.

3. On the [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] request to introduce into Cambodia two regular Thai Army regiments, Dr. Kissinger clearly indicated that he was under pressure from above to agree to the [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] proposal. After some discussion around the table the consensus was that it was better to hold these troops in reserve for an emergency. Dr. Kissinger said he would have difficulty getting clearance on the Johnson cable

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[2] The account of the 40 Committee meeting, which only tangentially discussed Cambodia, is in a memorandum for the record by Jessup. (National Security Council, 303/40 Committee Files, Minutes, 1970)

[3] This is the paper submitted by Nelson to Helms on May 20 and given to the WSAG on May 22; see footnote 4, Document 297.

of Friday[4] which said this and in effect turned down the [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] proposal. [*5½ lines of source text not declassified*]

4. [*1½ lines of source text not declassified*]

William E. Nelson
Chief, Far East Division

[4] A draft cable of May 22. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, 5/22/70)

305. National Security Study Memorandum 94[1]

Washington, May 25, 1970.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

Diplomatic Initiatives on Indo-China

The President has directed that a study be prepared of diplomatic initiatives on Vietnam and Indo-China which might be taken following the June 30 completion of current military actions in Cambodia. The study should consider:

—U.S. strategy for convoking or participating in an international conference on Indo-China;
—Forums in which such a conference could be convoked;
—Proposals which the U.S. could put forward to bring about a settlement;
—U.S. strategy concerning regional conferences which might be called;
—Other initiatives which could be taken to move toward a settlement; and
—How proposals put forward or endorsed by the U.S. in an international conference should be related to on-going negotiations on Vietnam.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–028, NSC Meeting, Vietnam, Ceasefire, Diplomatic Initiatives, 7/21/70. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. A copy was sent to Wheeler.

The study should present the advantages and disadvantages of alternative strategies concerning the U.S. approach to convoking or participating in a conference, of the various types of international forums for a conference, and of proposals which the U.S. might put forward or endorse.

The President has directed that this study be prepared by an ad hoc group chaired by a representative of the Secretary of State and including representatives of the addressees of the memorandum and of the NSC staff. It should be undertaken on a priority basis, and presented to the NSC Review Group not later than June 10, 1970.

Henry A. Kissinger

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306. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 25, 1970.

SUBJECT

Situation in Cambodia

Attached are two cables[2] from General Haig describing the military and political situation in Cambodia, his conversations with Cambodian leaders and recommendations for actions which should be taken to shore-up the Cambodians.

Haig reports (Tab A)[3] that the military situation is not bright and that:

—Most of the Northeast is under NVA/VC control and the enemy is infiltrating west across the Mekong. Only in the south has the situation stabilized as a result of ARVN cross-border operations.

—The Cambodian army is faced with conducting a war while at the same time developing a command and control structure, training existing forces, and equipping and training additional forces without a source for logistics.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VI, 23 May 1970–4 June 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Umbra. Initialed by Kissinger.

[2] The attached cables were undated and retyped.

[3] Tab A was a summary of the military situation as of May 23.

—The inexperienced Cambodian army:

• consists of some 60 battalions of which about 2/3 are marginally effective.
• critically needs tactical communications equipment, small arms, and trucks.
• has an extremely weak intelligence capability, logistic system and training capacity.

Although political weaknesses exist the situation is not as immediately threatening as the military one. Haig reports (Tab B)[4] that:

—There is no solid political opposition yet. The pro-Hanoi movement has not gotten off the ground. However, there is potential for conflict between younger reformers and the older political leadership, as well as the potential for factionalism within the army.

—Few individuals in the government realize that the war will be long and there is false optimism that massive American help and a few months training will allow the Cambodians to route the invaders.

—Cambodians at all levels distrust the Vietnamese.

—The basic political deficiencies stem from uncertainty of purpose and inexperience in governing.

As a result of his meetings with Lon Nol, General Pokse (Nol's Chief of Operations) and with General Matak and his assessment of the military and political situation (Tab E),[5] Haig believes that:

—The situation is grave but not altogether hopeless.

—We must recognize the seriousness of the Cambodian plight with an even greater sense of urgency.

—We should take the following steps:

• Move Colonel Ladd to Phnom Penh as soon as possible to assist the government of Cambodia in establishing priorities for shipments of additional equipment, to coordinate with MACV and a representative of the GVN who should be sent to Phnom Penh, and to serve as our liaison with a combined coordinating staff from donor Asian states.
• Begin shipment of light weapons and individual equipment up to a total of 30,000 and ship all remaining 1,000 man packs immediately.
• Begin tactical and B–52 sorties in North East Cambodia (Lon Nol would warmly welcome this and the area for the most part is sparsely settled).
• Commence periodic GVN convoys and patrols along the Mekong River to Phnom Penh.

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[4] Tab B was the political assessment contained in the first telegram which also contained the military situation.

[5] Tab C was an account of Haig's separate meetings with Lon Nol, Pakse Mon, and Sirik Matak on the morning, afternoon, and evening of May 23.

• Expedite the rehabilitation of Cambodian T–28s and urge Thailand to furnish up to 10 T–28s on a loan basis with a US replacement guarantee. The planes could initially be based in Thailand.

• Urge the South Vietnamese and Thais to send as many Khmer battalions as possible.

• Provide an observation aircraft for the US Defense Attaché in Phnom Penh.

• Send a high level US delegation to friendly Asian capitals to urge increased military and economic assistance.[6]

On the basis of his trip thus far, Haig concludes that:

—Without all or most of the above recommended steps the Lon Nol government's chances of surviving are dim at best.

—The Cambodian government can be expected to fight the NVA/VC to the best of its limited capability.

—The enemy appears to be taking a desperate gamble designed to offset blows to his sanctuaries by setting up a liberated area in the northeast or by liberating the entire country. The enemy is undertaking a campaign without prepositioning supplies or utilizing pre-established political cadres and political themes to motivate its forces.

—The enemy will remain inactive for an extended period in II, III and IV Corps. We should complicate his problems in Cambodia by helping the Cambodian government as much as possible while we press in South Vietnam to take advantage of the improved security situation.

—The conflict in Southeast Asia has changed fundamentally. Hanoi's deep involvement in Cambodia has seriously weakened its capacity to exert main force pressure on the South Vietnamese.

[6] Nixon highlighted the lists of recommended steps and wrote the following notes: "K—go ahead" and "K, follow up on all these items."

307. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 26, 1970.

SUBJECT

Conversation with Lon Nol

Attached is a report from General Haig of his two-hour conversation with General Lon Nol.[2] During the discussion the Cambodian leader stressed that:

—The Cambodian people are behind him and ready to make sacrifices, but he must demonstrate an effective resistance to the enemy. It is imperative to expand the Cambodian government's presence throughout the countryside.

—Cambodia must have the wherewithal to resist, and it can't wait too long.

—Cambodia critically needs:

- light arms to equip 50,000 troops;
- additional air support;
- assistance in equipping and training Khmers in South Vietnam and Thailand (the Thais have promised to form one brigade and two regiments);
- help in keeping the Mekong River open.

—His government is definitely in the anti-communist struggle and will gladly enter the US bloc of nations if necessary.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VI, 23 May 1970–4 June 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. A stamped notation on the memorandum reads: "The President has seen." Nixon sent Haig to Cambodia and South Vietnam from May 19–26 to discuss with Lon Nol, Sirik Matak, Thieu, and other Cambodian and South Vietnamese officials the issue of U.S. and South Vietnamese military aid to Cambodia. (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 1010, Haig Special File, Vietnam/Cambodia, Haig's Trip, May 19–26, 1970) On May 19 Rogers telephoned Kissinger to ask about Haig's trip and whether "we are making representations to Lon Nol" and if the President was sending Lon Nol a letter. Kissinger replied that only one letter would be sent that introduced Haig, who was going to provide "some estimate of the situation, military effectiveness and what the problems are. A fact-finding mission." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) For a critical account of the mission, see Shawcross, *Sideshow*, pp. 161–165.

[2] Attached was a "near verbatim text" of the conversation between Haig and Lon Nol which took place on May 23 at 10 a.m. in Lon Nol's office in Phnom Penh.

In his brief assessment of this conversation General Haig concludes that:

—The Cambodian leadership has burned its bridges completely and is resolved to hold firm.

—The leadership is badly shaken, if not desperate, and we must move promptly with more concrete manifestations of US support.

—Lon Nol is emotional and not very realistic (towards the end of the conversation he broke down). It would prove fatal to his government if he were to continue to expect a massive infusion of US assistance.

—Our most urgent task is to get the Cambodians to launch a realistic action program with essentially short-range goals designed to retain the support of the Cambodian people.

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308. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 26, 1970.

SUBJECT

Report of Conversation with Sirik Matak

Attached is a report from General Haig of his conversation with First Deputy Prime Minister Sirik Matak.[2] During the course of their conversation Matak indicated that:

—there is an urgent need for an armed force sufficiently strong to oust the enemy from Cambodian territory;

—Sihanouk is finished in Cambodia and the people are just now realizing the role that Sihanouk played in collaborating with the enemy;

—Cambodia wishes to seek neutrality but would want to consult again with the United States on the question of neutrality if the situation reaches a state of emergency;

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VI, 23 May 1970–4 June 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. A stamped notation on the memorandum reads: "The President has seen."

[2] Attached was a "near verbatim text" of the conversation between Haig and Sirik Matak which took place on May 23 at 6 p.m. in Matak's residence in Phnom Penh.

—Cambodia has agreed to forget past difficulties with the South Vietnamese, but the potential for trouble exists. One aspect that complicates the problem is VC/NVA infiltration into groups of Vietnamese inhabitants;

—US air attacks in northeast Cambodia would be warmly welcomed;

—Sihanouk has managed to project a false image of Cambodia to Senators like Mansfield and Fulbright. Cambodia was not a peaceful oasis; its soldiers were being killed by the VC every day long ago, but it was not publicized. The leadership merely closed its eyes while the fabric of the country was being destroyed;

—According to captured documents, the North Vietnamese planned to keep Sihanouk as long as he was useful to them and then to liquidate him.

General Haig observes that Matak appears to be the moving force in the Cambodian government although willing to give full deference to Lon Nol for the present. Although Matak accepts the value of continuing with an ostensibly neutral stance for Cambodia, he feels (as does General Haig) that this posture may not survive and that flexibility should be retained on this issue in the longer term.

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309. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 26, 1970.

SUBJECT

Conversation with President Thieu

Attached is a report from General Haig of his conversation with President Thieu on May 26.[2] In the course of the conversation, President Thieu:

—outlined his plans for future operations in Cambodia, which appear to be consistent with US guidelines;

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VI, 23 May 1970–4 June 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. A stamped notation on the memorandum reads: "The President has seen."

[2] Attached was an account of the conversation between Haig and Thieu and Bunker in the President's Palace in Saigon on May 26.

—discussed his broad strategy for the war after June 30, which is also entirely consistent with your desires. His plan includes maximum effort on pacification and concentration on destruction of enemy forces remaining in South Vietnam, new emphasis on control of the borders, and maximum effort against enemy infiltration of men and supplies;

—stated that the most important benefit of the Cambodian operation has been the fact that the enemy is now deprived of the security and freedom of movement he previously enjoyed in Cambodia;

—expressed complete understanding of Cambodian sensitivities and stated that he had already issued instructions to impose stronger control of GVN forces in Cambodia;

—suggested that we urgently consider improving Cambodian communications so that they can better control their forces and be aware of the battlefield situation;

—emphasized that a senior US military adviser is badly needed in Phnom Penh;

—said that he agrees with the assessment that Hanoi is hoping to topple Lon Nol quickly and cheaply, and that the answer rests with the will of the Cambodian people to resist until their forces can be rebuilt on a sounder footing.

In commenting on this meeting, Haig noted that:

—the issue of gravest consequence which should be receiving primary attention is what the GVN and US should do in the event NVA/VC forces make an all-out attack on Phnom Penh and the Cambodians urgently request help;

—it is essential that US spokesmen take an ambiguous and somewhat threatening position concerning future operations of the GVN.

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310. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, May 27, 1970, 0937Z.

8218. Ref. A. State 070781; B. State 077899.[2]

Subject: Meeting With President Thieu, May 26, 1970.

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER. Top Secret; Nodis; Khmer.

[2] Documents 285 and 301.

1. General Abrams and I had detailed discussion with Thieu covering subject of reftels evening of May 26. Thieu found no problem with our presentation and agreed that guidance outlined should govern future actions.

2. As reported in my Saigon 7986,[3] Thieu reiterated that it is not the GVN purpose to remain permanently in Cambodia. In GVN view, the main objective of the Cambodian operations is to assist and accelerate Vietnamization, to facilitate cleaning out remaining VC strongholds within Viet-Nam, and to destroy VC/NVA forces within country. It is not GVN purpose to take over either Cambodia's battle or its territory.

3. Thieu made the following additional comments:

—While he expects that all GVN forces will be out of Cambodia by 30 June, there may be some few caches which would need to be cleaned up.

—He hopes to work out arrangements with Cambodian Government which will permit limited cross-border operations to prevent enemy from rebuilding bases in Cambodia border area to preclude movement of forces across border from Cambodia into SVN and to prevent movement of enemy forces from SVN into Cambodia. Thieu believes that this latter move very likely to occur. He emphasized the fact that VC/NVA forces in III and IV Corps are now isolated and there is now opportunity to eliminate them.

—Since accelerated pacification program is to begin July 1, it is important that Vietnamese troops be in South Viet-Nam at that time.

—The GVN will study ways in which it can provide material support to the Lon Nol government to as great an extent as possible.

—It is important to keep the Mekong open to Phnom Penh but this does not appear to require strong military presence on the river.

—The GVN must do what it can to protect South Vietnamese residing in Cambodia. In this connection, access to Phnom Penh via Mekong important in case further evacuation necessary, but Thieu hopes it would be possible for Cambodian Government to maintain adequate security for ethnic Vietnamese.

—He feels that GVN must retain flexibility in regard to situation which could arise in case of a serious emergency such as an attack on Phnom Penh and a request for assistance from the Cambodian Government. He feels that we should try to arrive at a coordinated position on what action should be undertaken should such an emergency arise.

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[3] Dated May 23. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER)

4. Thieu plans to review situation with his military commanders today to go over situation concerning operations in Cambodia and to alert them to requirements for accelerated pacification program to begin July 1. I shall try to secure read-out on this.

Bunker

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311. Editorial Note

No minutes have been found for the Washington Special Actions Group meeting of May 27, 1970. The briefing memorandum for the meeting from John Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to Presidential Assistant Henry Kissinger, May 26, provides a list of the items to be discussed. They were: "legal restrictions on our ability to supply U.S. arms and equipment to third countries; declassification of the Presidential Decision on aid to Cambodia; the possibility of sending Thai troops into Cambodia until they can be relieved by the two Khmer regiments; FARK request for assistance in Northeast Cambodia; CIA's proposals to augment irregular forces in South Laos; Indonesian military assistance to Cambodia; and legal restrictions related to the proposed Church–Cooper amendment under consideration in the Senate." The question of declassification of the Presidential aid determination was at Senator Fulbright's request and the Departments of State and Defense were prepared to declassify the actual determination. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, 5/27/70) In the briefing memorandum for the June 2 Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, Holdridge reminded Kissinger that, "At the May 27 WSAG Meeting Ambassador Johnson pointed out that the only legal way he could see for the U.S. to support the introduction of the two Thai regiments into Cambodia was to identify them with the Black Panthers [Thai forces in Vietnam] as part of a program of 'fighting the Vietnam war in Cambodia.'" (Ibid., 6/2/70) According to Holdridge's May 26 briefing memorandum, the Cambodian request for reinforcement of northeast Cambodia by two Khmer Krom battalions raised a number of questions relating to feasibility, strategic advantage, and consultation. As for the CIA's alternatives for south Laos, the WSAG Working Group on Cambodia had been assigned the task of preparing a study. The issue did not need to be raised until it was complete. Indonesian military assistance had been promised, but had not been as yet delivered. (Ibid., 5/27/70)

312. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, undated.

SUBJECT

Issues for the May 31 Meeting

I have enclosed three papers addressing issues for discussion at the meeting on 31 May 1970.[2]

1. Troop Withdrawals (Tab A)

—The issue is whether we should speed up troop withdrawals.

—Secretary Laird's position is that there should be withdrawals in addition to the 50,000 presently scheduled by October 15.

—General Abrams prefers to limit withdrawals this year to 50,000 and has agreed to complete that withdrawal by October 15.

—My view is that the risks more than outweigh whatever small advantage could be gained by a speed-up of withdrawals. Since no timetable has been announced a speed-up would have little impact.[3] We should withdraw enough forces to calm public opinion but we should do so slowly enough to give Hanoi an incentive to negotiate and to avoid risks to our forces.

—I recommend that you support General Abrams' recommendation that withdrawals this year be limited to 50,000 to be accomplished by October 15. I also recommend that you approve phased withdrawal of 100,000 after January 1 with the terminal date for the withdrawal to be determined at a later date based on your assessment of the situation and enemy reactions.

2. ARVN Operations (Tab B)

—The issues are what limits we should try to put on ARVN operations in Cambodia and what support we should give to such operations.

—This question you will recall has already been discussed in the NSC[4] and the following four principles for continued support have been established:

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, 5/22/70. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

[2] Attached but not printed.

[3] Nixon underlined this sentence.

[4] At the restricted meeting of May 22; see Document 302.

1. withdrawal of most ARVN forces by June 30 without precluding their reentry;
2. continued ARVN operations in the sanctuaries after June 30 to (a) remove supplies and (b) help prevent the re-establishment of caches;
3. a flexible ARVN posture which would deter but not serve as a pretext for wider enemy attacks in Cambodia; and
4. U.S. logistic and artillery from the South Vietnamese side of the border and tactical air support where necessary for ARVN operations in Cambodia.[5]

3. Air Activity Rates in Southeast Asia (Tab C)

—The issue is the level which should be established for air activity rates.

—Laird is pressing for the reduction of air operations on the basis of the following chart:

	Current Sorties	*JCS Proposal*		
		7/70–12/70	*1/71–6/71*	*7/71–12/71*
B–52	1,400	1,000	1,000	900
7th AF	14,000	10,000	10,000	8,750
FWF	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
Navy	3,600	2,700	2,700	1,800
Marines	3,300	3,300	3,300	0

His major arguments are budgetary and cost-effectiveness.

—My view is that maintenance of the rate at least at present levels for the next few months will be important. We want to take advantage of the success of our Cambodian operations to keep the enemy's bases and logistic routes disrupted, and to attack his units in South Vietnam. We have authorized tactical air in Cambodia, are using it importantly in Laos and may provide some support to ARVN operations in Cambodia. Moreover, we should not decrease air activity in a way which could have the effect of lessening Hanoi's incentive to negotiate.

—We need to take a hard look, however, at where the money will come from to support the air activity rates and the effectiveness of our air activity.

—I recommend that air activity rates be maintained at present levels pending your review of a study to be done on an urgent basis of the financial aspects and effectiveness of air activity in Southeast Asia.

[5] The President underlined "tactical air support where necessary" in this sentence and placed a question mark in the margin.

The study should present the advantages and disadvantages of alternative strategies concerning the U.S. approach to convoking or participating in a conference, of the various types of international forums for a conference, and of proposals which the U.S. might put forward or endorse.

The President has directed that this study be prepared by an ad hoc group chaired by a representative of the Secretary of State and including representatives of the addressees of the memorandum and of the NSC staff. It should be undertaken on a priority basis, and presented to the NSC Review Group not later than June 10, 1970.

Henry A. Kissinger

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306. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 25, 1970.

SUBJECT

Situation in Cambodia

Attached are two cables[2] from General Haig describing the military and political situation in Cambodia, his conversations with Cambodian leaders and recommendations for actions which should be taken to shore-up the Cambodians.

Haig reports (Tab A)[3] that the military situation is not bright and that:

—Most of the Northeast is under NVA/VC control and the enemy is infiltrating west across the Mekong. Only in the south has the situation stabilized as a result of ARVN cross-border operations.

—The Cambodian army is faced with conducting a war while at the same time developing a command and control structure, training existing forces, and equipping and training additional forces without a source for logistics.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VI, 23 May 1970–4 June 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Umbra. Initialed by Kissinger.

[2] The attached cables were undated and retyped.

[3] Tab A was a summary of the military situation as of May 23.

—The inexperienced Cambodian army:

• consists of some 60 battalions of which about 2/3 are marginally effective.
• critically needs tactical communications equipment, small arms, and trucks.
• has an extremely weak intelligence capability, logistic system and training capacity.

Although political weaknesses exist the situation is not as immediately threatening as the military one. Haig reports (Tab B)[4] that:

—There is no solid political opposition yet. The pro-Hanoi movement has not gotten off the ground. However, there is potential for conflict between younger reformers and the older political leadership, as well as the potential for factionalism within the army.

—Few individuals in the government realize that the war will be long and there is false optimism that massive American help and a few months training will allow the Cambodians to route the invaders.

—Cambodians at all levels distrust the Vietnamese.

—The basic political deficiencies stem from uncertainty of purpose and inexperience in governing.

As a result of his meetings with Lon Nol, General Pokse (Nol's Chief of Operations) and with General Matak and his assessment of the military and political situation (Tab E),[5] Haig believes that:

—The situation is grave but not altogether hopeless.

—We must recognize the seriousness of the Cambodian plight with an even greater sense of urgency.

—We should take the following steps:

• Move Colonel Ladd to Phnom Penh as soon as possible to assist the government of Cambodia in establishing priorities for shipments of additional equipment, to coordinate with MACV and a representative of the GVN who should be sent to Phnom Penh, and to serve as our liaison with a combined coordinating staff from donor Asian states.
• Begin shipment of light weapons and individual equipment up to a total of 30,000 and ship all remaining 1,000 man packs immediately.
• Begin tactical and B–52 sorties in North East Cambodia (Lon Nol would warmly welcome this and the area for the most part is sparsely settled).
• Commence periodic GVN convoys and patrols along the Mekong River to Phnom Penh.

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[4] Tab B was the political assessment contained in the first telegram which also contained the military situation.

[5] Tab C was an account of Haig's separate meetings with Lon Nol, Pakse Mon, and Sirik Matak on the morning, afternoon, and evening of May 23.

• Expedite the rehabilitation of Cambodian T–28s and urge Thailand to furnish up to 10 T–28s on a loan basis with a US replacement guarantee. The planes could initially be based in Thailand.

• Urge the South Vietnamese and Thais to send as many Khmer battalions as possible.

• Provide an observation aircraft for the US Defense Attaché in Phnom Penh.

• Send a high level US delegation to friendly Asian capitals to urge increased military and economic assistance.[6]

On the basis of his trip thus far, Haig concludes that:

—Without all or most of the above recommended steps the Lon Nol government's chances of surviving are dim at best.

—The Cambodian government can be expected to fight the NVA/VC to the best of its limited capability.

—The enemy appears to be taking a desperate gamble designed to offset blows to his sanctuaries by setting up a liberated area in the northeast or by liberating the entire country. The enemy is undertaking a campaign without prepositioning supplies or utilizing pre-established political cadres and political themes to motivate its forces.

—The enemy will remain inactive for an extended period in II, III and IV Corps. We should complicate his problems in Cambodia by helping the Cambodian government as much as possible while we press in South Vietnam to take advantage of the improved security situation.

—The conflict in Southeast Asia has changed fundamentally. Hanoi's deep involvement in Cambodia has seriously weakened its capacity to exert main force pressure on the South Vietnamese.

[6] Nixon highlighted the lists of recommended steps and wrote the following notes: "K—go ahead" and "K, follow up on all these items."

307. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, May 26, 1970.

SUBJECT

Conversation with Lon Nol

Attached is a report from General Haig of his two-hour conversation with General Lon Nol.[2] During the discussion the Cambodian leader stressed that:

—The Cambodian people are behind him and ready to make sacrifices, but he must demonstrate an effective resistance to the enemy. It is imperative to expand the Cambodian government's presence throughout the countryside.

—Cambodia must have the wherewithal to resist, and it can't wait too long.

—Cambodia critically needs:

- light arms to equip 50,000 troops;
- additional air support;
- assistance in equipping and training Khmers in South Vietnam and Thailand (the Thais have promised to form one brigade and two regiments);
- help in keeping the Mekong River open.

—His government is definitely in the anti-communist struggle and will gladly enter the US bloc of nations if necessary.

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[2] Attached was a "near verbatim text" of the conversation between Haig and Lon Nol which took place on May 23 at 10 a.m. in Lon Nol's office in Phnom Penh.

In his brief assessment of this conversation General Haig concludes that:

—The Cambodian leadership has burned its bridges completely and is resolved to hold firm.

—The leadership is badly shaken, if not desperate, and we must move promptly with more concrete manifestations of US support.

—Lon Nol is emotional and not very realistic (towards the end of the conversation he broke down). It would prove fatal to his government if he were to continue to expect a massive infusion of US assistance.

—Our most urgent task is to get the Cambodians to launch a realistic action program with essentially short-range goals designed to retain the support of the Cambodian people.

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Washington, May 26, 1970.

SUBJECT

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Attached is a report from General Haig of his conversation with First Deputy Prime Minister Sirik Matak.[2] During the course of their conversation Matak indicated that:

—there is an urgent need for an armed force sufficiently strong to oust the enemy from Cambodian territory;

—Sihanouk is finished in Cambodia and the people are just now realizing the role that Sihanouk played in collaborating with the enemy;

—Cambodia wishes to seek neutrality but would want to consult again with the United States on the question of neutrality if the situation reaches a state of emergency;

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—Cambodia has agreed to forget past difficulties with the South Vietnamese, but the potential for trouble exists. One aspect that complicates the problem is VC/NVA infiltration into groups of Vietnamese inhabitants;

—US air attacks in northeast Cambodia would be warmly welcomed;

—Sihanouk has managed to project a false image of Cambodia to Senators like Mansfield and Fulbright. Cambodia was not a peaceful oasis; its soldiers were being killed by the VC every day long ago, but it was not publicized. The leadership merely closed its eyes while the fabric of the country was being destroyed;

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Attached is a report from General Haig of his conversation with President Thieu on May 26.[2] In the course of the conversation, President Thieu:

—outlined his plans for future operations in Cambodia, which appear to be consistent with US guidelines;

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—discussed his broad strategy for the war after June 30, which is also entirely consistent with your desires. His plan includes maximum effort on pacification and concentration on destruction of enemy forces remaining in South Vietnam, new emphasis on control of the borders, and maximum effort against enemy infiltration of men and supplies;

—stated that the most important benefit of the Cambodian operation has been the fact that the enemy is now deprived of the security and freedom of movement he previously enjoyed in Cambodia;

—expressed complete understanding of Cambodian sensitivities and stated that he had already issued instructions to impose stronger control of GVN forces in Cambodia;

—suggested that we urgently consider improving Cambodian communications so that they can better control their forces and be aware of the battlefield situation;

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—said that he agrees with the assessment that Hanoi is hoping to topple Lon Nol quickly and cheaply, and that the answer rests with the will of the Cambodian people to resist until their forces can be rebuilt on a sounder footing.

In commenting on this meeting, Haig noted that:

—the issue of gravest consequence which should be receiving primary attention is what the GVN and US should do in the event NVA/VC forces make an all-out attack on Phnom Penh and the Cambodians urgently request help;

—it is essential that US spokesmen take an ambiguous and somewhat threatening position concerning future operations of the GVN.

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2. As reported in my Saigon 7986,[3] Thieu reiterated that it is not the GVN purpose to remain permanently in Cambodia. In GVN view, the main objective of the Cambodian operations is to assist and accelerate Vietnamization, to facilitate cleaning out remaining VC strongholds within Viet-Nam, and to destroy VC/NVA forces within country. It is not GVN purpose to take over either Cambodia's battle or its territory.

3. Thieu made the following additional comments:

—While he expects that all GVN forces will be out of Cambodia by 30 June, there may be some few caches which would need to be cleaned up.

—He hopes to work out arrangements with Cambodian Government which will permit limited cross-border operations to prevent enemy from rebuilding bases in Cambodia border area to preclude movement of forces across border from Cambodia into SVN and to prevent movement of enemy forces from SVN into Cambodia. Thieu believes that this latter move very likely to occur. He emphasized the fact that VC/NVA forces in III and IV Corps are now isolated and there is now opportunity to eliminate them.

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—It is important to keep the Mekong open to Phnom Penh but this does not appear to require strong military presence on the river.

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—The issue is whether we should speed up troop withdrawals.

—Secretary Laird's position is that there should be withdrawals in addition to the 50,000 presently scheduled by October 15.

—General Abrams prefers to limit withdrawals this year to 50,000 and has agreed to complete that withdrawal by October 15.

—My view is that the risks more than outweigh whatever small advantage could be gained by a speed-up of withdrawals. Since no timetable has been announced a speed-up would have little impact.[3] We should withdraw enough forces to calm public opinion but we should do so slowly enough to give Hanoi an incentive to negotiate and to avoid risks to our forces.

—I recommend that you support General Abrams' recommendation that withdrawals this year be limited to 50,000 to be accomplished by October 15. I also recommend that you approve phased withdrawal of 100,000 after January 1 with the terminal date for the withdrawal to be determined at a later date based on your assessment of the situation and enemy reactions.

2. ARVN Operations (Tab B)

—The issues are what limits we should try to put on ARVN operations in Cambodia and what support we should give to such operations.

—This question you will recall has already been discussed in the NSC[4] and the following four principles for continued support have been established:

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, 5/22/70. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

[2] Attached but not printed.

[3] Nixon underlined this sentence.

[4] At the restricted meeting of May 22; see Document 302.

1. withdrawal of most ARVN forces by June 30 without precluding their reentry;
2. continued ARVN operations in the sanctuaries after June 30 to (a) remove supplies and (b) help prevent the re-establishment of caches;
3. a flexible ARVN posture which would deter but not serve as a pretext for wider enemy attacks in Cambodia; and
4. U.S. logistic and artillery from the South Vietnamese side of the border and tactical air support where necessary for ARVN operations in Cambodia.[5]

3. Air Activity Rates in Southeast Asia (Tab C)

—The issue is the level which should be established for air activity rates.

—Laird is pressing for the reduction of air operations on the basis of the following chart:

	Current Sorties	*JCS Proposal*		
		7/70–12/70	*1/71–6/71*	*7/71–12/71*
B–52	1,400	1,000	1,000	900
7th AF	14,000	10,000	10,000	8,750
FWF	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
Navy	3,600	2,700	2,700	1,800
Marines	3,300	3,300	3,300	0

His major arguments are budgetary and cost-effectiveness.

—My view is that maintenance of the rate at least at present levels for the next few months will be important. We want to take advantage of the success of our Cambodian operations to keep the enemy's bases and logistic routes disrupted, and to attack his units in South Vietnam. We have authorized tactical air in Cambodia, are using it importantly in Laos and may provide some support to ARVN operations in Cambodia. Moreover, we should not decrease air activity in a way which could have the effect of lessening Hanoi's incentive to negotiate.

—We need to take a hard look, however, at where the money will come from to support the air activity rates and the effectiveness of our air activity.

—I recommend that air activity rates be maintained at present levels pending your review of a study to be done on an urgent basis of the financial aspects and effectiveness of air activity in Southeast Asia.

[5] The President underlined "tactical air support where necessary" in this sentence and placed a question mark in the margin.

313. Memorandum of Conversation[1]

San Clemente, California, May 31, 1970, 2:08 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

The President
Secretary of Defense
Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard
Chairman, JCS (General Earle Wheeler)
Chief of Naval Operations (Admiral Moorer)
CINCPAC (Admiral McCain)
MACV (General Abrams)
Mr. Henry Kissinger
Brigadier General Haig (notetaker)

The meeting commenced at 2:08 p.m. The first three minutes were utilized for press photography.

The President: I have asked you to come to San Clemente today so that we could take a close look at where we are in Southeast Asia, review the situation with emphasis on South Vietnam but include also discussion of Laos and Cambodia. We are now 30 days into our Cambodian operation and the public in general tends to believe that the military operation is all but over. For this reason, I would like to have the comments of the Secretary of Defense, the Chiefs as expressed by General Wheeler and Admiral Moorer, Admiral McCain and, of course, our Commander in the field. General Abrams, would you please present your appraisal of the situation.

General Abrams: I would like to begin by giving our appraisal from the enemy's perspective of what is happening in Cambodia and Laos:

—After sacking of the North Vietnamese Embassy in Phnom Penh by the Cambodians, the enemy commenced to develop a 360 degree improved defensive position around its base areas in Eastern Cambodia. This situation continued until about 26 March. At this point, pro-

[1]Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1024, Presidential/HAK memcons, Meeting at San Clemente with President, May 31, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. This memorandum was based on Haig's notes. A sanitized version of this meeting was typed on June 4 and given wider distribution. Haig's notes and the sanitized version are ibid. On June 2 at 9:12 a.m. Kissinger telephoned Rogers, who had been at the NATO ministers meeting, to tell him about this meeting: "You didn't miss anything. It would make you climb the wall. Abrams has been going around Cambodia but he gave no analysis—just where the units are—the tactical situation. Then we decided about the role of tactical at the NSC meeting. There was nothing." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

Sihanouk uprisings began to occur. These uprisings were centered around the rubber plantations and were instigated by VC/NVA cadres, with the intent of putting pressure on the Lon Nol Government. Concurrently, the Cambodians started to deploy FARK units towards the enemy sanctuary areas concentrating in the Snol and Mimot areas, as part of his overall strategy to push the enemy back into the sanctuaries.

—Then, on 1 April the enemy began to expand out of the sanctuary areas forming a 15 to 20 kilometer band from the tri-border area in the north to the sea in the south.

—By the 12th or 15th of April, the enemy had gotten specific guidance—we have documents to confirm this—setting up a new liberation movement and organizing cadres to support the movement. In effect, the enemy had established a head before they had developed a body and they were now trying to do this.

—On May 1, following our attacks, they reacted in a mixed fashion:

(a) In IV Corps, the enemy just tried to avoid Allied forces.
(b) In the Parrot's Beak, SR 2 and SR 3 tried to fight but took heavy losses.
(c) In the northern tier of III Corps, parts of the 7th NVA conducted a skillful delaying action, designed to protect COSVN headquarters.
(d) In Base Areas 350 and 351, opposite II Corps, the enemy moved out of the way.
(e) In Laos, the enemy moved to take Attopeu on the Sekong River and Kratie and Sten Krang on the Mekong in Cambodia. In Laos, the enemy shifted his efforts from the north to the south, with the view toward developing a new logistics route over the Sekong and Mekong Rivers into III and IV Corps.

—In early May, the enemy suspended his infiltration groups in Laos destined for COSVN and held them up for about a week. We have intercepts to indicate that this caused some problems in that the groups started to consume rice stocks which had been prepositioned in the way stations for the rainy season.

—The 559th Transportation Group which runs all of the logistics system in Laos were told around May 11th to remain in Laos during the rainy season. This is abnormal since they usually return to North Vietnam during the rains.

—Between 10 and 22 May, 1,438 short tons of supplies were moved south from the Ashau area, suggesting a critical shortage in the III and IV Corps areas.

—On May 25, the enemy's pipeline around the western edge of the DMZ to Base Area 604 was reported operational.

On our side we have:

—Entered all the enemy's base areas in Cambodia, with the exception of Base Area 609.

—Gotten substantial amounts of supplies, hospitals, maintenance areas, small factory areas used to fabricate mines and munitions, and destroyed numerous logistical facilities.

—I believe we have disturbed COSVN, especially with our last three strikes which, with the second we forced them off the air for 30 hours and 20 minutes.

The President: How deep in were these strikes, General Abrams?

General Abrams: About 35 kilometers from the border.

The President: Then we have hit them in areas where they have not dug in.

General Abrams: I believe that is correct. Earlier, we captured a PW from the COSVN signal unit and he reported that they had received seven hours warning, that ⅔ of COSVN had moved out while ⅓ stayed and that many of those that remained were killed. He also described their tactic of placing their antenna approximately 2 kilometers from the staff section which the antenna supported. Consequently, we watched them day and night for a period of days, to get a pattern and then a firm fix on where the guts of the headquarters were located. Having gotten this fix, we think we significantly disturbed them, after instituting an entirely new system for delivering the strikes.

Dr. Kissinger: Didn't the prisoner state that they got their notice from Guam?

General Abrams: No, he was not specific. He merely stated that they had 7 hours' notice.

Mr. Laird: Of course, the Soviet trawler sitting off Guam reports to Peking when our B–52s take off and they, in turn, alert the enemy.

General Abrams: We had reviewed our whole B–52 targeting system on three separate occasions and removed many of the security holes but undoubtedly some still remained. The last three strikes we set up by establishing a compression calling for 35 sorties in 1 hour and 45 minutes. Only five officers besides myself in the headquarters knew the precise target. The B–52 pilots were briefed on primary and alternate targets and the whole system was fed information on an erroneous target. One hour and a half out, we gave new coordinates to the radar operator which he cranked into the system and guided the B–52s into the target. I am confident that this system has cut out the seven hour warning.

—In Vietnam, infiltration remains low, especially for the month of May, during which it rose to 13,900. The other months have been around 3,000 or 4,000. June will be at this level and perhaps July, although this could change.

General Wheeler: You are talking about arrivals, are you not?

General Abrams: Yes, we still have a good window on the infil-

tration business and the documents we captured in the Fish Hook corroborate the accuracy of our counting system.

—Terrorism has remained high with the most pressure in I Corps. There are 10 battalions just south of the DMZ which have been replenished through the DMZ. There are two regiments pointed towards Quan Tri City, four regiments pointed towards Hue and four regiments pointed towards the Da Nang area. During the week ending May 9, 100 U.S. KIA occurred in I Corps. This was 54% of the week's total. While this has dropped off since, it is still in I Corps where the pressure is highest. The enemy's pressure in the Highlands also continues. These are the only two bad areas where real main force pressure exists. These are the areas least affected by Cambodia.

The President: Do you think the stepup is the response to Cambodia?

General Abrams: Yes. In the future, we must:

(1) Have the South Vietnamese turn inward and clean out their problems in South Vietnam. Thieu agrees with this emphasis. Thieu has announced a renewed pacification effort, scheduled to commence on July 1 and running through October 31.

(2) Reinforce I Corps and II Corps with Vietnamese forces from III or IV Corps sometime in July.

The President: I know that your public appraisal of the ARVN has been high but what is your private assessment?

General Abrams: The ARVN has done better than I would ever have expected. Their combined operation up the Mekong River involving Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines was professionally done. All worked together. The Army were landed by helicopters and the Marines linked up over the water and relieved the Army in place. Throughout the operations, the Vietnamese Air Force provided close and continuous support.

The President: How do the Vietnamese people feel?

General Abrams: I cannot speak for the people but the Vietnamese military think the performance has been great. Up to now, they have been comparing themselves with U.S. forces. This time, they could compare themselves with the Cambodians and obtain an entirely different picture. Their pride is up.

The President: Then you could say that the operation has given us greater confidence in the Vietnamization program.

General Abrams: Yes.

The President: In terms of what is left, I recognize that from this point on it will level off although there still may be significant material. In your opinion is it worth digging any longer?

General Abrams: Yes, on a case-by-case basis. We are now using

Cambodians to help us locate caches and thus far, the reports have been about 50% accurate. We will not leave any U.S. forces one extra day longer in Cambodia if they are gainfully employed.

The President: How many U.S. troops have been engaged thus far?

Secretary Laird: There are 14,000 U.S. troops in there now. The highest figure was 19,000.

The President: But how many U.S. have been exposed in Cambodia all told? Also, how many GVN now and what was the highest total?

General Abrams: There are about 20,000 GVN in Cambodia now and at the high point it was 28,000. We will have to get other totals.

The President: This will be helpful to show the relative burdens.

General Abrams: They have also paid the highest price.

General Wheeler: That is correct. They have had 503 casualties as of today, while we have had 230.

The President: I would like to discuss some ideas for the future. I recognize that Laos is primarily CIA's responsibility but what can the Meos do offensively? To put it another way, is it not in our interest to keep three fronts active to the extent we are able? We should get the Meos to keep up the pressure and I would suspect the NVA may be somewhat weaker in Laos.

General Wheeler: Vang Pao started an offensive the other day which moved off easily the first day. Then they ran into very tough resistance. There were several NVA battalions in the area. I suspect the enemy does not wish to repeat last year's mistakes and also hopes to keep the pressure on themselves. It is obvious that the threat to Long Tieng is over. We may, however, be able to get some minor successes.

Admiral Moorer: Yesterday, Vang Pao reported he would keep pushing.

The President: Right. You should keep the heat on over the three fronts. This is vitally important to Vietnam. You must remember that all of the assistance we get there helps to bring Vietnam to a successful conclusion. Now is the time to keep the heat on so that the enemy doesn't assume that Cambodia was our last gasp. Before our operations started, I would have expected far more U.S. casualties. We have not seen the big stepup in casualties in Vietnam either, as so many predicted. Therefore:

(1) Clean out the sanctuaries as you have outlined and do not withdraw for domestic reasons but only for military reasons. We have taken all the heat on this one.

(2) On the South Vietnamese front, the primary objective must be the securing of Vietnam. For the ARVN, Cambodia is related to this objective and to that extent we want them to defend their interests in

Cambodia. Thus, we should urge them to take certain steps there. For our part, however, 30 June will mark the end of our ground operations. The enemy, however, must anticipate that the South Vietnamese will return if required. This involves the closest of judgments.

(3) Concerning U.S. support, we will not go back in with logistics or advisers. We will provide artillery support from the South Vietnamese side. Future air operations must be justified on the basis of U.S. security and goals. For example, striking COSVN in Cambodia. Northeast Cambodia could be important for the security of our own forces if the enemy builds up there but our answer should be fuzzy on this issue. U.S. air power will be used for the purpose of defending U.S. forces in South Vietnam. That is what we say publicly. But now, let's talk about what we will actually do. Within the above guidelines, we may find that the South Vietnamese in Cambodia need our help and we can deal with that. In other words, publicly we say one thing. Actually, we do another. Mel, do you care to address this question?

Secretary Laird: This is a key point. We will not fly close air support for the South Vietnamese but only interdiction and only General Abrams should talk about that.

General Abrams: Whatever cross-border operations the South Vietnamese do after July 1, they probably won't need or ask for U.S. close air support.

Secretary Laird: Abe, tell the President of the VNAF's turn-about.

General Abrams: After Cambodia started, the South Vietnamese pilots were actually bribing their duty officers to get on the Sunday flying roster. In the past, we had been unable to get them to fly on Sunday.

The President: Then you think they won't need close air support?

General Abrams: We will get no pressure from them on this issue but problems may develop for them.

The President: Then you have authority, but publicly it is for defense of U.S. forces. Just do it. Don't come back and ask permission each time. We can deny publicly that we are providing close air support. Now I understand that the enemy may hit in I Corps. We have only had one good run at the choke points in North Vietnam so I want you to study these choke points.

Secretary Laird: Mr. President, there are seven highways and four choke points.

The President: Fine. Look at these carefully immediately and see if the enemy has restocked along these routes. Find out specifically what would be worth hitting if the enemy avoids my warnings and institutes another high point, especially in I Corps. We cannot sit here and let the enemy believe that Cambodia is our last gasp. We have taken all the heat and if we need to hit them again, let me know. In this instance, I want you to ask for this authority however.

Secretary Laird: General Abrams, give the President your views for the use of the ARVN airborne in I Corps.

General Abrams: I think we should now reenforce I Corps with South Vietnamese forces, using some combination of the strategic reserve such as their airborne and their marines and perhaps some cavalry squadrons from the IV Corps area. This, of course, will take some urging on our part.

The President: Does this mean that they will be in contact with the North Vietnamese in that area?

General Abrams: Yes, the airborne division has for the first time moved in Cambodia as a division. They are now perfectly competent to run their own show.

The President: In summary then, I would like you to prepare adequate plans which provide for:

(1) Offensive operations in Laos.
(2) Continuation of ARVN ground and U.S. air operations in Cambodia.
(3) Provision for a summer offensive in South Vietnam (I am aware that you plan to initiate an offensive in III and IV Corps but I want to get the South Vietnamese to move offensively and at the same time keep our casualties low).

We have now arrived at a critical point. In July and August, the enemy cannot be led to believe that we have shot our wad. They must feel we are going ahead. Dr. Kissinger, would you care to comment on this?

Dr. Kissinger: I agree completely. The enemy will now have to reassess his priorities. We need especially strong air action during July and August.

The President: We also need a contingency plan in the event Lon Nol falls or in the event Matak takes over. In either event, the enemy might move on Phnom Penh, either through a coup or by direct military action. To preclude such an event, the South Vietnamese should constitute a deterrent. For this reason, we cannot leash the South Vietnamese but suppose the worst happens and Phnom Penh falls, then the port area becomes critical. In any event, it must stay closed. Therefore, we need a South Vietnamese plan to deny the ports to the enemy. We should think about this point especially. Another point is Cambodia itself. We have had quite a go-around on this one. Suharto told me he wants to help, even though he is for non-alignment. He made a strong pitch for modest U.S. replacements for Indonesian Soviet equipment which they, in turn, would provide to Cambodia. Indonesia wants to play a role in Southeast Asia. They want the South Vietnamese and Cambodians to hold. They are willing and actually wish to help with Russian equipment, if we can replace what they provide with U.S. equipment. We certainly need others to help Lon Nol even if only in a psychological sense. Indonesia should take the lead. Let's get a better effort from them.

Admiral McCain: Yes, Mr. President, we must encourage these people.

The President: Mr. Packard, cannot the Japanese be of more help?

Mr. Packard: Thus far, only with credits but they could certainly do more.

The President: We must not be out all alone on this one. We need the Asians to do more. We should not worry about amounts so much as the importance of getting something done quickly. President Suharto expressed great concern to me about the Soviet presence in the waters of the Pacific.

Admiral McCain: They are also beginning to worry about the resurgence of Japanese militarism.

Mr. Packard: Hopefully, we can get the Japanese to provide some open credit to the Cambodians.

The President: Mr. Kissinger, let's get moving on this. Sato certainly owes us one. Push Japanese action either with liberal credit or as an outright gift. On the military side, I want Mr. Ladd to go to Phnom Penh. He should do this not later than Thursday.[2] It is essential that the Cambodians know that we are behind them. How is our new military attaché performing?[3]

General Abrams: I am worried about this guy. He is too smooth. His discussions with me reflect supreme confidence. He seems dangerous. He brought in that Cambodian Brigadier General which we did not expect, who wanted all kinds of things to include dental work. Pietsch wanted me to see him but I refused to do so. Pietsch is making the U.S. profile too high.

Secretary Laird: We want to keep our assistance to Cambodia in South Vietnamese channels.

General Abrams: Yes, the Joint General Staff is sending representatives to Phnom Penh to assist with this.

The President: Where do we stand on Thai assistance?

General Abrams: I have grave doubts about their advice to the Cambodians and the provision of fighting troops. They have problems along their northern border which they themselves do not know how to solve. In my view, they need their people at home.

Secretary Laird: Exactly. Cambodia should work in their own north.

General Abrams: They should not send two regiments to Cambodia. The Thais just do not know how to do it. We must be realistic. The

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[2] June 4. Retired Colonel Jonathan "Fred" Ladd, former Commander of U.S. Special Forces in Vietnam.

[3] Colonel William Pietsch, U.S. Defense Attaché in Phnom Penh.

best people to train Cambodians are the South Vietnamese. They have the most experience.

Mr. Packard: What about the Indonesians?

Admiral McCain: I think the Indonesians are getting better.

General Abrams: This is a tough enemy and tough business and we must keep that in mind.

The President: Using the South Vietnamese as the channel to help the Cambodians is a good way, providing it does not prove to be counterproductive but we also want to get the other nations to help at least on the surface.

Secretary Laird: We can be tougher than we have been on the Thais. We should push them to face the northern Thailand problem.

Mr. Kissinger: It seems to me that the main problem is not what is best politically but how do we keep Cambodia from collapsing in the next 3 months. We must keep them propped up and time is the crucial problem. How do we do this? Anything we can do is certainly worth the risk.

Mr. Packard: But we can't pay for the Thais legally.

Mr. Kissinger: We have worked out a scheme in the WSAG but I am not pushing for this particular solution. What we must do is consider what we are going to do as we pull our forces out of Cambodia. It is essential that we keep a deterrent effect on the enemy.

Admiral Moorer: I agree entirely with Dr. Kissinger.

Admiral McCain: I also agree.

The President: The problem is the North Vietnamese also have a tough military problem but we must give them a political problem by getting Asian support for the Cambodians. The Thai problem might help. It is certainly important for the Indonesians to play a role. Let's look at some alternatives for what we do next. If the enemy takes Cambodia, we have got a rough problem. To prevent this, we must take some risks. The South Vietnamese, Thais, Indonesians should all help and the Japanese.

Now what about the Chieu Hoi problem?

General Abrams: The rates have dropped off somewhat this year but we are still in very good shape. We had some especially good results from our operations in the Parrot's Beak.

The President: I think we now need a major psychological offensive in South Vietnam to get the enemy to Chieu Hoi.

General Abrams: We are doing this Sir. The SR 2 Deputy Commander who defected has made some tapes which explain why he did it and encourages others to do likewise.

The President: Now, let's turn to the withdrawal program.

Secretary Laird: As you know, Mr. President, we have paused in our withdrawals over this period and we are paying for this holdup at the price of our U.S. forces in CONUS which are earmarked for NATO. I made the Army eat these costs. There is going to be some strong bitching about this but we are handling it. We plan to hold the pause on our withdrawals through July. Also, I have given guidance that there will be no withdrawals in excess of 60,000 troops for the balance of the year, but the Chiefs have problems with this and are preparing a paper with other options. Cambodia has been a success. Therefore, we should show some movement by withdrawing forces as soon as possible. The Chiefs' paper will be ready by the 10th of June. Money is the problem. Certainly, we cannot go to the Congress for a supplemental. I believe one of the options the Chiefs have presented calls for a 90,000 drawdown by the first of the year.

General Wheeler: Alternative A under our plan provides for a 60,000 drawdown by January 1 and another 90,000 by the end of May 1971 but the air sortie rates remain critical. We believe we have got to get higher sortie rates than the FY 1971 budget now provides and drawing down more ground forces is the only answer. Alternative B in our paper calls for up to 100,000 drawdown by the first of the year. Personally, I think this is too risky. In this plan, it still only provides for the FY 1971 approved sortie rate. No other tradeoffs were attractive to me because they involve a serious world-wide drawdown on our readiness. We are unable now to meet our NATO commitments. These commitments provide that we deploy 3 and ⅔ divisions to NATO within 30 days. Right now, we can only provide 2 and ⅔ divisions. This cannot be concealed from our Allies. On the other hand, even with 100,000 man drawdown by January 1, we still only keep the currently authorized FY 71 sortie rates. Therefore, this is a very high risk option.

The President: What is your view, General Abrams?

General Abrams: My judgment is to look in terms of South Vietnam—60,000 by December 31st—then 90,000 by May 1 can be done but it stretches the South Vietnamese capabilities. Anything beyond this would be nothing short of dangerous.

General Wheeler: I think we are now at the crossroads in this war. We have taken wrong turns in the past. The situation is favorable at this time because of Cambodia, especially in the III and IV Corps areas but in the north in the I and II Corps areas the enemy has the means to set us back.

Secretary Laird: I have asked for some more time to consider this problem.

Admiral Moorer: We are looking at our priority risks worldwide but we should not go too fast. We should not reduce our forces too fast. If the enemy is allowed to recover this time, we are through.

Secretary Laird: The South Vietnamese have shown they can do the job. We must keep the momentum going. I don't believe it is too easy to judge the relative merits of 60,000 or 100,000 and we must get Congressional support for our funding next year. Thus, we have got to win politically as well as militarily.

The President: Of course, that is why we must continue to draw down our forces.

Secretary Laird: The Hill is going to delay our appropriations process until next year. Mahon says our FY 1971 budget appropriations will probably be reduced by only $1 billion. However, Ellender insists that it may go down as much as $3 billion.

Admiral McCain: From my visits throughout Southeast Asia, I am convinced that Cambodia has made the difference. We must not lose it now.

The President: General Abrams, have you anything more to add?

General Abrams: I think we must get the ARVN to do most of the fighting in III Corps but the 5th Division and 18th Division are question marks. We have got to reinforce I Corps with ARVN. All this means that the Vietnamese will be pushed hard but they should be able to do the job.

The President: But what happens if Cambodia falls? I want you to put the air in there and not spare the horses.

Mr. Kissinger: We now have an advantage. Do we exploit this advantage or succumb to husbanding resources?

The President: To get the money we need, we must show results.

Secretary Laird: Yes, we must have the appropriations.

The President: That is a real problem. We will hang on. I will avoid any decision which throws away what we have accomplished. I will be judged on Vietnamization, U.S. casualties and the outcome of Cambodia. We cannot change this but decisions which are not realistic won't do. We have got to stretch the South Vietnamese. The effect of this worldwide will be whether or not we have succeeded. At the same time, we have a political problem involving the Congress and we must get the money.

Admiral Moorer: Why not just draw down an increment right away?

The President: I will not make a decision today. For now, we will hold to the 150,000 over the next year. I want no straight-jacket for the balance of the year.

Mr. Packard: Yes, but the drawdown should start soon. Maybe not until the end of June. If we go on a longer schedule and keep the sortie rates up, then NATO readiness must suffer.

Secretary Laird: This is true and we certainly cannot fool with Mediterranean area.

Mr. Packard: I can see no possibility of a supplemental and we will be lucky if we only have to take a $1 billion reduction.

The President: When we talk about priority of risks worldwide, keep in mind that if we fail on this effort all the rest is insignificant. We must succeed here.

General Wheeler: On my trip, the Turks were vitally interested in Cambodia. They know that they also are out in front and have drawn their own conclusions from your actions in Cambodia. The Turkish opposition now tells the people that the U.S. will never come to their aid. Your actions in Cambodia and South Vietnam have strengthened NATO. Cambodia was a very sound decision.

The President: Exactly. We must also realize that if the allies believe this, then the enemy also must wonder. If we sit around and just dribble out our power, it is bound to have some effect on the enemy. We have got to make a decision best designed to disengage us but still succeed.

Admiral Moorer: We have intelligence suggesting there have been nine tankers in Haigphong this month alone, probably required to replace the POL hit during the air strikes in the north.

Mr. Packard: Can we do more in the DMZ area, perhaps mining the Ben Hai River?

General Abrams: He has got 22 battalions in this area. 10 are south of the DMZ and 12 are to the north. Replacements for these units and their supplies come directly through the DMZ.

The President: Could South Vietnamese hit North Vietnam through commando raids?

General Abrams: Probably not at this time but we should look at this.

The President: We need something to give the north some problems. Take a look at it.

We have all had a long day. I have decided at this point that the public assumes Cambodia is largely over and therefore I will give them a brief interim report this week, probably on Wednesday.[4] It will touch upon what we have accomplished there, where we are. I hope it would have a salutory effect. During the balance of the operations, you will probably not get too much that is newsworthy and we have got to get the story out nationally. My report will be based on your report, General Abrams, and will be kept all within the framework of what we have said here today. We should continue to play a strong confident

[4]Reference is to the President's Address to the Nation on Cambodia, June 3; see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970*, pp. 476–480.

game. I would like to say that our people in the field have done a superior job. What they have done is almost fantastic, especially the South Vietnamese.

Secretary Laird: My only problem is that they will get some setbacks. We must not be too optimistic here at home.

General Abrams: I had dinner with some press people the other night. They now want to know how we are going to stop the South Vietnamese. I told them that just last month they wanted to know how I was going to get them moving.

The President: The fact is they just don't want to win.

Mr. Packard then raised the Gleason gear sales to the USSR and the President instructed him to seek a 90-day extension rather than to move now commenting "by that time, we may be able to link something with it."

The meeting was adjourned.

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314. Editorial Note

No minutes have been found for the Washington Special Actions Group meeting of June 2, 1970. Briefing memoranda for this meeting and the June 4 meeting from John Holdridge to Henry Kissinger, June 2 and 4, provide a sense of the issues to be discussed: the Thai plan to send two Thai regiments to Cambodia; the status of Thai/ Khmer regiments which would theoretically replace them; the U.S. public position on support for Thai military aid to Cambodia; proposed operations in south Laos and northeast Cambodia; costs to the U.S. of supporting Thai, Khmer, and Lao forces in Cambodia; and Indonesian military assistance to Cambodia. The Group agreed with Under Secretary of State Johnson's view that the only legal way to get Thai forces into Cambodia was to use the Thai Black Panther troops in Vietnam "as part of a program of fighting the Vietnam war in Cambodia." The Group then agreed that Johnson should send a cable to Bangkok to negotiate the pay and allowances for the Thai/Khmer regiments. Following the meeting of June 2, the Department of State agreed to COMUSMACV studying the issue of guerrilla operations in south Laos and northeast Cambodia and CIA preparing a study on potential Chinese reaction. At the June 2 meeting, the Group agreed with General Abrams' view opposing U.S. support of Cambodian operations in the so-called Green Triangle (encompassing Bung Lung–Ba Lev–Lomphat in northeast Cambodia) after June 30. The Group agreed to send

instructions to Rives to pass this decision on to Lon Nol in such a way as to emphasize the positive aspects—air support until June 30—of the U.S. decision and expressing sympathy and understanding for Lon Nol's position. The Group acknowledged that potential costs for support of Thai, Khmer, and Lao forces in connection with Cambodia were mounting and could create a "real budgetary problem." Kissinger directed the Group to prepare a study and get a handle on these costs. Finally, Kissinger stated that the President wanted a strong effort to encourage Indonesia to give arms to Cambodia and that the United States make up for depleted Indonesian stocks. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 6/2/70)

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315. National Security Decision Memorandum 63[1]

Washington, June 2, 1970.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Director, U.S. Information Agency
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT

Psychological Warfare Operations Against the Vietnamese Communists

The President has directed that a committee be formed to provide direction for and coordination of psychological warfare against the Vietnamese Communists.

The committee is to be chaired by a senior representative of the U.S. Information Agency, to be appointed by the Director of USIA. It will bear the designation Ad Hoc PSYOP Committee and will report to the NSC Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam. Members of the committee will be representatives of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense,

[1]Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 363, Subject Files, NSDM 51–96. Top Secret; Sensitive. On March 17 Sullivan, as chairman of the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam, sent Kissinger a memorandum proposing an organization for more effective coordination of psychological operations against Vietnamese Communists. (Ibid., RG 59, S/S–Ex Files: Lot 83 D 305, NSDM 63)

the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Assistant to the President for National Security. The recommendations of the Ad Hoc PSYOP Committee will be executed by the respective agencies represented on the committee in accordance with existing responsibilities, missions and procedures of the several agencies. This committee will perform the following functions:

—Develop a National Psychological Warfare strategy directed against the Vietnamese Communists, including psychological objectives to be accomplished.

—Coordinate the overall psychological warfare effort against the Vietnamese Communists.

—Provide thematic guidance.

—Prepare periodic reports to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs on our psychological warfare operations against the Vietnamese Communists.

—Assess the anticipated psychological impact of Vietnam related policy options as appropriate.

Decisions relating to a psychological warfare strategy, as well as other decisions covering major issues in the conduct of our psychological warfare against the Vietnamese Communists, should be referred to the President for approval.[2]

The responsibility for coordination and policy guidance for all psychological and informational programs in South Vietnam remains with the Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs, Saigon, under the direction of the U.S. Ambassador and Mission Council.

Henry A. Kissinger

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[2] On June 17 Sullivan sent Kissinger a memorandum with an attached paper that listed objectives and set out the themes and ground rules established by the Ad Hoc PSYOPs Committee created by NSDM 63. This paper was approved by the Ad Hoc Committee on Vietnam. In a July 6 memorandum to Kissinger analyzing the paper, Holdridge suggested that the objectives were "fairly traditional": persuading the leadership to change its policies; increasing internal tensions, doubts, and policies; and motivating the Vietnamese people to question the wisdom of the North Vietnamese Government. Holdridge then listed the proposed targets: the top Party leadership, the Party apparatus, the North Vietnamese people, and Communist forces in the north and south. The themes developed for each target were designed to convince them that the war could not be won and policies must be changed, to increase war weariness and discouragement among troops and the population, and to cause resentment and tension between northerners and southerners. Kissinger approved the paper on July 14. (Memorandum from Holdridge to Kissinger, July 6, attaching a memorandum from Sullivan to Kissinger June 17 and a paper prepared by the Ad Hoc PSYOP Committee submitted to Sullivan on June 12; ibid., NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–216, NSDM 63)

316. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 4, 1970.

SUBJECT

Report of Hanoi Reaction to U.S. Moves in Cambodia

From a source who has been in touch with the North Vietnamese in Paris, our Defense Attaché in Paris has sent in a report on Hanoi's reaction to the U.S. operations in Cambodia. We consider that this report rings true, and may be a good indication of what Hanoi actually thinks about our Cambodian operation. It makes these points:

—The most upsetting factor to the North Vietnamese was that the U.S. behaved unpredictably in the Cambodian operation.

—The North Vietnamese estimate that to date they have lost about 30 percent of the supplies they had in Cambodia.[2]

—The North Vietnamese were also hurt by Cambodian actions against their agents. Many political cadres were lost. Others were ordered to fade into the environment and avoid capture. Hanoi will now attempt to work through the Khmer Buddhists who are presently unfavorable to the North Vietnamese.

—The North Vietnamese feel about 12 percent of the Cambodian population actively support them.

—Hanoi was disappointed by the lack of Soviet support and that Moscow had not broken with Phnom Penh. This has moved Hanoi closer to Peking.[3]

—Le Duan was dressed down by the Soviets who told him that they had invested large sums in his support but could not go beyond the present degree of commitment. They would make good the losses in the sanctuaries but it would take from four to six months (presumably to ship supplies from Moscow to Hanoi).

—There have been Chinese political cadres in Cambodia for some time, perhaps six months, mainly in the Northeast.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 147, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, 1 June 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. Holdridge sent this memorandum to Kissinger on June 3, noting that he was responding to a request from Haig to prepare a memorandum of Walter's report. A stamped notation on the memorandum reads: "The President has seen, June 8, 1970."

[2] Nixon highlighted this paragraph.

[3] Nixon highlighted this paragraph.

—The North Vietnamese contact maintained that they would continue to fight despite the factors listed above while awaiting the departure of U.S. forces from Cambodia. They would then try to gain a spectacular success over the ARVN.

Comment. The source for this information is a Frenchman who lives in Paris but who had previously lived for many years in Hanoi. He has good contacts among the North Vietnamese in Paris. Some of his reporting appears to have been of questionable accuracy, but much more of it has checked out. As I noted, we regard this piece as being probably true.

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317. Editorial Note

No minutes have been found for the Washington Special Actions Group meeting of June 4, 1970. A June 4 briefing memorandum for this meeting from John Holdridge to Henry Kissinger indicates that the issues to be discussed were the same as for the meeting of June 2 (see Document 314). The briefing memorandum for the next meeting on June 8 indicates action had been taken as a result of the June 4 meeting. Johnson sent a backchannel message to Bangkok outlining levels of support for the two Thai regiments to be assigned to the Black Panthers in Vietnam thus freeing two regiments already in Vietnam for possible duty in Cambodia. Johnson also outlined the level of support for the two ethnic Thai–Khmer regiments that could be recruited and replace the regular Thais in Cambodia. Johnson sent cables to Bangkok endorsing Thai air support for forces operating in Cambodia and for the plan for Thailand to loan Cambodia five T–28 aircraft to replace similar planes of the Cambodian Air Force which were undergoing repairs. These cables are attached to the June 8 briefing memorandum. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meetings, Cambodia, 6/4/70 and 6/8/70)

318. Memorandum From the Director of the Program Analysis Staff of the National Security Council (Lynn) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, June 5, 1970.

SUBJECT

Cambodia and South Vietnam

At Tab A is an update (as of June 2, 1970) of my earlier memorandum on the Cambodian operation.[2] As before it consists of:

—an analysis of the military impact of Cambodia operations (the latest numbers are used);

—a decision framework for thinking about U.S. options in Vietnam in the future.

However, this version of the paper discusses at some length the main criticism leveled against the earlier version, viz., that I was wrong in asserting that our cross-border operations have led the NVA/VC to be more aggressive and ambitious in Cambodia than they would have been otherwise.[3]

The contrary view is that we had solid evidence, both from the fact of increasing NVA/VC attacks in Cambodia's eastern provinces and south of Phnom Penh and from captured documents and COMINT, that Hanoi definitely planned, prior to our operations, to defeat the Lon Nol government militarily and establish a Communist regime in Cambodia. Our Cambodia operations, according to this view, can be credited with dealing a military setback to the Communists, relieving the pressure on Lon Nol, and perhaps buying enough time for the present Cambodia government to survive with Allied assistance.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 6/8/70. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for action. Drafted by Lynn.

[2] The updated memorandum was attached at Tab A but is not printed. The earlier memorandum from Lynn to Kissinger, May 28, was entitled, "Evaluation of Allied Operations in Cambodia." (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 585, Cambodian Operations, Cambodia/Vietnam, 31 May Meeting)

[3] In a May 30 memorandum to Kissinger, Haig took strong exception to Lynn's May 28 memorandum claiming it "lacked the kind of objectivity" Haig had come to expect from Lynn. Haig continued, "he has in almost every instance gone to great pains to emphasize the negative aspects of our involvement in Cambodia. In some instances, he does this by mentioning negative statistics while avoiding counter balancing favorable statistics which a minimum of objectivity demands. In other instances, he cites unfavorable data which is tenuous at best and uses it to support the most pessimistic conclusions." Haig then proceeded to take issue with specific conclusions in the Lynn paper. (Ibid., Box 1009, Haig Special Files, Vietnam Files, Vol. V, [1 of 2])

I fully realize the uncertainties of estimating what would have happened had we not carried out the Cambodia operations. You probably have evidence that I do not. Based on the evidence available to me, however, I think the above line of argument is probably wrong, and important consequences flow from this conclusion. The conceptual framework and analysis are at pages 14 through 20.

This may seem like a moot argument, but I think it is of great relevance. It is in effect a plea that we undertake the most careful, objective and thorough analysis we possibly can in deciding future policy in Southeast Asia or, for that matter, anywhere else. Unless we are deliberately thorough, we can easily be misled or wrong.

We have improved the paper in other ways, and it is much more readable.

As a follow-up to our recent conversations, I would like to supplement the thoughts in the paper to (a) account more explicitly for Cambodia and (b) describe more concretely steps that have and can be taken to improve our position in Vietnam and thereby the prospects for Vietnamization and negotiations.

Concrete proposals are at the end of this memorandum.

Cambodia

I am convinced that:

—(a) the U.S. was compelled by political circumstances to act to assist the Lon Nol government, and

—(b) the U.S. had to act in Cambodia to the extent required to protect its strategic and military interests in South Vietnam.

I also believe that the U.S. must now act rationally in response to the new situation in Indo-China. In selecting its course of action the U.S. should:

—weigh carefully what U.S. interests in Cambodia imply about the extent to which we should support the Lon Nol government (there is a sharp difference between the necessity to assist a threatened government and the necessity to underwrite the continued existence of that Government no matter what the cost);

—analyze the relationship between our Vietnamization and negotiations objectives for South Vietnam and possible actions required to support our interests in Cambodia;

—consider possible NVA/VC and other enemy reactions to alternative moves we might make in Cambodia and the risks and opportunities they imply for us.

Cambodia may be on the verge of collapse, militarily and economically, if not politically.

Militarily, I have seen few, if any, reports of determined offensive or defensive ground force actions against enemy forces by Cambodian

army units. Only U.S., ARVN, and Khmer Krom forces can be so credited. As the enemy recovers from the shock of U.S./ARVN operations, the defense of Phnom Penh and its key LOC's to Kompong Som and Thailand will require a major boost in Cambodian force effectiveness.

Economically, the requirement to pay a force more than five times as large as the pre-March 18th army will almost certainly result in greater government expenditures concomitantly with a decline in government tax and customs revenues caused by the fall in shipping and business activity resulting from the war. Reports indicate foreign exchange reserves have dwindled, meaning imports will not be available to dampen inflation.

Additional military setbacks, coupled with economic difficulties will strain the political relationships within Lon Nol's government. On top of this, the onus of ARVN's continued and often harsh actions in Cambodia will probably become more difficult for Lon Nol to live with after U.S. units leave. Meanwhile, Thieu's, or more likely Ky's, stake in Cambodia, as well as that of General Tri and others, could make ARVN's continued presence an explosive political issue in South Vietnam, as well as between Cambodia and Vietnam.

I would not pretend to have sorted these issues out or be certain of their impact on our policies toward Cambodia. However, this government still has the opportunity to examine and make its decisions on the best evidence and judgment it can muster.

I do not know how current Cambodian decisions are being handled. I have tried to get information from the Joint Staff so I could do some analysis, but all attempts have met with failure. I cannot even obtain a copy of the daily NMCC Operational Summary so I can follow military developments in South Vietnam more closely.

If the WSAG is the decision-making forum, my observation of its earlier performance moves me to urge strongly that you consider chartering a special group to do the analytical thinking that must back up intelligent decisions on the new and complex issues raised by Cambodia.

Your earlier recourse to such a group resulted in an excellent paper on assistance options in less than a week.[4] I believe that such a group could address the issues I raised above as well as analyze:

—the enemy threat to Cambodia: the enemy's main and insurgent force capabilities, enemy intentions, and the enemy's strategy;

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[4] Reference is to a study prepared by the WSAG Cambodia Working Group on options for U.S. assistance to Cambodia submitted to Kissinger on April 22. (Ibid., Box 506, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. III, 10 April 1970–23 April 1970)

—the capability of Cambodian forces, with various levels of U.S. and U.S.-sponsored assistance to cope with the enemy threat and the outcomes that can be expected;

—the role that Thai and GVN forces can play in assisting the Lon Nol government;

—the economic situation in Cambodia, the requirement for external assistance, and possible sources of economic aid;

—the implications of possible Cambodian developments for the military situation in South Vietnam to include an assessment of:

—the effect of enemy and friendly unit diversions from South Vietnam to Cambodia on the situation in South Vietnam;

—the effect of Cambodian developments on the logistics capabilities of the enemy to support operations in III and IV Corps;

—the strategic significance of the new Cambodian situation for the GVN's Delta/III Corps strategy, e.g., does this make NVA units in the Delta more vulnerable than before? Will the enemy seek to open new supply corridors through the upper Delta from Northeast Cambodia? Should the U.S. re-consider its abstinence from operations in the Delta in order to achieve lasting gains by ousting NVA main force units? Should DMZ-like barriers or similar arrangements be made to secure South Vietnam's border with Cambodia?

Recommendation

I recommend you establish an interagency group similar to the one you convened earlier to analyze the major issues bearing on current Cambodian events and develop alternative U.S. courses of action for Cambodia.[5]

If you approve, I recommend you sign the memorandum at Tab B.[6]

Vietnam

I believe that as a result of a series of actions you have recently taken, there is a chance that the government is assembling the analytical elements that can provide the basis for decisions leading to a more coherent Vietnam strategy:

—On May 27, 1970, you sent Secretary Laird a memorandum asking him to forward proposals for future RVNAF force development

[5] Kissinger initialed the approve option and wrote at the top of page 1: "Tab B is not a directive. It has no addressee." The memorandum from Kissinger reconvening the WSAG Cambodia Working Group was sent to Packard, Johnson, Helms, and Wheeler. (Ibid., NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 6/8/70)

[6] The draft Tab B without the addresses was not attached.

and U.S. support along with an analysis (which you requested in an April 6th memorandum) of the principal alternatives;[7]

—On May 19, 1970, you sent CIA Director Helms a memorandum asking for his assessment of the VC/NVA proselyting and penetration activities, their implications for U.S. goals in Vietnam, and possible GVN/U.S. actions to counter them;[8]

—You recently approved the dispatch of a memorandum to Ambassador Bunker transmitting the Countryside Paper[9] and asking for a Mission assessment of the status of the VCI and programs to counter it, the GVN leadership problem, and land reform;

—The VSSG is now preparing ceasefire and economic assistance papers, and I have dispatched a first-rate economic study team to Vietnam.[10] These actions should provide options for possible decisions on these critical and long-pending policy issues;

—VSSG work is underway on a main force paper which should result in fundamental insights into the main force war and such issues as ARVN performance, enemy logistics vulnerabilities, the relationship between enemy infiltration and enemy main force options and the enemy's use of base areas.

In short, I believe the groundwork is being laid for a more sophisticated and possibly more successful Vietnam strategy than this government has ever had.

It would be a great loss if at critical junctures we ignored what we have learned and proceeded instead to decide each move piecemeal, in the relative absence of good analysis, hoping for the best, and without thinking through the consequences.

Very few knowledgeable people on this war accept the assumptions or share the pseudo-empirical assessments of either the war's leftist opponents or its patriotic-military advocates. Unfortunately, our Vietnam policy to date has vacillated between heeding the fears of the former and embracing the hopes of the latter.

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[7] Both are attached to a memorandum from Laird to the President, June 5, announcing to the Chairman of the JCS interim decisions on modernization and Vietnamization. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 146, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, May 1, 1970)

[8] Not printed. (Ibid.)

[9] Reference is to the Vietnam Special Studies Group paper of May 13, "The Situation in the Countryside." (Ibid., NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–2, VSSG Meeting, 5/20/70)

[10] According to telegram 0883270 to Saigon, May 29, the team included Charles Cooper and Albert Williams of the Rand Corporation and Willard Sharp of AID. (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 VIET S)

Recommendations

—(a) Your actions listed above have moved us in the right direction, and I believe the quest for good analysis is picking up some momentum. In a very real sense, however, I fear we have thus far failed in our analysis to bring this knowledge to bear in the proper forum at the proper time.

Earlier, you approved my recommendation that the NSC meet on the VSSG Countryside paper and other VSSG work. I still believe we should have such a meeting, perhaps after we have obtained Ambassador Bunker's comments and, as you indicated, after the ceasefire paper is done. We should begin surfacing the real issues.

Later meetings could be held on Secretary Laird's plans for RVNAF, ARVN performance, and the enemy's strategy.

Last week, you asked me to prepare a memorandum for the President on my "Vietnamization concerns." In the meantime, Secretary Laird has sent the President a memorandum that indicates he has become aware of the threats to Vietnamization described in our trip report in February[11] and in the VSSG Countryside paper. If you approve, I will combine these actions in a tour de force memorandum on the war for the President, which recommends that the NSC address the major issues raised above.[12]

—(b) It is important that we act now to follow up the Cambodian operation with decisive action in South Vietnam and along the Cambodian border. At Tab C is a memorandum[13] that requests assessments from Secretary Laird and General Abrams on the following possible actions:

—large-scale attacks on base areas within South Vietnam;

—a blockade of Cambodia with Cambodia's cooperation to establish a precedent for control of international shipping into Cambodia in the event the enemy attempts to re-supply the areas in Cambodia he controls by sea or if Lon Nol falls;

—a new pacification offensive;

—expansion of ARVN or South Vietnamese territorial forces to cope with the threat in Cambodia and replace U.S. troops in South Vietnam;

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[11] A summary of the report, March 11, is ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 144, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, March 1970.

[12] Kissinger initialed the approve option.

[13] Tab C is attached but not printed.

—the use of U.S. troops in the Delta to help ARVN clean out still active VC base areas and destroy recently infiltrated and vulnerable NVA regiments;

—special border control measures on the South Vietnam–Cambodia border to include establishment of new RF–PF outposts, special river patrol measures, the establishment of natural or technological barriers.

The memorandum asks for views on other measures deemed feasible by Laird or Abrams and the response is due on June 15, 1970.

I recommend that you sign the memorandum at Tab C for Secretary Laird.

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319. National Security Study Memorandum 95[1]

Washington, June 6, 1970.

TO

The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT

U.S. Policy Objectives in Indo-China

The President has directed that a study be prepared on an urgent basis of U.S. interests and the short-term U.S. policy alternatives in Indo-China, with particular emphasis on the implications of the Cambodian situation.

This study should be done on the assumption that there is no progress toward a settlement in Indo-China through an international conference or other diplomatic initiatives. It should include discussion of, but not be limited to, the following subjects:

—Our interests and objectives in the current situation; e.g., the degree to which we consider important the maintenance of a non-Communist Cambodian Government.

—The steps which the U.S. might take directly or in support of other countries to further those interests and objectives.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 365, Subject Files, NSSM 43–103. Top Secret; Nodis; Sensitive. A copy was sent to Wheeler.

—The issues and options for U.S. policies if the Cambodian Government falls.

—The effect of various U.S. actions on efforts toward reaching a political settlement in Indo-China.

The President has directed that this study be prepared by an ad hoc group chaired by a representative of the Secretary of State and including representatives of the addressees of the memorandum and of the NSC staff. It should be undertaken on a priority basis to enable it to be considered concurrently with NSSM 94 and submitted by June 15, 1970.[2]

Henry A. Kissinger

[2] The response to NSSM 95 was prepared on June 24. (Ibid.) It was not considered concurrently with the response to NSSM 94; see Document 336.

320. Memorandum From Richard Smyser of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, June 8, 1970.

SUBJECT

Message from General Walters regarding Meeting with Le Duc Tho

Hanoi has turned down our suggestion for another meeting with Le Duc Tho with language which clearly indicates that it wants to keep the channel open. Hanoi's reply was noteworthy for the following:

—It stated that there had to be a "temporary suspension" of the meetings (allowing for later resumption).

—After repeating the charge that we had caused the Cambodian coup, it blamed the suspension of the meetings on that rather than on any substantive breakdown. In fact, it stated that substantive discussions had "barely" started.

—Nor did it link our air attacks to the suspension of the meetings, though it did cite them as evidence of our desire for "military victory."

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 853, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. V. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only.

—It added further that the meetings would produce nothing useful "at this juncture" (again keeping the door open).

—The preconditions to another meeting are very vague and can be interpreted as forbidding or as virtually perfunctory. We can try to claim that we have met them after the Cambodian operations are finished, in order to test Hanoi's intent.

—As for settlement conditions, this message failed to mention the NLF "ten points" or the usual Communist demands for U.S. withdrawal and for a "provisional coalition government."

This statement represents the minimum that Hanoi could say under the present circumstances, particularly because Hanoi may well believe that we did cause the Cambodian coup and that, in any event, there can be no serious negotiations until the Cambodian outcome is a little clearer.

At the same time, Hanoi obviously wants to keep the door open. This may reflect its desire to negotiate seriously or its estimate that our continued contacts reduce the likelihood of further American escalation. In either case, it is an indication that North Vietnam's situation at this point is not free of pressure either.

Attachment

Memorandum From the Senior Defense Attaché in Paris (Walters) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

Paris, undated.

Herewith text received evening five June from Tran Viet Dung. Titles omitted in text. "Recently Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho had meetings with Kissinger. In course of the meetings from side of DRVN we have always shown goodwill and a serious attitude in order to achieve peaceful and just solution for Vietnamese problem. Barely had these meetings started to discuss substantial questions when the United States fomented a coup d'état in Cambodia for purpose of preparing extension of the war to the whole of Indochina and to exercise pressure on negotiations. This led the meetings to a negative result and a temporary suspension. In fact the United States and the Saigon administration at their orders subsequently launched tens of thousands of their troops into an aggression against Cambodia. At the same time United States Air Force carried out several attacks against territory of DRVN thus infringing its sovereignty and security. All of these facts are sufficient to show clearly that the United States are still seeking a

military victory. This prolongs and spreads the war and shows that they are not animated by a sincere desire to solve peacefully the Vietnamese problem. The words of peace and goodwill uttered by the United States are more empty words without meaning. That is why at this juncture a meeting between Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho on one hand and Kissinger on the other as proposed by American Government at the beginning of month of May will bring nothing useful. However, as soon as United States have renounced the use of military pressure and show goodwill and a serious attitude for the purpose of seeking a peaceful and just solution to Vietnamese problems, Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho will be ready to meet again with Kissinger. But if the United States continues to prolong and extend their war of aggression, the Vietnamese people are determined to fight to recover at any cost their independence and freedom. The negotiations in Paris are presently at an impasse for which the United States must assume the entire responsibility."

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321. Editorial Note

No minutes have been found for the Washington Special Actions Group meetings of June 8 and 9, 1970. Briefing memoranda for these meetings from John Holdridge to Henry Kissinger, June 8, indicate the issues to be discussed: provision of captured Communist arms to Cambodia, improvement of intelligence collection and analysis concerning Cambodia, the response to the North Vietnamese/Viet Cong attack on Seam Reap (including the psychological impact of the possible fall of Seam Reap and the nearby ruins of Angor Wat), the situation in the Green Triangle, the reconditioning of Cambodia T–28 aircraft, and the provision of communications equipment to Cambodia. The Lon Nol government urgently requested South Vietnamese air support and Thai troops to defend Seam Reap, and General Creighton Abrams advised that the South Vietnamese should set up a helicopter base at Seam Reap. The subsequent recapture of the air strip at Seam Reap eased the situation, but it remained precarious. There was also discussion of Cambodia making a formal appeal to the 1954 Geneva Co-Chairmen, the International Control Commission, the United Nations Secretary-General, and the Pope, but the feeling—at least as reflected in the briefing memoranda—was that these moves were premature. Kissinger charged the Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency with making recommendations to improve intelligence collection in Cambodia. Lon Nol asked that all North Vietnamese/Viet Cong arms caches cap-

tured in the sanctuaries be turned over to Cambodia. The issues of reconditioning Cambodian aircraft and providing communications equipment to Cambodia were not resolved at these meetings. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Boxes H–074 and H–075, WSAG Meetings, Cambodia, 6/8/70 and 6/9/70)

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322. Telegram From the Embassy in Cambodia to the Department of State[1]

Phnom Penh, June 9, 1970, 0440Z.

1176. Joint State–Defense message.

1. As the deadline for the withdrawal of American troops from Cambodia approaches, it appears well to begin serious consideration of situation which we will be facing following that date and what should and can be done about it. This is, of course, based on the presumption that the situation in Cambodia and elsewhere in Indo-China will not see an early resolution.

2. The situation as we see it after June 30 will be as follows:

A) US troops pull out of Cambodia;

B) Partial ARVN pullout;

C) GOC will not control area east of Mekong or north of Prey Veng Province except for perhaps small area east of Kompong Cham town and near Mimot, but even these will depend on presence or assurance of SVN help. Exception may be small GOC forces in Rattanakiri which will survive only if continued help supplied by US/ARVN efforts.

D) Area west of Mekong north of line between Kompong Cham and Tonle Sap Lake may also be largely in NVNA/VC hands.

E) Prospect in southern border provinces can be tolerable if ARVN either leaves troops in area or is willing to provide assistance, if and as needed. However, NVNA/VC will probably continue harassment operations in area as they do presently.

F) Western and southwestern areas of Cambodia also run risk of increased disturbances in view of reported infiltration to west by NVNA/VC forces pushed from sanctuary areas near coast.

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[1] Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 27 CAMB/KHMER. Top Secret; Nodis; Khmer; Immediate. Repeated to Bangkok, Canberra, Saigon, COMUSMACV, COMUSMACTHAI, and CINCPAC.

G) The FANK will just have begun process of formation and training with limited arms and equipment and almost no organization.

H) The economy is already at an almost complete standstill. Not only are exports and imports down, but internal commerce and thereby the flow of money has come to an almost complete halt. This has been caused and will continue as a result of NVNA/VC occupation of territory and of the cutting of communications facilities, as well as such necessary measures as restrictions on movements, curfews, and the restriction of urban night life. All of the above result in such disruption that private business is almost non-existent and government revenues have virtually dried up. Taxes, for example, can no longer even be collected in large part of Cambodia. The result can only be the eventual disappearance of foreign reserves and a desperate situation internally as concerns the essential payment of troops, government employees and government services. For the Nonce, the GOC can continue thanks to a largely agricultural economy, larger foreign exchange holdings than many underdeveloped nations and the possibility, according to most local banks, of being able to issue some 2 billion riels without damaging the value of the local currency.

I) Although top level GOC leadership does not appear fully aware of the need to extend itself to rally the population, there is no reason to believe that it will not continue to enjoy the support of the population in areas it controls.

J) There are encouraging signs that local officials continue to make individual efforts to explain events to the population. This can be expected to continue, as well as better selected efforts against the NVNA/VC as contrasted with earlier broadsides which gave rise to serious, non-specific anti-Vietnamese feelings.

K) In areas reoccupied by Cambodia or freed by US/ARVN actions, the GOC has begun to reinstall administrative officials. This can be expected to continue as long as security can be guaranteed.

L) There are increasing reports of Cambodian peasant disillusionment with Sihanouk and that Communist efforts to establish FUNK is meeting with extremely limited success. However, after June 30 GOC efforts in this field must become more urgent, both from the point of view of propaganda and counter-insurgency.

M) Whether republic is proclaimed or not after June 30, it is virtually already in being. Evidence indicates that political groupings beginning to form within parliament and that Sangkum party no longer viewed as the ultimate political vehicle. Political developments outside of Phnom Penh difficult to assess for purposes gauging present political power centers. As noted in L above, Communists probably not succeeding in filling gap left by Sihanouk.

N) There is a good possibility that US, SVN, and Thai will have been able to contain the NVNA/VC advances in most areas, although the northeast and north will have been lost temporarily as enemy establishes redoubt extending into Laos and incorporating half the area alongside the SVN frontier.

3. Assuming that the GOC can hold on until June 30 thanks to the aid of its friends, we believe that situation will be beginning to be clarified to some extent. There may possibly be a delineation of "fronts" in specific regions. In any case, the United States' effort to assist Cambodia will be well launched but the serious need will be to continue it along its present limited path with a few variations. Equally if not more vital will be the moves of the other nations in the political, economic and military fields. The Undersecretary's statement to a recent visitor that the ultimate solution to the Cambodian crisis lies in the diplomatic field is quite correct. Nevertheless, if other immediate assistance in the military and economic/financial field is not forth-coming, there will remain nothing for diplomacy to deal with. Therefore, we would raise various suggestions, both precise and general, to be considered for the period after June 30, 1970. Some of these concern the USG, others concern other actual or potential aid donors. Some are specific, others are general in nature:

A) Continued diplomatic efforts by Djakarta group and others as well.

B) ARVN troops should either remain in some parts of Cambodia or should be stationed near enough to the border on an alert basis so as to be able to intervene when needed by Cambodians. Arrangements should also be made to base appropriate SVN aircraft at Phnom Penh airfield to provide emergency air support or troop lift for Cambodian forces since weather during monsoon season is usually better at Phnom Penh than at Saigon or other SVN airfields which may be used support operations in Cambodia.

C) Training of Cambodian forces either in SVN, Thailand or Indonesia, or in Cambodia itself by foreign advisors, should be urgently initiated if not already underway before end of June. Training might be effected in both camps or through use of mixed forces, as discussed already by Cambodians with Thais and South Vietnamese. Despite optimistic opinion of Cambodian troops in some quarters, most are presently a pretty miserable lot, perhaps with the necessary will but without training, organization or experience. Cambodians themselves prefer training in SVN training camps near SVN/Cambodian border where troops can be trained, armed, and equipped simultaneously.

D) Air support should be available at all times and urgent fulfilling of communications needs.

E) Some sort of transportation facility should be organized. Perhaps an ARVN helicopter group could be placed at the disposition of the FANK when needed.

F) Serious consideration should be given to the removal from Phnom Penh of A–1 aircraft which are out of commission but do not appear to require too much work to be put back into shape. These could either be repaired for Cambodian use or, if needed elsewhere, could be purchased from the GOC.

G) Meanwhile, T–28s should urgently be turned over to the GOC in place of inoperable ones presently in Phnom Penh. This should start before June 30 but should continue thereafter. Serious consideration should also be given to providing support (parts and maintenance assistance) for the 11 C–47 aircraft in the inventory. Numbers of cargo aircraft should also be increased, possibly by loan, to provide greater air resupply capability to counter further lack of ground security.

H) In the medical area, too, aid is needed. Probably sufficient help forthcoming from Japan, ROK and others with regard medical supplies but organization help required. Here, ICRS and others such as Austria, Sweden, etc., might provide medical teams, equipment (FANK possesses only 8 ambulances), etc.

I) As regards military equipment, re-supply will be major factor support of Khmer Krom and 65,000 Khmer troops set as limit FY 70 USG effort. We tend toward limiting equipment effort there and letting others do rest, perhaps with indirect USG assistance in some cases.

J) In naval field we support idea of modest program involving supply of spare parts, clothing, ammunitions and communications plus small number of PBRs and some vessels such as LCTs, LCMs and one or two LCUs which useful and necessary transport men and supplies year around and which can also supply modest fire support.

K) Economic factor alluded to above is that of future financial plight of GOC, whether or not war drags on. Here, we believe main burden should be that of others such as Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, either through cash grants or loans or through such programs as a commodity import one to generate funds for GOC use. Eventually, and perhaps sooner, USG should begin consideration of an aid program but one not requiring an AID mission.

4. In conclusion, we wish stress again our belief in support for Cambodia as nation desirous helping itself and whose policy of neutrality USG supports. Regretably, Cambodia completely unprepared defend self, having untrained and poorly-equipped military establishment. Nation has will but not ability to fight war and needs time for organization, training, etc. USG, SVN and Thailand currently buying time through their efforts. However, more is needed especially in economic/financial fields in order avoid future collapse on other front.

This is where others should be pushed assist. The USG should continue its proposed program, including the decision not to install MAAG or other missions in Cambodia. While this means more work for both Saigon and Bangkok, they are equipped handle it and thereby enable USG, for what is probably first time, to really implement what I have long felt was generally successful Communist method of assistance: that is, aid to a country through money and matériel in multi-national efforts but not troops or large missions which become too directly involved. In Cambodia I believe we have exceptionally good opportunity make this work in that issue not merely "communism" vs "democracy" (which always hard to explain and of little concern in new nations) but one of unified Khmer race against foreign enemy who trying impose communism.

Rives

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323. Editorial Note

On the evening of June 10, 1970, Assistant to the President Henry Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin spent 4½ hours cruising the Potomac on the *Sequoia*, discussing Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Europe and Soviet-U.S. relations. On June 15 Kissinger prepared highlights of the discussions for the President. Attached to the summary was a full record of the discussion. According to the summary highlights, the discussion on Southeast Asia went as follows:

"—Dobrynin said that the Cambodian operation had a great impact on the Soviet leadership and made them doubt our motives for a possible summit. While we had made some military gains, Chinese influence in the region had been bolstered and prospects for a settlement set back.

"—The Soviets have no interest in a communist government in Phnom Penh since it would be dominated by Peking. Dobrynin considered our Cambodian operations past history and probed for what kind of government we could tolerate.

"—Dobrynin asked if we were prepared to partition Laos, a suggestion he had heard from the State Department. I said we were ready to discuss any reasonable plan that would assure the neutrality and security of Southeast Asia.

"—*The North Vietnamese care about a political settlement, not about the rate of our withdrawals.* Dobrynin said elections were unacceptable to Hanoi. When I pointed to your April 20 reference to determination of the popular will, he wondered whether our proposal was still open. I told him all proposals had been reiterated in the April 30 and June 3 speeches.

"—Dobrynin had the impression from Hanoi that we were being rigid in my Paris talks with the North Vietnamese. He saw little chance for negotiating movement now, but the situation might change after June 30."

In the first paragraph above, Nixon underlined the phrase "Chinese influence in the region has been bolstered and prospects for a settlement set back," and wrote in the margin: "interesting." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 489, President's Trip File, Dobrynin–Kissinger, Vol. 1 [Part 2])

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324. Memorandum From John Holdridge of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, June 11, 1970.

SUBJECT

NSSM 94: Diplomatic Initiatives on Indo-China

At Tab A is a memorandum to you from Eliot of State transmitting the text of NSSM 94,[2] which deals with diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China we might take following the completion of current military operations in Cambodia in order to bring a settlement. The study

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 530, Country Files, Far East, Indochina, Vol. I, 1970–1971. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. Sent for action.

[2] Dated June 9, attached but not printed. Smyser also looked at this draft of the response to NSSM at Kissinger's request. In a June 12 memorandum to Kissinger, Smyser wrote that it was a "passable first cut" with some good ideas—collaboration with the Asian nations in the Djakarta group, international observers from Japan, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and cease-fire in place—but he thought it suffered from "a tendency to interpret its mandate very narrowly," did not give options or preferences, had internal contradictions, never assessed the Chinese role, relied too heavily on Soviet help, made no detailed look at the composition of a conference, and did not consider possible cooperation with Sihanouk. (Ibid.)

was drafted by a working group of the Vietnam Ad Hoc Committee consisting of Ambassador Sullivan as Chairman and representatives from Defense, the JCS, CIA, State, and the NSC staff. It has been cleared by all the Principals except yourself.

The study begins by outlining the kind of a settlement *we would hope to achieve:* ideally, a realization of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva agreements, but more realistically a defensive interrelationship against a continued Communist threat on the part of South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, with the first three perhaps being technically non-aligned and without the presence of U.S. combat forces, and with Thailand serving as a base from which U.S. military assistance could be provided. The importance of keeping the southern two-thirds of Cambodia out of Communist control is noted as a means of assuring territorial contiguity. It is assumed that the Communist threat would be subject to international supervisory constraints.

A *narrative discussion* then ensues which deals with the following subjects:

Section A: the various strategies which might be pursued to convoke an international conference on Indo-China, acting on the assumption that most nations would favor such a conference and that it could help to achieve our stated objectives:

—A *public call* by the President for an international conference;

—A *private approach by the President* to U Thant, the French, the Geneva Co-Chairmen, or all three;

—*Secret discussions with the Soviets* as a channel to Hanoi;

—*Direct discussions with the North Vietnamese* at Paris;

It is pointed out that in implementing these approaches the question of timing should be carefully considered.

Section B: the various international forums in which such a conference might get under way:

—*A renewed Geneva conference* on the 1954, 1962, or some expanded model, acting through the Geneva Co-Chairmen;

—The *conference of "interested parties" suggested by the French*;

—A *conference under the sponsorship of U Thant*, acting on the basis of his statement favoring a conference, and to be held in Geneva;

—A *conference using the nations attending the Djakarta Conference* on Cambodia as a nucleus;

—An *expansion of the current Paris talks on Vietnam* by the addition of Laotian and Cambodian representatives and maintenance of the "our side-your side" formula;

—*"Corridor conversations" on Indo-China coming out of Article IV consultations* among signatories of the 1962 Geneva Conference on Laos;

—A "*three-ring forum*" in which the *Paris talks would continue* and *negotiations would be opened between the opposing sides in Laos and Cambodia*, thus permitting a coordinated approach to the whole Indo-China problem.

Section C: the various proposals which the U.S. might make to induce an international conference and work toward a settlement ranging from acceptance of Communist demands at the one extreme and a virtual ultimatum on the other:

—*Accepting the NLF 10-point program* as the basis for an agreement on Vietnam;

—Expressing a willingness at Paris to *set a firm and early date for unconditionally withdrawing all U.S. troops* from Vietnam;

—*Softening our position on a political settlement in Vietnam* and expanding this theme to cover Laos and Cambodia, but not setting a timetable for U.S. troops withdrawals so as to retain leverage;

—*Proposing or initiating a cease-fire in Vietnam*, which could include an agreed general cease-fire without conditions, an agreed local cease-fire, and a unilateral US/GVN cease-fire;

—*Proposing a package deal* consisting of a standstill cease-fire throughout Indo-China, immediate exchange of POW's, reactivation of the ICC in all three countries, establishment of observer groups from the Djakarta Conference countries, and agreement by both sides to participate in wider Indo-China negotiations;

—*Appointing a prestigious figure to lead our Paris delegation* who would negotiate on the basis of the package incorporated in the President's April 20 speech (a further reduction in U.S. troop strength by next Spring might also be offered);

—Doing the same as above, but *setting a time limit on our willingness to follow this course* (with the implication that we would thereafter be prepared to use greater force);

—*Setting forth a carrot and stick proposal* which would stiffen our military role in Indo-China and deny economic aid to Hanoi for reconstruction if it refused to negotiate, but would greatly reduce the U.S. military presence, accept neutralization of Indo-China, and repeat President Johnson's Johns Hopkins aid offer if Hanoi were to become responsive.[3]

Section D: other initiatives which the U.S. might take to involve North Vietnam and other Communist nations if an international conference does not prove feasible (the study warns here that Hanoi probably still

[3] At the top of the page Kissinger wrote: "This is just a laundry list. How do we clean it up?"

considers the odds in its favor and will resist attending a conference unless it believes that it can gain its goals in South Vietnam through one, and that while it might eventually reassess this position in the light of military and political developments, there is as yet no sign it is doing so):

—*Working out an arrangement for a cease-fire and immediate exchange of prisoners of war,* along with the immediate reestablishment of the ICC in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia;

—*Moving to establish a support base in Thailand* to maintain the military viability of the three Indo-China states;

—*Taking action in Washington to permit military and economic assistance* to the three Indo-China states;

—*Announcing an accelerated rate of troop withdrawals*.

Section E: the various strategies which might be pursued with respect to regional conferences and initiatives whether or not an international conference is convened:

—*Associating ourselves with the objectives and actions of the Djakarta Conference communiqué,* possibly to include using Djakarta Conference nations to form Observer Groups;

—*Working to keep Sihanouk and the PRG from representing Cambodia and South Vietnam* in regional conferences or meetings, or from being accorded equal status;

—*Encouraging realistic discussions of Indo-China at regional conferences* and avoiding resolutions which would condemn our side;

—Working through Indonesia and Malaysia to keep Sihanouk and the PRG from being invited to the Non-Aligned Summit Meeting in New Delhi (this issue is already OBE'd—they were *not* invited).

—Not seeking any new regional conference on Indo-China but rather exploiting the Djakarta Conference;

—Taking advantage of the June 17 ASPAC Ministerial Conference in Wellington to obtain a fresh Asian endorsement of the Djakarta Conference conclusions;

—Seeking a fresh statement of intentions toward Cambodia and the Djakarta initiative from participants in the July SEATO and TCC ministerial meetings.

Section F: relating the Paris negotiations on Vietnam to proposals in an international conference:

—Accepting the concept that *all interested parties in an Indo-China settlement should preferably be brought into a single forum* to achieve a settlement (this might mean liquidating the Paris talks);

—Assuring that proposals which we support or sponsor in international forums are consistent with our position in Paris or in other Indo-China negotiations.

Section G: the pros and cons of all the alternatives set forth in Sections A, B, and C (you will want to go over these in detail, and they are not repeated here).

Comment: One problem which I have with the study is its assumption, notably in Section D, that Hanoi will resist going into an international conference until it is convinced that it will get everything it wants by way of a settlement, and that we will either have to soften our negotiating position considerably to gain Hanoi's participation or accept the possibility that an international conference simply cannot be arranged at the present time. This assumption, which was strongly pressed by the CIA drafter,[4] tends to downplay the constraints operating upon Hanoi (e.g. manpower shortages, the effects of Cambodia on Hanoi's strategy, and economic problems in North Vietnam), and thus infers that North Vietnam can go on as before for quite a while yet. In this respect, we have had more than a few remarks from various Soviets to the effect that Hanoi is "exhausted," which in turn follow in the wake of reports that the Soviets themselves are getting tired of underwriting Hanoi and would like to see Hanoi negotiate. It is therefore conceivable that over the next few months, if not now, Hanoi may become more receptive than the paper appears to think to the idea of an international conference. Whether or not it would be any more receptive to working out a compromise settlement remains hard to say, but there is some chance that once in a conference it would be as subject as ourselves to international pressures in favor of a settlement. (We may need to go through a period of heightened North Vietnamese military activity, for which the enemy now appears to be gearing up, before Hanoi shifts its stance.)

The foregoing observation aside, I believe that the study adequately outlines the various alternatives and the pros and cons connected with the key questions. If you should desire further drafting, however, it would be possible to accomplish this in conjunction with the work on NSSM 95, which is intended as a companion piece to NSSM 94 and which now has a completion date of June 19. With respect to interagency consideration, you may recall that you informed Ambassador Sullivan that the study would not be referred to the Review Group but to some higher-level body.

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[4] Kissinger wrote the following note in the margin at this point: "Why is CIA drafter?"

Recommendation:

That you approve NSSM 94 in its present form for high-level interagency consideration—approve.[5]

Disapprove, refer back to working group for further drafting.

[5] Kissinger initialed this option and wrote: "I want a meeting of the VSSG to be followed by consideration of this paper. Laundry list must be reduced. I need small group to clean [?] out a scheme—Winston [Lord] talk to me about this."

325. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, June 12, 1970, 2:30 p.m.

SUBJECT

Cambodia

PARTICIPATION

Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger

CIA
Thomas H. Karamessines
William Wells

Defense
Mr. Wade

JCS
Admiral Thomas Moorer
General Glick

NSC Staff
W.R. Smyser

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Tom Pickering

General Cushman said that estimates on the aid for Cambodia are being completed, and will be complete when Saigon comments. Mr.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1970–1971, 6/12/70, Jordan and Cambodia. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room. Kissinger initialed the memorandum from Holdridge, June 19, transmitting these minutes to him.

Karamessines said that the integrated Bunker–Abrams plan would be received that day and would be ready for the Tuesday meeting.[2]

Admiral Moorer, in response to Dr. Kissinger's question, said he has a report from Saigon on what they gave to Cambodia. More will come soon. Yesterday Cambodia got 600,000 rounds. Dr. Kissinger asked if this included material as well. He asked for a precise list of captured material shipped to Cambodia and what would be shipped next. The President wants this.

Dr. Kissinger said that we needed to increase our intelligence capacity in the Phnom Penh Embassy. We do not now have any information on what is happening in the Cambodian countryside or in the border areas, and we should get this information to be able to prepare for Communist military actions and to evaluate what we should do. He said the President did not worry about 6 more people, if they were needed. There was a discussion of the space shortage at the Embassy. Ambassador Johnson suggested that the increase be handled on an incremental basis. First a DOD complement of several people would be sent, as well as 5 Marines. State would send 2 (out of 3) administrative personnel. [*1½ lines of source text not declassified*] There was no objection to putting this proposal to Rives. Dr. Kissinger asked how soon we would have an increase in intelligence capacity; a week, perhaps? Mr. Karamessines said it would probably be longer.

Admiral Moorer said that the T–28's were on track. Five had been loaned from Thailand. We will send Thailand ten more of which five will go to Cambodia. He said that they wanted to give more authority for Salem House operations, and were testing for greater COMINT capacity. He said that General Abrams has uniforms for the Thai force of Khmers, but thought it would be best if Thailand made them—they would fit better. Dr. Kissinger asked if that would be soon enough.

Ambassador Johnson said that Lon Nol would like to see the results of the photo reconnaissance, and Admiral Moorer said he would be shown some.

The question was raised about money for the uniforms. Neither State nor CIA said they had the money, and the question was left open.

Admiral Moorer said that General Abrams would train two more battalions. The cost of the equipment would come from the MAP add-on funds for 1970–71. Ambassador Johnson asked why it could not be MASF-funded.

Dr. Kissinger asked why South Vietnam had stopped recruiting Khmers. Mr. Pickering said because it cut RF–PF recruitment.

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[2] There was no WSAG meeting on Tuesday, June 16. Karamessines probably is referring to the June 15 meeting; see Document 326.

Admiral Moorer said that they were trying to see how to exploit the captured documents found in the operations for what they revealed about enemy plans. Dr. Kissinger asked Mr. Smyser to ask the Psyops Committee to look into this.

Mr. Karamessines said that Cambodia had been trying to get a 5 or 10 KW transmitter from Thailand. Bangkok suggested putting one on the border, but not in Cambodia. Cambodia wants it in Phnom Penh, of course.

Ambassador Johnson said he had asked the Australian Ambassador that day if his country could provide a transmitter. Admiral Moorer said that he could get a portable 10 KW transmitter to Phnom Penh soon, but a 50 KW would take longer. He said it cost $380,000. Mr. Wells pointed out that Cambodia already had a large (50 KW) transmitter, and any additional would be to provide an alternative channel for listeners so they would not get tired of just one station. Ambassador Johnson said he had heard that there was none. Ambassador Moorer said that they could get a 10 KW transmitter from Okinawa to Phnom Penh on a loan basis soon. It was decided to have the working group look at this.

Ambassador Johnson raised the subject of the Black Panthers, indicating that the Thai were unhappy about the restrictions being placed on their operations.[3] General Abrams was not happy either. They cost a lot. He does not want more.

Ambassador Johnson had drafted a cable with an alternative proposal, which he had tabled.[4]

A discussion ensued about how best to undertake the action proposed in the telegram and to justify it. There are no funds for use of Thai forces in Cambodia. There was some discussion about whether we should argue that the forces were committed for the defense of Thailand, but Dr. Kissinger argued that this would hurt us with the Thais in justifying their presence at Long Tieng. He asked why we just did not tell them that we have no legislative authority to pay them in Cambodia.

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[3] According to a June 12 memorandum from Holdridge, briefing Kissinger for this meeting, State sent Unger instructions indicating that the United States could not legally support Thai troops in Cambodia. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–075, WSAG Minutes, 6/12/70)

[4] According to Holdridge's memorandum to Kissinger, June 12, the draft proposal envisioned supporting and upgrading two Thai regiments for the defense of Thailand that could be used in western Cambodia or southern Laos and given U.S. logistical support if an armed attack on Thailand developed. (Ibid.)

Ambassador Johnson said that, no matter what the reason, we want to train two regiments in Thailand rather than Black Panthers.

Dr. Kissinger reviewed the history of the issue and said that we were now back where we started—we have two Thai regiments as a strategic reserve, which is not what is needed.

Admiral Moorer said he would like to use forces across the border without U.S. support, but the Thais and the Koreans were not good for this.

Dr. Kissinger asked if the two regiments being developed would go into Cambodia. Ambassador Johnson said they would do so only if the threat to Thailand became clear and if the Thais themselves decided to move—with us paying. He said that his proposal would train regiments and let Thailand and Cambodia decide how to use them. But we would not give them special pay and allowances as for the Black Panthers.

Dr. Kissinger asked if this had not been agreed. Ambassador Johnson said only in the areas near South Vietnam; then payments could be made because the operations were Vietnam-connected. He said we would pay for the equipment and support, but not the special pay and allowances. [*1½ lines of source text not declassified*] We've said that it is up to them, but we cannot pay.

Dr. Kissinger asked what about the two Khmer regiments being trained by the Thais. Mr. Karamessines said this was in training. The packs will go in soon, and training will start July 1.

Dr. Kissinger then again reviewed the history of the discussions over the past three weeks, and said that we were back where we had been three weeks ago, without any forces to move into Cambodia when we moved out. Ambassador Johnson said this was correct, because of MACV's and Bangkok's attitude. He said that his proposal would get the process started, at least, at less cost than the Black Panthers. He said we could go ahead if DOD and the WSAG agree that we want to equip and train the Thai regiments in place. Mr. Ware said he would check, but thought DOD would agree, Dr. Kissinger said this seemed sensible, since the proposal would cost DOD less. Ambassador Johnson said that Thailand would get about $7 million less under this proposal.

Dr. Kissinger asked if the forces would be used in Cambodia. Ambassador Johnson said this was not certain, but they could use them in Thailand. The ISA representative indicated that we do not want the Thai pulling forces out of Thailand which are used to defend our bases.

Dr. Kissinger again reiterated that nothing seemed to be happening by June 30. Ambassador Johnson said that there were the two Khmer regiments, whom we could not pay a bonus. There was a brief aside discussion about the 1971 MAP, in which DOD said that $25 million had been reserved for Cambodia.

Mr. Karamessines asked if the Thai could not be asked to conduct a holding operation for three months. Ambassador Johnson pointed out that the Black Panthers, who are trained, cannot go into Cambodia without losing their allowances. [*1 line of source text not declassified*]

Dr. Kissinger again reviewed the history of the discussion, and again pointed out that there was nothing available to bridge the gap. He said that there have been many proposals and ideas and changes in proposals, and now we have a strategic reserve, but even that will not be ready in time. He said what was needed were units to bridge the gap. Hanoi will try to give us a serious blow in Cambodia after June 30, and what will we do?

Ambassador Johnson indicated the problem, [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] Dr. Kissinger said that we have to get ready quickly.

Mr. Wells asked if offset payments could be used, [*1 line of source text not declassified*]

In response to Dr. Kissinger's urging for some push, Mr. Karamessines said that we should put a three-month proposal to the Thais. We would pay for the upgrading if they would send forces into Cambodia, even though we could not pay allowances. Dr. Kissinger said this sounded good. The ISA representative said it was not certain whether it could be done.

Ambassador Johnson said we would propose to pay for the upgrading, and that we would ask Thailand what units they could use until the Khmer were trained.

Discussion of the Green Triangle began, but was deferred since the proposal is still being studied.

326. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, June 15, 1970, 3:15 p.m.

SUBJECT

Cambodia

PARTICIPATION

The President
Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger

CIA
Richard Helms
Thomas H. Karamessines
William Wells

Defense
David Packard

JCS
Admiral Thomas Moorer
General Vogt

State
U. Alexis Johnson
Marshall Green
Tom Pickering

NSC Staff
John Holdridge
Col. Richard Kennedy

Dr. Kissinger said that the President had the feeling when told about the steps we were taking in getting military assistance to Cambodia that we were proceeding at too leisurely a pace. He, Dr. Kissinger, had therefore called today's meeting to underline the importance which

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1970–1971, Cambodia 6/15/70. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room. Kissinger's staff produced a summary of the President's remarks at this meeting and Kissinger sent it to the participants on June 17 with the caveat that it was "absolutely for your own personal use and should not be distributed elsewhere." (Ibid.) At 7:45 p.m. on July 15, the President called Kissinger to ask if he thought that the WSAG "got the message?" Nixon continued: "They said they were trying so I just hope they got it. No doubt about what we were going to do—we were going to take some gambles and risks." Kissinger responded that it was "useful" that the President addressed the group, "you couldn't have made it more plain." Nixon stated: "Maybe they are going to come up with some things. I am going to watch it every 24 hours." Kissinger agreed that what was needed was, "more urgency." The President asked "What do you have in mind about the Lon Nol government?" Kissinger replied: "I don't think your position is that we tie ourselves to the man." Nixon exclaimed: "Never!" Kissinger stated that "Just as long as it is a non-communist government in Phnom Penh. There is no problem about that." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

the President attached to preventing Cambodia from going Communist, and to assure that a maximum effort would be made to achieve that objective. He wanted everyone to understand that this was national policy, and that within the policy guidelines under which we were operating, to see that the proper steps were being taken to supply arms and equipment, carry out air operations, to bring in what Asian forces could be gotten in, and to carry out a work program on which all had agreed. (Dr. Kissinger noted that it was his understanding there were no disagreements on this program.) It was his thought that the group would review where everything stands. One of the things for discussion was the movement of captured arms and equipment to Phnom Penh.

Admiral Moorer said that a message on this subject was in from General Abrams, but he was not satisfied with the message and was going back for further explanations. The list of equipment on hand or already turned over seemed too small. Mr. Packard remarked that a study had been made of the Cambodian supply situation in the Laotian Panhandle, and the fact was there was very little coming through this source. He offered to provide a briefing. The group decided, however, to defer this until later.

Admiral Moorer reiterated that he questioned the amounts on General Abrams' list of what was to be turned over to the Cambodians. It seemed too low. He would require that information be obtained from the GVN on what it had captured. General Abrams had promised a machine listing of all data, which would be a full-fledged inventory. Dr. Kissinger recalled that Lon Nol had said crew-served weapons were needed above all. Admiral Moorer observed that in the current list, there were only 30 crew-served weapons along with 800 individual weapons plus ammunition. General Abrams was apparently standing by with another long list, and was checking with Phnom Penh as to when the arms could be received.

Dr. Kissinger wondered if these arms were of any use to the ARVN, to which Admiral Moorer replied that some could be employed by the RF/PF. Mr. Packard noted that the issue was whether to send all stocks on hand, or rather to provide the arms as fast as the Cambodians could make use of them. Dr. Kissinger agreed that delivery should be related to the Cambodian's capacity to put the arms to use. Was Colonel Ladd also available to help out yet? Had any reports come in from him? Ambassador Johnson replied in the negative—Colonel Ladd had only been in Phnom Penh for three days, and in any event would be reporting through Rives.[2]

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[2] Retired Colonel Jonathan "Fred" Ladd, the special liaison official sent to Phnom Penh to coordinate military assistance to Cambodia, had a special channel that did not go through Rives; see Document 328.

Admiral Moorer said that a meeting was going on in Saigon now between MACV and representatives from Phnom Penh on the captured weapons, and that we were pressing hard to be forthcoming within the bounds of real life. The machine runout which he had mentioned of the entire inventory would be pouched from Saigon on June 16 and would reach here in 24 or 48 hours. It was too long to be put in a cable message. This list was being added to all the time, and the weapons stocks were being examined as to condition. Some needed reconditioning and repair, but our representatives knew what was wanted and would make the stocks available to the extent that the Cambodians could absorb them.[3]

Dr. Kissinger turned to the diplomatic side, and asked Ambassador Johnson what progress had been made in this field. Ambassador Johnson responded with the information that on personnel in Phnom Penh, [*2 lines of source text not declassified*] that Defense had been told to add five DIA personnel. Admiral Moorer added that the directive had already gone out on the Defense personnel. Dr. Kissinger asked if this was all that could be absorbed, and when these people would be in place. Admiral Moorer said that only two days would be required, since the personnel would come from within the area. He agreed with Dr. Kissinger that we could expect an improvement in our intelligence as a result. [*1 line of source text not declassified*]

At this point the President entered, and after explaining that he had been reading the daily progress reports over the weekend, said that he thought it would be useful for him to give his feeling of things as he saw them so that the members of the group could know what he believed ought to be done, and how much risk might be taken. The first point he wanted to raise was the question of whether it was in our interest to defend Cambodia; in answer to which he would say definitely "yes." It was important for Suharto and the Indonesians, as well as for the Thai and the Lao, to know that we were standing firm. There was a psychological factor here. The question was, too, could we with our resources and with the resources of others prevent the Cambodian Government from falling, and if that were the case, what measures were we justified in taking? The situation might appear dubious but he would equate the current views with the decisions which he had made on March 17 regarding the defense of Long Tieng in Laos. There we had decided to use our air power and commit the Thai battalions.

[3] On June 19 Kissinger sent the President a summary of military assistance—both from the United States and other countries—sent to Cambodia since April 28. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VII, 5 June 1970–19 June 1970)

It had been a close decision, but this decision had eventually had some effect. We had perhaps saved the situation for another year. In addition, we had bought time for the leaders of Vietnam, who now had a chance to go forward with Vietnamization.

Turning to Cambodia, the President remarked that we would have a much more serious problem there if Cambodia had gone down with the sanctuaries unstopped and with all the supplies still in them. Having moved, we had accomplished a great deal and could ask now what more Cambodia was worth to us and what we could afford to risk. We could make the argument that the U.S. shouldn't risk too much, so that if Cambodia did go down the U.S. would not be held responsible; however, world opinion would blame us anyway, in the way that the other side had blamed us when Lon Nol had taken over. Accordingly even if Cambodia were to fall, we would have to assume some of the responsibility. The advantage of keeping Cambodia independent was two-fold: one, it would be extremely useful in assuring the goals of the Vietnamization program to deny Sihanoukville and the sanctuaries from being used by the other side, and two, there would be a serious psychological impact if things went the other way. In this latter respect, knowing the attitudes of the Thai, Lao, and even the South Vietnamese, and taking into consideration the work of the Djakarta Conference, which was an effective effort made collectively to maintain Cambodian independence and neutrality, one reached an obvious conclusion.

Another factor which argued for taking the risks, the President continued, was that it was no secret that arms and training were being provided by the South Vietnamese, and in addition the Indonesians would be sending arms as a result of our providing them with more modern weapons. In the light of this help, it seemed important to determine in our own minds that we should do everything we could to shore up the Cambodians psychologically and militarily, and to take what heat we needed to take now rather than to let things alone and then fail through not trying. He wanted everyone to take a confident line with the press and in backgrounders. Perhaps Lon Nol would go down the tube; this could happen, but the Lon Nol Government appeared to have increasing support among the people.

The President observed that one of the best things which had occurred recently was the Djakarta Conference. However, more visibility was needed concerning the Conference to show that eleven Asian nations had gathered together to say that they wanted to help. Conceivably the diplomatic impact of this conference might also have a restraining influence on the North Vietnamese and on the Soviets, who in contrast to the Chinese appeared to want an international conference on Indo-China.

On the military side, the President said, he would urge the following things, which were not really new: first, to be sure that the very inadequate Cambodian Army received arms to the extent that we could supply them. These did not need to be sophisticated weapons such as tanks. There should be a greater sense of urgency, and not merely reports that the arms were awaiting shipment at the end of the runway. It would be a great psychological advantage to the Cambodians to know that we were helping. The President's second point was that it would be very helpful to get the Indonesians involved. When President Suharto was here he had spoken of a very modest program of providing Soviet arms in return for modernization, and we should cooperate with the Indonesians in this respect. This would be a very good thing to work out.

Regarding the Thais, the President mentioned that he knew the legal arguments and problems, but even Frank Church and several other Senators who had objected to Americans in Cambodia understood the principle of Asians helping Asians. This might be a costly business, and Congress didn't like it, but the South Vietnamese, the Thai, the Indonesians, and others had an economic excuse for not assisting on their own. In addition, there would be a great psychological effect.

On intelligence, the President said that we needed to know more of what was going on. There would be a problem in having too great a U.S. presence in Phnom Penh, but we should feel our intelligence was adequate, since so much rode on what we got. General Abrams had reported that even if the North Vietnamese were wandering around the country, they had not held any important positions; this suggested that they did not have too much muscle and were launching hit-and-run raids to create apprehension in the Capital. This also suggested that they did not have a great degree of staying power.

Another point raised by the President was keeping the South Vietnamese loose. He respected the views of General Abrams and others that the first responsibility of the South Vietnamese forces was the situation in South Vietnam, but this situation would be much more difficult if Cambodia were completely under Communist control. Or, looking at things in another way, the situation in South Vietnam would be much better if Cambodia were kept free of the Communist control. Therefore, the South Vietnamese forces should be kept loose both now and after June 30 so that if the North Vietnamese hit one place or another, the South Vietnamese would be in a position to do something. One of the main deterrents of the North Vietnamese actions was the actions of the South Vietnamese, and we needed to keep holding this over the North Vietnamese heads.

The President said that the last point he wanted to bring up was that of our air power and our activities. He had already talked about this in the NSC meeting two weeks ago, and gathered that it was un-

derstood what we would do between now and July. It was also understood that after July 1 we would continue our interdiction. This interdiction, the President stated, should be interpreted broadly, and it was very important that everybody in Defense knew this. The President reiterated that he believed it necessary to take risks now regarding public opinion, so as to see that Cambodia maintained its neutrality and independence. Perhaps there were those who would disagree, but the President himself felt that we should take these risks.

He asked the group to come up with positive action steps.

In his opinion things were going well on the diplomatic front, but it seemed to him that on the military front and supply front we were thinking too defensively. We should not be afraid of a negative reaction, but should think in positive terms. He wanted to see a report every day on what we are doing in the Cambodia area on the diplomatic, intelligence, military, and supply sides, and would watch closely the developments in these fields. It was his judgment that it was no good going way out, but it was worth taking risks. It was his intuition that the present Cambodian Government could be saved. He didn't know for how long, but that was the way we had to think. If we did not make enough effort, we would still be blamed by the international community. We should not worry about this—we should make sure we did enough, so that if we were blamed, it would be worth it.

Mr. Packard asked to say a few words on the situation on aerial interdiction. He was aware that the President was concerned about our not seeming to do much, but we were watching developments very closely, and knew that while the enemy was keeping his supply lines open in the Laotian Panhandle, he was not getting much in. There were very few targets. The President asked if we were supporting the South Vietnamese, to which Mr. Packard replied that we were doing so but that it was not feasible for us to go deep in as far as, say, Siem Reap with tacair because we had no way of telling enemy from friendly forces. There was also a weather problem, and our radar was not good enough for close air support. He wanted the President to understand, though, that we were doing everything we could, but that there were real limits.

The President stressed that he wanted an imaginative, positive approach. For example, if as the South Vietnamese moved around and there was any action they could take we should let them go. Admiral Moorer said, adding to what Mr. Packard had just reported, that up to the end of last week we had taken action to help extend reconnaissance throughout Cambodia, and had commenced to infiltrate teams of indigenous ground personnel. CIA was increasing its activities and we had finally taken steps to increase our ability in Phnom Penh to react quickly to intelligence data. Dr. Kissinger mentioned that a Vietnamese air unit had been established in Phnom Penh, and the President noted

he much preferred a Vietnamese unit to an American unit. Admiral Moorer mentioned that two intelligence officers were being sent to Phnom Penh who were experienced in evaluating the ground situation from the air, and who could fly with the South Vietnamese.

Ambassador Johnson stated [*2½ lines of source text not declassified*]. We could not pay the kind of allowances we had paid elsewhere, but we could hope that the Thai were sufficiently interested to go in anyway. The President expressed the thought that the Thai must indeed have a great interest in this matter, for if Cambodia and Laos were both to go, they would be deeply threatened.

The President noted that he had just received the new Cambodian Ambassador and wondered if we were planning to upgrade our representation.[4] Ambassador Johnson said that everyone was of the opinion it was now time to do so. Dr. Kissinger stated that a memorandum to this effect was now on the President's desk.[5]

The President then urged everyone to stick with it even more, and not to worry about the consequences. If we were to look around the world, as far as the U.S. was concerned it was very hard not to see difficulties. However, we had to face up to them. This of course did not mean that we should do the wrong things. As far as Cambodia was concerned, we hadn't wanted Lon Nol to act or Sihanouk to run off, but this had happened, and Lon Nol had opted for us and for neutrality. So we were in the box. Ambassador Johnson questioned whether our objective wasn't more to maintain a non-Communist Government rather than just to maintain Lon Nol, and the President agreed. The problem was not only like that in Vietnam, but also to establish a non-Communist Government in Cambodia which would not allow the North Vietnamese to wander around. The President understood Sirik Matak was the better of the two; in fact the President had once met him. The Cambodian Ambassador had brought a bowl from Matak and had said that Matak was an old friend. The President added that we were not backing any particular government, and that what we wanted was an independent, neutral government. If Lon Nol was not enough, we would not want to support him; we should not try to pull out the rug, though, until we see how well he does. Sihanouk had been for many years taken as the only leader, and no others had developed. This time, we might want to look around.

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[4] The President met from 11:37 a.m. to 12:33 p.m. on June 11 with five ambassadors who were presenting their credentials. Ambassador Sonn Voeunsai of Cambodia was one of them. (Ibid., White House Central Files, President's Daily Diary)

[5] Reference is to a June 11 memorandum from Rogers to the President that recommended four senior foreign service officers for the post of Ambassador to Cambodia. (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VII, 5 June 1970–19 June 1970)

The President asked Admiral Moorer if there were any good people in the Cambodian Army, and whether the Cambodians were fighting. Admiral Moorer explained that the problem for the Cambodians had been that the French had supplied all of the senior leadership, but they nevertheless were fighting, and were going back into the towns. In fact, for Cambodians they were not doing badly. Compared to Helms' Laotians, they were about a stand-off in military ability.

The President recalled that he had asked the Cambodian Ambassador about the popular attitude towards Sihanouk, and had been told that all Cambodians had loved Sihanouk but this love had been turned around when the Prince had gone to Peking. This may have been a self-serving observation. Ambassador Green remarked that the French had a lingering love for Sihanouk, but knew now he had gone completely over to the Chinese. The Russians felt the same way, and were yearning for an international conference. Dr. Kissinger asked if anything had been heard from Firyubin's visit and Ambassador Green responded negatively. The President underscored some of his earlier words on the need for an international conference on Cambodia. Ambassador Green referred to a cable just in from Moscow reporting the Australian Ambassador's conversation with Kapitsa, which had been very revealing.[6] The Soviets had wanted to get something going towards a settlement in Indo-China, but their hands were tied because of the Chinese influence in Hanoi. They felt, though, that it was important to get Hanoi to move in the direction of a settlement, and were of the opinion the Paris talks offered a possibility.

The President thought that this was very interesting.

Addressing the group as a whole, the President spoke of the long hours which everyone present had put in, and expressed his appreciation for the excellent work which everyone had been doing. He was most gratified with all of their contributions. He left the meeting at this point.

Dr. Kissinger said that the group could review progress at the beginning of the next session. This would be on Wednesday, at 11:30 p.m.[7] He referred to the Indonesian offer of 15,000 rifles, remarking if this was what they had in mind as the extent of their modernization program, we ought to be able to go ahead. Ambassador Green thought that they might be dragging their feet somewhat to which Dr. Kissinger spoke of conflicting messages coming in from Galbraith. Ambassador Green believed that the Indonesians would get moving after their meeting with the Soviets in Moscow on June 16. Our technicians for the Bandung ammunition factory were arriving on the 18th.

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[6] Not further identified.

[7] June 17; see Document 327.

327. Editorial Note

No minutes have been found for the Washington Special Actions Group meeting of June 17, 1970. The June 17 briefing memorandum for the meeting from John Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to Assistant to the President Henry Kissinger, indicated that the issues for consideration were those discussed at the last few meetings: review of positive steps taken to aid Cambodia with military assistance, intelligence and diplomatic support, radio transmitters for Cambodia, costs of U.S. assistance to Cambodia, shape of the Cambodian Military Assistance Program for fiscal year 1971, and the Green Triangle situation. Holdridge suggested that Kissinger ask a series of questions to determine what had been done in these areas and to encourage the relevant departments and agencies to do more. Check marks next to most of the questions suggest that Kissinger asked many of these questions at the meeting. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–075, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 6/17/70)

Prior to the meeting at 8:25 a.m. on June 17, Nixon called Kissinger and issued a series of orders: "I think one of the first projects for your group [the WSAG] is to get that town on the Sihanoukville Road opened. You know the one I mean? Tell them to get the whole South Vietnamese army, bomb them, everything. Tell them to get off their butts and get going and I want a report in two hours." The President hung up without a response from Kissinger. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File) At 8:35 a.m. Kissinger called Packard to tell him that "The President just read the newspaper . . . that there are 1500 troops in Kompong Speu and 5000 on the outside. He said that anyone who says they can't find targets there now should look for another job." Packard replied: "Well then maybe we should look for another job." Kissinger continued: "He [the President] wants the road opened if it takes the whole South Vietnamese Army and he wants a report in two hours, not of what can't be done, but of what can be done." Packard explained: "The problem is that they are holed up in the town. We got it surrounded. But the trouble with air strikes—the enemy's in the middle of the town—we could bomb it but it would destroy the town." Kissinger said not to do that: "My job is to transmit orders, but also to make some sense of them." He asked if Packard could provide a report in 2 hours. Packard said he would try. (Ibid.)

328. Backchannel Message From Colonel Jonathan Ladd to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig)[1]

Phnom Penh, June 18, 1970.

1. After four duty days in Phnom Penh, in which two were required to get into direct contact with highest level Cambodian officials, I believe things are beginning to move in accordance with President Nixon's desires.

2. My relations with Embassy staff have progressed, so far as I can tell, from curiosity as to why I was sent here to confidence that I will be an asset to Embassy operations and personal friendships and willing assistance in all that I have endeavored to accomplish.

a. I shall make this an interim report as I am not yet prepared to address meaningfully every aspect of your message to me.[2]

3. When I arrived, Sunday the 14th, my first impression was that this was a "business as usual" atmosphere and that little of the environment of urgency I encountered in Washington and at MACV existed. My arrival, the visit of Admiral Butts and Amb. Koren from CINCPAC, the growing rumors of attack upon Phnom Penh and the cables announcing the intelligence augmentations all have served to

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 85, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Phnom Penh (Mr. Ladd 4 of 4). Top Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only. [*text not declassified*] In a telephone conversation on June 18 at 6 p.m., the President told Haig to initiate actions to get additional South Vietnamese forces engaged in Cambodia, open up Route 1, and get a Thai regiment to Cambodia. Haig told the President that he had received a message from Ladd. Nixon asked: "Is he on the job and working?" Haig responded that Ladd was "going to start screaming for shipments. For stuff they need for psychological reasons." Nixon stated: "If they need trucks and armored vehicles, get them in there. Just get them in there. There are certainly plenty of them over there. I hope he realizes what we expect of him. Needle the hell out of him. I expect a report every 12 hours." (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 363, Telephone Conversations, Chronological File)

[2] In a backchannel message to Ladd, June 17, Haig informed him that the President wanted his personal assessment of five issues described in the footnotes below. Haig also informed Ladd that the "President wants any and all administrative bottlenecks and red tape cut in order to take those steps now needed to prevent a takeover of Cambodia by Communist forces." Haig suggested that "the coming days and weeks may be critical and that in large measure the outcome may pivot on psychological issues rather than military power." The North Vietnamese were intent on giving the impression that they were "systematically rolling up Cambodian countryside and isolating Phnom Penh by overwhelming military strength, with a view toward placing maximum psychological pressure on Cambodian regime." Haig stated that "we question whether enemy strength would permit takeover." He asked for Ladd's views. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 430, Backchannel Messages, Jonathan F. Ladd [Part 2])

change my first impression. Our principal problem internally is to organize this outfit into an effective staff to respond to the many requirements and tasks facing us. Heretofore the Embassy apparently operated as almost a "one-man-show." This is no longer possible and the fact is recognized by all concerned. I am receiving full cooperation from Mr. Rives. The Attachés are probably adequate professionally but are not the types to inspire confidence nor are they particularly well organized to tackle the problem at hand. They are now working directly under my control and I am attempting to get them productive.

4. Lon Nol met with Mr. Rives and me yesterday and again I met with him today after a full morning with his logistics staff. He has agreed to all of our recommendations concerning establishing realistic priorities, getting his requests funneled through me and not every Tom, Dick and Harry going to Saigon and to evacuate the forces he has in the Green Triangle.

5. Today FANK staff and I hammered out a priority list for receipt of captured enemy weapons and ammunitions and I sent it to MACV by back channel this morning advising GOC is ready to begin receiving priority one items immediately. A detailed breakdown of items by priority will be sent out front channel as soon as I finish this message.

6. With regard to your number one:[3] US response to reasonable requests from the GOC has been excellent. MACV is well organized and eager to assist and has had to play it almost by ear in the past. Requests sent by DAO were vague, incomplete and in some cases just efforts to make some high level Cambodian official happy. This has been corrected. The system as now established will work fine and as soon as the Cambodians get used to it I'm sure everything will smooth out.

7. Your number two:[4] So far as I have been able to determine the GVN assistance (material, training plans, transportation and the establishment of an effective liaison mission here in Phnom Penh) has been thorough, efficient and responsive. So far as the Thais and other countries are concerned, I know only what I read in the cables and although there is much talk, it seems all such offers end with a phrase or two about the assistance "of course" being paid for by Thais or Cambodian MAP. I will look into this in greater depth and report later. I assume action has already been taken to encourage our Embassies in po-

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[3] In the June 17 backchannel message to Ladd, Haig stated that the first assessment needed from Ladd was: "Adequacy and responsiveness in both type and quantity of U.S. shipments of military equipment to Cambodia and responsiveness of the current system in response to Cambodian military." (Ibid.)

[4] Requested assessment number 2 reads: "Scope and effectiveness of assistance measures, including provision of troops, military supplies and economic assistance by GVN, Thais and other countries." (Ibid.)

tential loner countries of Asia to talk to their host governments about the regional nature of this crisis, the opportunity for Asians to help Asians and the necessity for them to shoulder some of the expenses in a common cause.

8. Your number three:[5] So far as ground operations are concerned, except for the Green Triangle area, the air support in the form of flare dropping aircraft has been most helpful in defense of several towns. I will have to get the details for you. The gut problem so far as close tactical support is concerned is experienced ground controllers and personnel who can direct the airborne FALs to the targets. Right now I am told by DAO that some of the twenty-odd PRC25 given to the Cambodians are being used for this purpose (some carried in the back seat of a T–28 and some with units on the ground). How these people communicate with U.S. or VNAF aircraft, I just don't know but will find out and report later.

9. Your number four:[6] My early impression is that the most critical problem of command and control in FANK is communications. The defense of Phnom Penh relies primarily on the municipal telephone system which is not good under ordinary circumstances and would probably be inoperative if the city was attacked. Most troop units in the field rely upon runners and visual signals. I do not believe FANK has any reliable communications system with its major headquarters and garrisons throughout the country. Just before I arrived, MACV made a communications survey over here but I have not seen it nor am I a communications expert. I will try to get some meaningful data on this but suggest you ask MACV for a report on the survey. Next to communications, I consider the greatest handicap to tactical operations is lack of mobility. FANK uses broken down commercial busses and trucks to move troops on the ground. They have a few C–47's they could use if airfields happened to be available and not under enemy control or interdiction. Roads are reported to be "cut" by the enemy but I am inclined to feel "subject to interdiction" might be a better way to put it. Regardless of the wording, FANK has no effective reconnaissance vehicles (armored or non-armored) to keep the roads open or find and fix any enemy that may be there. I will report later on my findings on the FANK tactical planning capability. So far, I have had

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[5] Requested assessment number 3 reads: "Adequacy and responsiveness of current U.S. and VNAF air support. Is scope and timeliness of US/VNAF air support adequate to influence critical ground actions as they occur and what should be done to improve system through expanded authorities or improved technical and control capabilities?" (Ibid.)

[6] Requested assessment number 4 reads: "Measures which should be taken to improve proficiency of FANK operations, to include command and control and planning for effective tactical operations." (Ibid.)

time only to get deeply into the logistics problems. For the logistics field, however, I am impressed with their higher level capability to plan, extent and accuracy of their records and reports and their common sense approach to their problems. Their logisticians aren't dumb, they just haven't got much to work with.

10. Your number five:[7] To raise FANK military capabilities on a short term basis I think that:

a. They must obtain a means to communicate effectively from at least battalion level upward through FANK headquarters. Also, the Phnom Penh defense command must be able to communicate between its major elements.

b. They must have some better mobility capability (the 40 trucks scheduled for delivery in a couple of weeks will help ground mobility). They also need access to some rotary wing troop lift capability so they can move reinforcements of at least battalion size in a reasonable length of time.

c. They need weapons, mostly small arms and compatible ammunition, to arm the units of volunteers now undergoing training without weapons. I will try to refine this by precise weapons and numbers they can assimilate as soon as possible.

11. I agree with your assessment of the overall situation and concur that the outcome may indeed pivot on psychological issues rather than raw military power. I gather Lon Nol is encouraged by what we are trying to do but he left the definite impression with me that he was discouraged by the "much talk but little positive action" on the part of his Asian neighbors. He is grateful for all the RVN is doing but is concerned about not being able to get any definite commitment from them on how much help he can expect after 30 June. He also told me he knew that practically every nation that has offered him help intended to do so only if the U.S. paid for it.

12. Will begin update every three days as directed and augment if necessary.

[7] Requested assessment number 5 reads: "In light of the responses to foregoing, measures which you think must be taken on a priority basis to raise FANK military capability on short-term basis." (Ibid.)

329. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 18, 1970.

SUBJECT

Positive Steps to Aid Cambodia

As you requested, there follows a report on the positive steps since June 15 which have been taken by the various U.S. Government agencies to provide assistance to Cambodia.[2]

Supply

—Arrangements have been made to provide *radio transmitters* to the Cambodians to broadcast into areas of Cambodia which Radio Cambodia presently cannot reach. An EC–121 will be used temporarily for this purpose.

—The *Indonesians have offered to provide 15,000 rifles*. U.S. technicians arrive in Indonesia June 18 to study conversion of the *Bandung ammunition plant* to handle AK–47 ammunition.

—The Japanese have offered $2 million in humanitarian aid; we will attempt to stimulate more.

—The GRC has reportedly offered to furnish light and medium weapons to equip two divisions. We are considering this.

—Efforts are being made to stimulate aid from *Australia* (communications equipment) and *New Zealand.*

—970 individual and 30 crew-served captured weapons have been turned over by ARVN to Cambodian forces along with 37,000 rounds of ammunition.

—1950 individual and 250 crew-served captured weapons under U.S. control are ready for delivery when the ability of the FANK to use

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 509, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VII, 5 June 1970–19 June 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. A stamped notation reads: "The President has seen." Holdridge and Kennedy sent this memorandum to Kissinger on June 17 with the recommendation that he sign and send it to the President.

[2] At 9:12 a.m., June 17, the President telephoned Kissinger to complain about the lack of action since he had met with the WSAG on June 15 (Document 326). The President insisted that Kissinger obtain an up-to-date report on aid to Cambodia. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–074, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 5/19/70)

them has been determined. CINCPAC and MACV have been directed to work closely with our Defense Attaché in Phnom Penh to provide as much captured material as can be effectively used. MACV is reviewing all captured material for this purpose.

—40 U.S. trucks are ready in Vietnam for delivery to the Cambodians; Cambodian drivers and mechanics are being moved to Saigon on June 18.

Military Assistance

—A Presidential Determination is being forwarded to you to *add another $1 million to the present Cambodian FY 70 MAP* of $7.9 million; *$25 million in military assistance and $10 million in defense support* is being arranged for FY 71. A detailed program is being developed by CINCPAC and MACV. The support funds will in part be used to support 2500 Khmer–Krom troops (of whom 2,000 are now deployed) and 4,000 Thai–Khmer troops (of whom 1,000 have now been recruited). Two additional Khmer–Krom battalions in training in South Vietnam will be deployed to Phnom Penh on July 14.

—Four 1000-man packs have been positioned for the Thai–Khmer troops and will be sent in when their training begins on July 1.

—The Thai have been informed of *our willingness to train and equip two Thai regiments for deployment to Western Cambodia*, and to consider indirect means for supporting pay and allowance bonuses which we cannot legally provide directly.

—*Five Cambodian T–28 aircraft* are being repaired in Thailand, and five Thai T–28's have been loaned to Cambodia. Ten additional T–28's are being airlifted from the U.S. to Thailand for further loan or transfer to Cambodia.

—MACV is drawing up a plan for the *full use of U.S. air assets and of GVN ground and air assets* in Cambodia to ease NVA/VC military pressure on the Cambodian forces.

—Proposals for *paramilitary operations* against NVA/VC supply lines in South Laos and Northeast Cambodia are being drawn up.

—A *South Vietnamese Air Force advanced base* is being established in Phnom Penh with aircraft, helicopters, supplies, and security. Planning for this base has been expedited.

Intelligence

—*CIA has stepped up its intelligence collection* [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] *activities* in Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos; [*1½ lines of source text not declassified*].

—Five *military intelligence officers* are being added to [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] Phnom Penh for assessment and validation of intelligence.

—*Five 5-man road watch teams* have been sent from South Laos to Northeastern Cambodia, and *five more are being readied*; native Cambodians will accompany these teams.

—On June 16 MACV was directed to make *maximum use of indigenous ground reconnaissance teams* for intelligence, target identification for air attacks, and forward air control of air strikes.

—MACV was directed today to encourage the South Vietnamese to establish a *Joint Information Center in Phnom Penh* to coordinate intelligence collection, evaluation, and dissemination. MACV and the Defense Attaché in Phnom Penh will assist and participate.

—MACV has been requested to *expedite stationing at Phnom Penh* of *two or three South Vietnamese light observation aircraft*.

—U.S. *tactical air reconnaissance* over Cambodia has been increased to include COMINT, ARDF, and photography.

—*MACV is introducing sensors* in Northeast Cambodia to assist in detecting enemy movement and locating targets.

Diplomatic

—We are *following the activities of the post-Djakarta Conference three-nation team* (Malaysia, Indonesia, and Japan) to see where we might be helpful. This team will press for an international conference on Cambodia, international actions by the 1964 Geneva powers, and increased support for the international position of the Cambodian Government.

—The *French* are going ahead with $5 million loan to Cambodia and are maintaining teachers, doctors and their military mission in Phnom Penh.

—We are approaching Australia, New Zealand and Japan renewing our pressures for assistance to Cambodia.

330. Memorandum From Richard Smyser of the Operations Staff of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, June 18, 1970.

SUBJECT

The Conclusions of the VSSG Cease-fire Analysis

One of the committees (panel 2) formed by the VSSG to review cease-fire options has produced what I—as well as others—consider a rather drastically pessimistic conclusion regarding the possible outcome of a cease-fire under stand-still or regroupment conditions. (A copy of this conclusion is attached at Tab A.) Basically, it concludes that the GVN under those conditions would have suffered "major and serious losses in control" which are "likely to be irreversible without the reinsertion of massive U.S. troops." 25 or 18 out of 44 provinces would allegedly be lost in a year under the respective proposals. This is because of the great strength of the VCI as compared to the GVN administrative structure. On the other hand, under conditions involving NVA withdrawal, the GVN would emerge largely on the winning side after a year.

Unfortunately, I am not able to argue this in the same context in which it is presented. I do not have myself or on my staff the expertise or material at hand to challenge the detailed studies of each individual district and province. You may therefore wish to dismiss my reservations, but I would at least urge that you pose the following problems to those responsible for the analysis:

—How can the VCI itself, without Main Force support, sweep in to gain control of 25 or 18 provinces in a year, unless the terms of the cease-fire are very loose or unless we and the GVN are prepared to sit by with complete passivity while they violate those terms?

—What assumptions are being made about Viet Cong activity, about U.S. withdrawals, about Vietnamization, and about the relative impact of a cease-fire on the morale and effectives not just of the GVN but also of the VC?

—If the VCI is such a formidable instrument with the Main Force in place or regrouped, how do they suddenly become so helpless that the GVN can prevail when the NVA and the U.S. forces are withdrawn?

—If this is such a good proposition for the Viet Cong, why does Hanoi not go for it?

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 118, Vietnam Subject Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Sent for information.

I do not favor a cease-fire proposal, and I have favored a VSSG analysis of what it would produce on the ground before we even considered it seriously. I even believe that we will suffer some loss in security under the conditions posed. But I wonder whether we have not loaded the assumptions or the conclusions too much.

Tab A

Conclusions of the Vietnam Special Studies Group Paper on a Cease-Fire Option

Washington, undated.

We believe that the detailed analysis of the broad range of data available for our province assessments support several major overall conclusions:

—A ceasefire now in accordance with packages 1 or 2, i.e. without NVA withdrawals, would create a situation a year from now in which the GVN would have suffered major and serious losses in control. Package 1 (in place) is least favorable, resulting in predominant GVN control in only 19 provinces compared with 44 today. These GVN provinces would encompass 44% of the rural population compared with 40%, in provinces controlled by the VC. Package 2 (regroupment) would favor the GVN in only 26 provinces a year from now. The GVN share of the rural population would be 62% versus the VC's 26%.[2] In both of these cases, the losses suffered by the GVN are likely to be irreversible without the reinsertion of massive U.S. troops; and barring that, the enemy's prospects for a military victory would be greatly enhanced. At best South Vietnam would be a divided country with the enemy in control of I and II Corps and the control of GVN in III and probably IV Corps. However, this situation might not be stable, making further GVN deterioration a possibility. At worst the GVN would grow weaker and fall, by political or military means, to the Communists. As bad as these outcomes may appear from the perspective of the situation in the countryside, the enemy, who seeks to gain control in Saigon, may not be satisfied with these outcomes because of the risk that GVN forces may be able to defend the major centers of political power in South Vietnam.

—With genuine NVA withdrawal (Package 3), the GVN could eventually overcome the residual VC forces, providing the significant

[2] A handwritten note at this point, apparently by Smyser, reads: "Is it much higher now under the new HES [Hamlet Evaluation System]?"

underlying social and economic problems were solved. The final outcome would depend on the eventual political settlement reached. However, the GVN would retain the option of defending itself if the enemy reverted to a military strategy.[3]

—A year of continued hostilities (assuming continued U.S. redeployment) will:

—Not result in major changes in the control situation, although the VC/NVA will probably be in a better position to continue hostilities at the end of that year.

—Likely see marginal improvements a year from now for the GVN vis-à-vis its present ceasefire position. However, these gains would not significantly change the ceasefire outcomes from what they would be if a ceasefire were agreed to now. Because of the significant decline in allied forces, the VC/NVA will have less incentive to agree to a ceasefire a year from now then they would today.

[3] A note in the same handwriting at this point reads: "Not under 1 and 2?"

331. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, June 19, 1970.

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AT WSAG MEETING

The President said he thought he would stop in for a moment to get the latest up-to-date report on Cambodia. Following the meeting the other day,[2] he had been concerned on one thing—it seemed to him

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970, 6/19/70. Top Secret; Sensitive. These minutes contain the record of the meeting only when the President was present. In an undated memorandum Haig informed Nixon that he had discussed with Kissinger the President's suggestion that he meet with members of the WSAG "to emphasize again your desires for positive action in the Cambodian situation." Haig stated that Kissinger thought it would be "constructive," but suggested that it would be "most constructive" if the President's appearance was brief and that he "avoid any statement which appears to be a directive that Thai forces be introduced into Cambodia." Rather, Kissinger suggested that the President "urge positive action to resolve difficulties which now stand in the way of a Thai decision to move forward." Haig attached talking points for Nixon. (Ibid., Box H–075, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 6/19/70)

[2] See Document 326.

that it was as important as anything else to pay attention to the psychological effect of such matters as stories in the *New York Times* listing attacks on 30 towns, roads cut, and oil and rice shortages in Phnom Penh. The history of politics shows that psychological pressures could bring governments down as well as military attacks.

The President then noted he had read reports to the effect that two main roads radiating from Phnom Penh were still open, and asked what the situation actually was. From news reports, he had understood that the enemy had cut these roads or was interdicting them. Admiral Moorer replied that Route 1 was open between Saigon and Phnom Penh, and that trucks were moving along it. He referred to the possibility that the press might pick up exaggerated reports from the people saying that they were attacked, and make it appear that something more was happening. The President asked how recent the report was of Route 1 being open, and Admiral Moorer replied that this information had just been received. General Kraft (MACV Director of Operations) had been to Phnom Penh, and had arrived back in Saigon only three or fours hours ago; he had flown down the road and saw traffic. In addition, it was possible to keep the Mekong River open. On June 17 the Shell people had brought in a tanker containing a three months' supply of aviation fuel.

The President asked about the situation on the other road. Admiral Moorer replied that Route 4 between Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh was open at least as far as Kampong Speu. Enemy forces which had been in the town had retreated to the south, and while they had the capability of interdicting the road he did not believe that they could cut it.

The President stated that he had the impression that Phnom Penh was surrounded and under seige. What did the people in Phnom Penh think? The stories of Phnom Penh being surrounded had come from press representatives writing from Phnom Penh. Mr. Packard said that he had checked this morning, and that enemy forces numbering anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand were in the vicinity of Phnom Penh. Reports from the enemy spoke of attacks on the 18th against the airport and the power plant. The problem in defending Phnom Penh was it is greatly spread out, and required lots of troops; there are 15,000 Cambodian troops in Phnom Penh. The President asked if the Cambodian forces were well positioned, and Mr. Packard replied affirmatively. Nevertheless, small enemy units could sneak up. Although the city was not in danger of falling, this created a psychological problem. The same was true with respect to the roads—small enemy bands could move around the countryside, and cut a tree or place mines to block communications temporarily. We would simply have to live with this situation.

The President inquired about the oil supply in Phnom Penh. Were supplies sufficient only for two weeks? Admiral Moorer reiterated that supplies could reach Phnom Penh, especially via the Mekong. The President agreed that if shipments could come up the Mekong, the situation was not serious. The President understood, too, that there was rice on hand in Phnom Penh for six weeks. This was quite a bit.

Mr. Packard noted that he had looked into Cambodian oil supplies. In one category there was only a 28-day supply, but in everything else there was more. He concurred with Admiral Moorer on the possibility of getting tankers up the Mekong regardless of conditions on Route 4. Admiral Moorer added that the South Vietnamese were continuing to bring refugees out by river.

The President wondered in terms of psychological warfare if it would be useful to have the South Vietnamese run another task force up the Mekong to Phnom Penh. This could be for the ostensible purpose of bringing rice. He didn't have the slightest idea if this would work, but he was not talking in terms of actual warfare but rather in terms of psychological matters and politics. For example, it was possible that the Thai forces in Laos wouldn't fight unless attacked, but their very presence there had given a great psychological lift to the Lao.[3]

Mr. Helms observed that in addition to making psychological moves, we needed better press responses. The President agreed, and wondered if we could do something about the U.S. press. Mr. Helms said that CIA was, in fact, trying to arrange for "leaks" to the press in Phnom Penh [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*]. The President indicated that he was not thinking in terms of misleading the press. However, we needed to recognize that we could lose psychologically rather than militarily, and had to play a positive game. This was what the other side was trying to do by running around the countryside and shooting things up. He thought, though, that without Sihanoukville and the sanctuaries, the enemy forces must be running short of ammunition. How were they moving it—on their backs, or on trucks? Mr. Helms stated that the enemy was using captured trucks and pedi-cabs. He described the enemy attacks as going into the ghettos and terrorizing them.

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[3] In a June 22 memorandum to the President Kissinger summarized an attached report of June 1 from the CIA on the Thai defenders (one regiment consisting of two artillery battalions and three infantry battalions) at Long Tieng in Laos. The report gave the Thai high marks for defensive skill, leadership, and discipline, but noted their dependence on logistical support and their lack of aggressiveness in forward patrolling. Still the CIA ranked their performance as admirable, to which Nixon remarked in the margin of Kissinger's memorandum: "Good." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 432, Backchannel Files, Angkor/Erawan reports)

Would it be to our advantage, the President asked, to see if the South Vietnamese couldn't be encouraged to get in a few more fights? He asked how many South Vietnamese units were in Cambodia. Admiral Moorer said that there were ARVN units at Kampong Speu and that South Vietnamese Marines were at the ferry crossing at Neak Luong. The President emphasized that one thing was important: the South Vietnamese had to stay. In addition, we needed to get the psychological line out that more might come in. He had said on June 3[4] that all U.S. troops would be out by the end of the month, but the South Vietnamese were different. It was alright for the American people to know that all U.S. forces would be out, but not for the enemy, since it removed the uncertainty about our actions. It was therefore important to get stories out that the South Vietnamese were there, and would not allow the Phnom Penh–Sihanoukville axis to be destroyed. As he had told Secretary Rogers, while it might actually be necessary for the South Vietnamese to go in, this could be avoided if we handled psychological matters correctly. For example, we should do everything we could right now in terms of giving arms to the Cambodians. If enough was going in to give the appearance that we are really supporting them, they would get a big boost.

Admiral Moorer remarked that according to a report from General Abrams the South Vietnamese joint general staff fully appreciated the desirability of keeping Cambodia out of NVA/VC hands. The President emphasized he wanted to be sure that we did not discourage the South Vietnamese from this. General Abrams had said earlier that the mission of the South Vietnamese was to hold South Vietnam. He appreciated this consideration, but also knew the importance of seeing that all of Cambodia didn't fall. We had to be sure that their position was balanced. Admiral Moorer assured the President that General Abrams understood the President's point. Within the framework of his guidance General Abrams had developed a good relationship with the Cambodians to assist them as well as the Vietnamese in Cambodia. The Vietnamese for their part had increased their liaison team in Phnom Penh to 24 people including representatives of the principal service functions. They had reached agreement with the Cambodians that both could operate 16 kilometers on either side of the border, and also had agreed on areas of operation. The South Vietnamese would deal with anything beyond 60 kilometers from the border on a case-by-case basis. Highway 1 was open to two convoys per week, and the South Vietnamese were looking into the matter of keeping Route 4 open. He re-

[4] Reference is to the President's June 3 Address to the Nation; see *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970*, pp. 476–480.

iterated that the Mekong could be kept open. A discussion on the utilization of the Mekong ensued with the fact emerging that the river depth was 17 feet all the way to Phnom Penh. The President thought that this point should be made publicly. Was the South Vietnamese Navy good? Could Vietnamese forces hold the river open? Admiral Moorer said that the South Vietnamese forward base at Neak Luong contained supplies for 15 days, and a brigade of the Vietnamese Marine Corps was there to assist in keeping the road open. Behind these forces was the 9th ARVN Division, which contained combat engineers. An airfield was being developed for reconnaissance tacair, helicopters, and gunships. All these were South Vietnamese. This advanced base was better than Phnom Penh for the South Vietnamese, since it was closer to South Vietnam, outside the reach of reporters, and easier to defend. Continuing, Admiral Moorer noted that South Vietnamese FAC's would be sent to Kampong Thom tonight to provide tacair support as further examples of South Vietnamese assistance to Cambodia.

On the shipment of captured weapons, Admiral Moorer reported that a plan had been worked out. The first shipment would be on June 19, in which rifles and mortars would be flown in. The South Vietnamese had also agreed to train 80 Cambodian companies, thirty to be given refresher training, and 50 recruit training, with the latter completed by October. The U.S. was providing supplies, and the Cambodians the men and the food. Two Khmer Krom battalions had been trained in South Vietnam and would be in Phnom Penh between July 1 and 13. Thieu had said that this operation had to stop, but had later agreed to go ahead; 1,000 more would be recruited. With respect to the fighting, General Abrams had reported that the South Vietnamese had borne the brunt but appreciated the consequences of a Communist takeover of Cambodia. They were receptive to the idea of supporting Cambodia, amenable to General Abrams' suggestions, and responsive to reasonable requests. Admiral Moorer noted he was sending General Vogt to Saigon that afternoon to inquire into intelligence and communications matters. In passing, Admiral Moorer noted that the South Vietnamese had furnished a number of 4-man teams with radios to be sent out into the countryside around Phnom Penh.

The President asked if the South Vietnamese had furnished ground observers for our air. It was understood, he said, that our air would have a free hand. Admiral Moorer described the Salem House teams, which were composed of indigenous personnel who had been trained by the South Vietnamese but worked with us. Such teams were assisting beyond the 30 kilometer limit, and should help in our interdiction.

The President declared that it was important for people at State to talk positively and confidently. There should be no worry about being proved wrong, nor should there be any distorting. What was the pub-

lic relations situation at Phnom Penh? Ambassador Green replied that there was a good public affairs officer at Phnom Penh, but that we had been deficient in giving him guidance. The President stressed that we should remember our purpose here. We had to remember that news reporting could affect the outcome of a battle. There was the question of having a more positive view. We should lay out the facts positively, and explain what the Cambodian Government has going for it. For example, the Government had stronger popular support now than it did under Sihanouk. Was it true that the Cambodian forces had basically stayed in place, and hadn't run? Admiral Moorer referred to reports of some recruits having run away, but he and Mr. Packard agreed that the 30–40,000 Cambodian regular troops had done rather well. Admiral Moorer cited a report from our Defense Attaché that the Cambodian forces had counter-attacked. The President described the enemy situation in Cambodia as being different from that in South Vietnam, in that the North Vietnamese were in a hostile country and did not have the support of guerrilla forces in the countryside. Now that we had removed fear of the U.S. in North Vietnamese minds, we needed to leave a stronger fear of what the South Vietnamese would do. This was very important, and State and Defense should both consider sitting down with a few reporters, and give a backgrounder.

The President referred to an item in this morning's *New York Times* by Tad Szulc. Szulc was a brilliant fellow, but he was not out to do us any good. The President did not blame him for this story, but blamed us. We needed to face the fact that there were a great number of people in the press and in Congress who have a vested interest in seeing us fail. This was a game for them, and we should counterplay. We had a story to tell which was not being told. Thinking back to the period of April 10–30, four provincial capitals had fallen during this time. He had said that our sanctuary operation was concerned with South Vietnam and not Cambodia, and this was indeed our major goal. Nevertheless, Cambodia did not need to go. With our power, it would be a major failure to let it go without making a significant effort. We should send in arms, send in more South Vietnamese, go up the Mekong and undertake more reconnaissance. Admittedly this would not have much of a military effect, but would have an enormous effect psychologically. The President recalled to Ambassador Green the importance of psychological factors to Asian leaders, citing President Suharto as an example.

Ambassador Green noted that while we had our problems, the enemy had terrific ones, such as supply and communications. The President strongly concurred, referring to the way the enemy was spread out in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Ambassador Green referred also to Khmer nationalism as a problem for the enemy. The President said that it was important to support Cambodia diplomatically; he had

been glad to see that the three Djakarta conference nations had at least been heard by the Soviets. He concurred that Khmer nationalism was a useful factor. Ambassador Green stated that it was not just Communism involved, but fear of Tonkinese, who could be distinguished from South Vietnamese. The President noted that the elements of the Civil War which were present in Vietnam were not present here. It was not important who ran the government—Lon Nol, or Matak. The main point was that Cambodia should be neutral and independent. Ambassador Green suggested that in the forthcoming SEATO meeting, we might make a point of speaking in favor of respecting Cambodia's neutrality.

The President referred to the possibility that Alec Home might be named as the new British Foreign Minister. If so, he might be helpful. The President had talked with Heath, who would be making a mistake if he did not appoint Home. With the Conservative victory, the British might start to play a more positive role, both here and in the Middle East. Heath was a tough man as indicated by his expressions three years ago on British policy east of Suez. He couldn't reverse things, but would do something. It would be good to have some help and not to be alone. In Jordan and Lebanon, it would be good to have somebody with us. Ambassador Green thought that if Home were to attend the SEATO meeting, he could be extremely helpful.

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332. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 22, 1970.

SUBJECT

Enemy Weapons Losses in Cambodia

You recently asked on what CIA based its assessment that we had captured a relatively small number of weapons in Cambodia in comparison to amounts believed to have been in the enemy's stockpiles. Attached at Tab A[2] is a CIA report explaining the stockpile derivation

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 510, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VIII, 20 June 1970–20 July 1970. Secret. A notation on the first page of the memorandum reads: "The President has seen."

[2] Attached but not printed.

and giving specific estimates of the numbers of individual and crew-served weapons. Estimated enemy requirements are based on a number of factors, including consumption resulting from wear, requirements to re-equip local forces with more modern weapons, and losses to allied forces. Although there is considerable uncertainty, CIA believes that the weapons captured thus far in Cambodia are approximately the following percentages of the stockpiles.

		Stockpiles		
Weapons	*Captured in Cambodia*	*Low Estimate*	*High Estimate*	*Percent Captured*
Total tons	161	565	950	17%–29%
Individual #'s	20,033[3]	70,000	117,750	17%–29%
Crew-served #'s	2,359	9,120	15,330	15%–26%

An assumption that the above estimate is valid raises several questions:

—Why have only seventeen to twenty-nine percent of the enemy's weapons been found after six weeks of operations?

—Why is this indicator of progress not consistent with other categories of captured equipment?

Estimates of food (63%–107%) and ammunition (71%–119%) captured are fairly close to each other and would appear to be more reasonable based on the amount of territory covered and level of effort of operations in Cambodia. A possible explanation is that the enemy put priority on and was successful in moving weapons out of the stockpiles prior to allied attacks. The enemy may have used a number of these weapons to arm its rear service units; considered weapons essential, both psychologically and militarily, to developing cadres throughout Cambodia; and reasoned that the weapons were the most valuable, difficult to replace, and most easily extracted items within the stockpiles. On the other hand, it seems more likely that the many uncertainties in the weapons stockpile calculations contributed to an over-estimate.

CIA is continuing to analyze this problem and to refine their calculations. I will provide you with the results as soon as they are available.

[3] Some of the weapons recently captured by ARVN may have belonged originally to the Cambodian Government rather than coming from enemy sanctuaries. [Footnote in the source text.]

333. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, June 23, 1970.

SUBJECT

Recent Policy Decisions in Hanoi

There are a number of indications that Hanoi, after a period of indecision following the Cambodian coup and our actions against the sanctuaries, has decided to emphasize military effort over the intermediate term. Hanoi's preparations in the military field and in diplomacy, together with statements by major figures, have given clues to this decision. They have also shown that Hanoi will demand continued major sacrifices from its people and cooperation from Communist states.

Actions in the Field. Hanoi has made a number of military moves and preparations:

—The Laos infiltration network, usually closed during the rainy season, is being kept open. It has been warned to expect major infiltration. So far six battalion groups, about 3,300 men, have been sent into the trail. It is not yet clear where they are going. The evidence so far suggests that they will stay in Laos, presumably to defend the trail against possible GVN-Thai incursions.

—Hanoi has stepped up action in the trail area, capturing Attopeu and Saravane.

—Hanoi has also stepped up the pace of Communist military actions in the I and II Corps areas of South Vietnam.

—Communist military pressures in Cambodia remain high.

Diplomatic Moves. In the diplomatic arena, Hanoi has done the following:

—Clearly indicated that it expects no serious work to be done in Paris in the intermediate future.

—Decided to send a mission to Communist states to explain recent policy decisions. This indicates that a significant decision has been taken in Hanoi. The Secretary of State's memo on this subject is at Tab A.[2]

Hanoi Statements. In order to convey the seriousness of its new decisions to the population, the Hanoi leadership has also taken a number of political steps in North Vietnam:

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 147, Vietnam Country Files, Vietnam, 1 June 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. A stamped notation on the first page reads: "The President has seen."

[2] This June 12 memorandum from Rogers to the President is attached but not printed.

—It convoked a session of the National Assembly two weeks ago. This is a very rare occurrence which usually marks the leadership's desire to gain a veneer of "popular" approval of major decisions.

—Premier Pham Van Dong and Assembly leader Truong Chinh in their speeches to the Assembly repeatedly cited the "new situation," the "immediate" and "urgent" tasks, and the "great advantages and possibilities."

—Those speeches also hinted that the U.S. may resume bombing; they spoke several times of accomplishing their tasks "under every circumstance," a veiled reference to a bombing resumption which is probably understood by every North Vietnamese.

—The speeches, including one by a leading economist, reflected concern about the costs of the renewed effort and about the economy's ability to bear more intensified warfare. They hinted that Hanoi would ask for greater help from foreign nations.

—An accompanying article by General Giap, Hanoi's military chief, repeatedly spoke of "protracted war." This indicates that Hanoi has decided that it must now emphasize long-run military pressure rather than hope for an early victory or early settlement.

—Giap also replied to apparent feelings of concern within the North Vietnamese army and party about the Cambodian reversal. He spoke several times of a "difficult" situation and said that "if there is retrogression, this is only partial and temporary." He also spoke repeatedly of "sacrifices."

—His speech does not suggest any planning for a Tet-type offensive, but for a general step-up in military pressure, particularly against the pacification program; other indicators point to I and II Corps as the principal areas for intensified Communist actions.

—Other statements and indications suggest that Hanoi's main effort in the near term will be in Cambodia rather than in any part of South Vietnam, although the Communists will also keep up pressure in Vietnam in order to divert potential South Vietnamese assistance to Cambodia. It is thus possible that the units now being started through the infiltration pipeline will continue on to Cambodia rather than remaining in Laos or going to Vietnam.

—Giap pledged that the North Vietnamese would fight "shoulder to shoulder" with the Lao and Cambodians and would "lead the national liberation undertaking of the Indochinese peoples to complete victory."

I have asked the State Department for further information on the expected visit by a North Vietnamese delegation to Communist nations, and for their recommendation on actions we should take in the face of this.

334. Editorial Note

No minutes have been found for the Washington Special Actions Group meeting of June 24, 1970. According to a June 23 briefing memorandum for Henry Kissinger, prepared by John Holdridge, the main purpose of this meeting was to have a quick rundown of steps being taken to aid Cambodia before President Nixon's departure for San Clemente on June 25. In addition Holdridge informed Kissinger that "our aid to Cambodia is running into big money:" $25 million for the Cambodian Military Assistance Program for fiscal year 1971, $59 million projected as added on to the Military Assistance Programs for Thailand and South Vietnam for Cambodian-related expenses, a potential additional $75 million for paramilitary forces in the southeast Laos–northeast Cambodia–northwest South Vietnam triangle, and unspecified funding for Indonesian support to Cambodia. The Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency were both having difficulties with the funding. Finally Holdridge alerted Kissinger to the fact that the Lon Nol government was running out of money and might be out of cash within a month or so. Holdridge suggested Kissinger review the Washington Special Actions Group Working Group plan for paramilitary operations in south Laos, northeastern Cambodia and northwestern South Vietnam. Plans to drop propaganda leaflets over Cambodia and to use enemy documents captured in Cambodia were "unexceptional" and could be discussesd if time permitted. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–078, WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 6/24/70)

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335. Memorandum From Richard Kennedy of the Planning Group of the National Security Council to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, June 25, 1970.

SUBJECT

Combined VSSG Meeting on Ceasefire Proposals and Senior Review Group Meeting on Diplomatic Initiatives (NSSM 94)

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–046, SRG Meetings, Indochina, 6/27/70. Top Secret; Sensitive. At the top of the page Kissinger wrote: "Why p. 15 withdrawal within one year? What if this is not part of the package—Pres has never focussed on it."

You called this joint meeting in order to consider possible cease-fire proposals in conjuction with diplomatic initiatives leading to a conference on Vietnam and Indo-China. Our objective should be to be sure that the conclusions of the VSSG study are reflected in the consideration of proposals for diplomatic initiatives.

Specific objectives for your discussion of the VSSG paper[2] are contained in Larry Lynn's memo to you.[3]

As to the Diplomatic Initiatives paper (NSSM 94)[4] you will want to get agreement to a restructuring of the paper to (a) eliminate options which are non-starters (b) package the various proposals in a more meaningful way which would be the basis for a full scenario approach.

—The paper is not now constructed in a way which would give the President alternative courses of action—it is in the nature of a laundry list from which one could select specific actions. No attempt has been made to put the actions together in the context of a complete course of action.

—Ambassador Sullivan prepared a slimmed-down version of the paper at your request.[5] It does get out most of the unrealistic options but still misses the mark. It has not been distributed (at Sullivan's request) and cannot be raised at this meeting. It could be a springboard for a quick rewrite.

You also will want to have reflected in the NSSM 94 paper the conclusions on ceasefire which will be drawn out of the discussion of the VSSG paper. Some of the proposed initiatives leading to a conference in the NSSM 94 paper include as an ingredient a ceasefire proposal. In any event if a conference were to be convened, the ceasefire question would arise soon. Thus the implications of a ceasefire are an essential consideration in the review of the diplomatic initiatives proposals.

Relationship Between the VSSG Paper and NSSM 94

At present, there is not very much relation at all between the two papers.

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[2] For an analysis and the summary conclusions of the VSSG paper on a cease-fire, see Document 330 and the attachment thereto.

[3] Lynn's undated memorandum to Kissinger reviewed issues for which the VSSG paper did not provide back up details or explicit agency views. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–046, SRG Meetings, Indochina, 6/27/70)

[4] The draft response to NSSM 94, June 9; for a summary, see Document 324.

[5] Attached to a June 23 memorandum from Sullivan to Kissinger. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–046, SRG Meetings, Indochina, 6/27/70)

—*The VSSG paper* outlines three packages for analysis. Those are:

(1) Ceasefire in place;
(2) Ceasefire with regroupment;
(3) Ceasefire with withdrawal.

—The VSSG paper concludes that the only one of the three which would be to our advantage in absolute terms is package 3, ceasefire with withdrawal. The others would cause us to lose at least some and perhaps considerable control over the countryside over the next year, although the exact amount of the loss is under dispute and is probably impossible to determine in advance.

—The VSSG paper also concludes that Hanoi will probably not accept any ceasefire proposal right now, and is not likely to make one of its own. It particularly concludes that Hanoi would not accept package 3 without favorable political conditions.

—NSSM 94, on the other hand, proposes three ceasefires which are essentially standstill ceasefires:

—an agreed unconditional ceasefire (which the VSSG says would work to our disadvantage on the ground and Hanoi would not accept anyway);
—an agreed local ceasefire (which the VSSG does not address, but would probably consider disadvantageous);
—a unilateral US/GVN limited ceasefire (which the VSSG does not address at all).

In order to take care of this problem, the drafters of NSSM 94 should be asked to frame their proposals in the same terms in which the VSSG has framed them, or the VSSG should be asked to evaluate the results of the proposals listed in NSSM 94.

We recommend that you take up the *VSSG paper first* and then proceed to consider the Diplomatic Initiatives Paper (NSSM 94).

Your book[6] contains:

—Talking Points for the VSSG ceasefire paper (with Larry Lynn's memo to you);

—Talking Points for the Diplomatic Initiatives Paper (NSSM 94);

—VSSG–Ceasefire Paper;

—NSSM 94 Paper (with John Holdridge's summary and Winston Lord's analysis papers);

[6] Attached but not printed.

—Revised NSSM 94 Paper prepared by Ambassador Sullivan (with a brief analytical summary);

—NSSM 94.

The book was prepared with the assistance of Larry Lynn, John Holdridge and Dick Smyser.

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336. Minutes of Combined Vietnam Special Studies Group and Senior Review Group Meeting[1]

San Clemente, June 27, 1970, 10:10 a.m.–12:20 p.m.

SUBJECT

Vietnam Cease-fire and Peace Initiatives

PARTICIPANTS

Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger

Defense
David M. Packard

State
Amb. U. Alexis Johnson
William Sullivan

JCS
Adm. Thomas H. Moorer

CIA
Gen. Robert E. Cushman
Thomas H. Karamessines
George Carver

NSC Staff
Col. Richard Kennedy
Laurence E. Lynn
Richard Smyser
Keith Guthrie

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–111, SRG Minutes, Originals, 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. The meeting was held in the Conference Room at the Western White House in San Clemente, California. Jeanne Davis sent these minutes to Kissinger on July 4. Kissinger wrote the following note on the transmittal memorandum: "Put also in my files. HK"

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

VSSG Cease-Fire Study[2]

The VSSG Working Group will revise the study as follows:

1. A brief statement of the rules of engagement that would apply under each cease-fire package will be prepared.

2. The description of each cease-fire package will include data on the location of both enemy and US and Allied main force units covered by the cease-fire. For Package 2, anticipated regroupment areas will be specified.

3. Best possible, probable, and worst possible outcomes will be formulated for each cease-fire package. The factors which affect the outcome will be clearly identified and fully described. To assist in analyzing outcomes, Defense will provide assumptions about anticipated progress on Vietnamization, and JCS will supply data on projected US withdrawals, including the specific units involved and the anticipated timing.

4. Cease-fire outcomes will be evaluated on the basis of two alternative assumptions regarding withdrawals: (a) that all US forces will be withdrawn within one year after a cease-fire takes effect, and (b) that withdrawals will continue according to the present schedule. In evaluating outcomes under the two withdrawal assumptions, the VSSG Working Group should consider (1) whether it may be desirable to retain certain US units as a deterrent to cease-fire violations and (2) how much it might be feasible to slow down the rate of US withdrawals once a cease-fire is effected.

The revised VSSG study is to be submitted to Dr. Kissinger by July 8.

NSSM 94 Study[3]

The NSSM 94 study is to be revised as follows:

1. Options clearly unacceptable in terms of US interests are to be deleted. From the list of proposals the US might make to induce a peace conference, the options to be eliminated will include (a) acceptance of the NLF Ten Points and (b) unilateral and unconditional withdrawal. As a substitute for the latter option, a new option will be prepared providing the bargaining US withdrawal in exchange for some concession by the communists.

2. The paper should provide a full discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of various forums and US proposals which might be used to induce negotiations for a peace settlement in Indochina. It should clearly distinguish between concessions to get negotiations

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[2] For analysis and summary conclusions, see Document 330.

[3] For a summary, see Document 324.

started and those which might be made in the courses of negotiating a peace settlement. It should also distinguish between public initiatives and steps that might be taken privately to launch negotiations. In particular, the paper should discuss the role that a new US senior negotiator in Paris might play in getting talks underway.

3. The paper should include recommendations on the optimum membership for an all-Indochina peace conference.

The NSC staff will prepare a first draft of the revised study and submit it to the Ad Hoc Group established under NSSM 94. The completed paper is due to Dr. Kissinger by July 14.

Mr. Kissinger: Let's first take up the VSSG paper. It is an important contribution toward understanding what a cease-fire would look like. I gather that everyone prefers Package 3, since it produces what is obviously the best outcome. If we were to get a cease-fire agreement today, what would the difference be between Package 1 and 2? Since there are very few enemy main force units in South Vietnam right now, we would be better off with Package 1, since Package 2 would require us to regroup our forces.

Mr. Lynn: It's not true there are few enemy main force units presently in South Vietnam.

Adm. Moorer: Two NVA regiments are moving into the vicinity of populated areas in I Corps.

Gen. Cushman: Many of the NVA forces in I Corps have pulled back and are already regrouped.

Mr. Kissinger: They don't lose anything if their forces are already regrouped; yet, U.S. forces would have to regroup. Where would the enemy forces in I Corps be regrouped?

Mr. Lynn: To the north.

Mr. Packard: Where they regroup makes a difference.

Mr. Kissinger: When we speak of regroupment, does anyone know exactly what we would ask for?

Mr. Lynn: No, although it is contemplated that their forces might be in II Corps.

Gen. Cushman: In principle, we want them as far away as possible from the population centers.

Amb. Sullivan: In III and IV Corps, they have already withdrawn.

Mr. Carver: They have some troops there. Regroupment involves the overlap problem, that is, determining who is in control of what area.

Amb. Sullivan: Regroupment applies only to NVA forces and U.S. and Allied main forces. In III and IV Corps there aren't any NVA units, except in the U Minh forest.

Mr. Lynn: There is also the question of regrouping NVA fillers assigned to VC units.

Amb. Johnson: Is there any possibility of achieving that?

Amb. Sullivan: In the NSSM 37 study,[4] it was assumed the fillers would stay.

Mr. Lynn: With an in-place cease-fire what would prevent fillers being introduced?

Gen. Cushman: There could also be infiltration of fillers from the regroupment areas.

Mr. Lynn: Under Package 1, is infiltration to be taken as an indicator of non-compliance with a cease-fire?

Mr. Smyser: The paper assumes there will be infiltration.

Mr. Kissinger: Suppose we offer a standstill cease-fire today. Would that not be better than regroupment?

Mr. Lynn: The paper makes very clear that it would definitely not be better.

Mr. Kissinger: Yes, but I like to challenge my staff. Why would a standstill agreement not have the same practical consequences as cease-fire with regroupment? Under Package 1 we remain in the vicinity of the populated areas; under Package 2 we would have to regroup. A standstill agreement today would find enemy main force units out of the country. What we need is a definition of what is meant by a standstill agreement and what is meant by regroupment.

Mr. Packard: We should also consider what other activities we will be undertaking under each of these situations. For example, what will we be doing on pacification and on economic problems? We should broaden our definitions to include these aspects.

Mr. Lynn: Annex A describes what would be going on under each package. It is, of course, possible to quarrel with the assumptions used in formulating the packages.

Mr. Kissinger: Does the Annex tell what is meant by an in-place cease-fire?

Mr. Lynn: Yes. The paper says "Large unit contacts in South Vietnam would cease. Small unit contacts would decrease sharply but would probably not cease until patrolling limits became stabilized."

Mr. Kissinger: That describes the *consequence* of an in-place cease-fire. It doesn't say what would actually be happening.

Gen. Cushman: It would be like the Christmas truce. Large units would avoid engagement; some small unit contact might continue.

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[4] For a summary, see Document 91.

Mr. Kissinger: You can't tell troops just to cease contact. You have got to tell them what to do and what not to do.

Mr. Lynn: We haven't grappled with the question of what we would be negotiating about when arranging a cease-fire.

Mr. Kissinger: Leaving aside the question of negotiations, what exactly is it that units may or may not do? Do they stay in their base camps? Can they move out? Are they free to conduct sweep operations within their own lines?

Mr. Lynn: We assume all main force units would remain mobile but would not actually seek contact with one another.

Amb. Sullivan: General Abrams has pointed out that a standstill cease-fire under favorable circumstances would have the advantage of permitting military movement that would not be possible with regroupment. He is more inclined toward a Thieu-type standstill.

Mr. Lynn: That can't be verified.

Mr. Kissinger: Tom, what do you think?

Adm. Moorer: When we start discussion, they will adjust their positions. I think Packages 1 and 2 are both dangerous. The problem of verification bothers me. There is the question of distance asymmetry; they withdraw a few miles, while we withdraw several thousand. The timing is not too good, since a cease-fire proposal would come just when we have brought about a change in the situation in Vietnam. Furthermore, we ought to look at it from the standpoint of the overall situation in Indochina.

Amb. Johnson: Each package presumes a U.S. withdrawal.

Mr. Kissinger: I hadn't understood that before.

Mr. Lynn: The most vulnerable parts of the country are terribly significant. In southern I Corps and northern II Corps, there is a sizable prospect that a large part of the country would be detached from the GVN.

Amb. Johnson: I thought a cease-fire would be like the Christmas truce, but extended indefinitely.

Mr. Lynn: It is assumed that the NVA and the VC would take as much advantage of a cease-fire as they can without overtly breaking it.

Amb. Sullivan: Our people would do the same.

Adm. Moorer: We would carefully observe the rules of engagement, but they will exploit a cease-fire in much the same way they did the 1968 cessation of bombing.

Mr. Kissinger: Right now we need some rules about who can do what. It is one thing to have a Christmas truce and another to have an indefinite cease-fire. If we could draw a line separating the two sides'

forces, we could arrange a classical cease-fire. But in Vietnam, we can't do that.

Gen. Cushman: The enemy will not accept unless they see an advantage. I would be worried if they did agree to a cease-fire.

Adm. Moorer: So would I.

Mr. Kissinger: We will never get a negotiation started that way.

Mr. Carver: Verification of the cease-fire would be unequal. We would have the whole press corps and the television networks policing our observance of the cease-fire.

Mr. Lynn: And we would also lose valuable sources of intelligence about enemy activities.

Mr. Smyser: There are two possible situations. The enemy might really want a cease-fire. Or they might want a cease-fire only so that they can exploit it. The papers to date assume the second situation. However, the other is also possible.

Mr. Packard: There are many things they can do without violating a cease-fire. The paper notes that their forces could be expected to move back into the countryside and support guerrilla operations.

Gen. Cushman: They can just disavow whatever activities they undertake during a cease-fire. They might consider it desirable since it would permit them to work on their personnel problem. They could live with a cease-fire if we observe it.

Amb. Sullivan: While the U.S. might abide by the Marquis of Queensberry rules, our South Vietnamese friends might not be so inhibited.

Mr. Lynn: In that type of struggle, the VC have a comparative advantage. They have a better infrastructure, long experience with clandestine operations, lots of penetrations that we don't have, and the willingness to use any means, including terrorism and assassination.

Mr. Packard: Terrorism is important. It would have to be included in a cease-fire.

Gen. Cushman: If it were not, there would be an erosion of control.

Adm. Moorer: The NVA can always attribute violations to the VC, as they have in the case of violations of the DMZ.

Amb. Johnson: According to the VSSG projections, if fighting continues, what will we be gaining in the countryside?

Mr. Lynn: The paper has two views. The first is that we would continue to gain despite the U.S. withdrawals. Vietnamization would continue to bring gains in GVN control. The second view is that at best we would stay about where we are, with some slight declines. My personal view, which is not reflected in the paper, is that there will be significant declines.

Gen. Cushman: There is a basic split in the estimates. The station in Saigon says that the VC insurgent threat would decline if operations continue. However, with the drawdown of U.S. forces there will be some erosion of the situation. (To Carver) Will those estimates go into our paper?

Mr. Carver: Yes. It will be ready next week.

Mr. Kissinger: We need a clearer description of the rules of engagement under each cease-fire hypothesis. This is not as important in the case of withdrawal as with a standstill agreement. In I Corps a standstill would be close to the same thing as regroupment. Under the VSSG analysis we lose southern I Corps and northern II Corps under both a standstill and a regroupment. Does everyone agree that the outcome in I Corps would be bad?

Mr. Packard: It depends on how you define control and on what the GVN does. If they make progress on the economy and winning the hearts and minds of the people, things may go better. If they sit down, it will be bad.

Mr. Kissinger: How can they replace 150,000 U.S. military troops and come out better militarily?

Mr. Packard: They might if they could take over some U.S. military responsibilities and at the same time make some progress on building up the economy and support among the people.

Adm. Moorer: It also depends on what they can do about infiltration.

Mr. Kissinger: Does anyone think the South Vietnamese would do better than is indicated by the VSSG projections?

Mr. Packard: Nobody's guess can be very good. It is important to get the whole effort in Vietnam oriented back toward Vietnamization following the Cambodia operation. It depends on what the South Vietnamese can achieve. We ought to see what happens during the next couple of months. Then we will be in a better position to make an assessment.

Amb. Johnson: If things go downhill, we will be worse off than now as regards trying to arrange a cease-fire. If the situation improves, our position will be better.

Mr. Packard: If the situation deteriorates and we then propose a cease-fire, we would be no worse off than if we seek a cease-fire now and then things go downhill. Later on if we want to propose a cease-fire and accept some degradation of our position, we can do so.

Adm. Moorer: Another factor would be whether NVA forces in South Vietnam continue to decline.

Gen. Cushman: It would be an advantage to us if the NVA main force units were not in the fight. Can the ARVN and the local forces handle things without us?

Mr. Kissinger: How are we to present the issues to the President so that he can make a judgment?

The three cease-fire packages in the VSSG paper should be rewritten to include very brief statements of the rules of engagement applicable in each case and the rough locations of troop units under each package. Outcomes should be formulated in terms of the best possible, the probable, and the worst possible; and the factors that will affect the outcome should be specified. For example, if more rapid Vietnamization is identified as a factor, the paper should explain exactly what that means.

Mr. Lynn: The key to answering those questions is to know exactly which of our units are leaving.

Mr. Packard: The JCS has rough projections underway. We can get that information and provide it to you.

Mr. Kissinger: Alex has pointed out that for each cease-fire package the VSSG paper assumes a total U.S. withdrawal within twelve months. I thought the cease-fire was related to something like the present withdrawal schedule.

Mr. Lynn: We can examine the outcome using the assumption that withdrawals take place according to the present schedule.

Amb. Sullivan: This would have a major effect on the estimate of the results of a standstill agreement.

Mr. Lynn: Not necessarily. We will be down to 32 U.S. maneuver battalions by April 1971 and to 25 by the end of the fiscal year. That is not much combat strength.

Mr. Kissinger: In that case, why not pull out all the forces?

Mr. Lynn: Because without a cease-fire their firepower is needed.

Mr. Kissinger: But if there is a cease-fire, is it good or bad to retain some troops twelve months after it takes effect?

Mr. Lynn: Under a cease-fire the firepower provided by the remaining units would not be useable.

Gen. Cushman: But those troops would act as policemen.

Mr. Kissinger: Then we have two questions. Can we assume that a cease-fire will hold? And is there a need to have a U.S. force as a deterrent?

Mr. Packard: It might be easier to keep more troops in Vietnam if they are not fighting.

Mr. Lynn: Can we get a couple of assumptions on whether we can get away with it if we retain more forces in Vietnam following a cease-fire?

Amb. Sullivan: Would the deterrent be principally against main force or against guerrilla activities?

Gen. Cushman: I think it would primarily serve as a shield against enemy main force activities.

Mr. Carver: It would also be a confidence-builder for the GVN. During the next year the GVN will in theory be increasing the regional and provincial forces by 50,000 men. Quantitatively this can offset the U.S. withdrawals, although qualitatively it would not compensate completely. Nevertheless, there would be some offset.

Mr. Packard: We need to study what we can do to make the South Vietnamese exert more effort.

Mr. Carver: There are a number of imponderables. How bad has the Cambodian operation hurt the enemy? How much will the morale boost to the ARVN from Cambodia carry over into subsequent operations in Vietnam? How much is the planned South Vietnamese buildup going to be a mere paper exercise?

Mr. Packard: That's why I think we should wait three months to assess the situation.

Mr. Carver: We will be able to make a clearer intelligence estimate in a few months.

Mr. Smyser: When the French arranged a cease-fire in 1954, their air force provided a deterrent capacity against terrorist attacks.

Amb. Sullivan: Our paper (NSSM 94) presumed that the present withdrawal schedule would be retained. Why did the VSSG study use a different assumption?

Mr. Lynn: One of the task forces working on the paper inserted the assumption of withdrawal within one year.

Mr. Kissinger: Why?

Amb. Sullivan: Does using the one-year assumption make the cease-fire look worse?

Mr. Lynn: Yes. But the question is how much worse. We can do an analysis based on the present schedule.

Mr. Packard: In the VSSG study, was any assumption made that a ban on infiltration of supplies would be one of the conditions for a cease-fire?

Mr. Lynn: No.

Mr. Packard: That would be a good condition to insist on.

Amb. Johnson: It would not be feasible, however.

Mr. Lynn: I don't know whether the assumption of total withdrawal in one year cooks the results or not. We will have to see.

Mr. Kissinger: There are two things we need to look at. If we remove U.S. forces, what will happen in South Vietnam? What is the possible value of retaining some forces in Vietnam as a deterrent against violation of the cease-fire?

Mr. Lynn: Of course, the South Vietnamese might become more aggressive if they believe they can rely on U.S. troops to bail them out.

Amb. Sullivan: On the other hand, retaining U.S. troops might make the South Vietnamese less aggressive. They might assume that they could depend on us to take all the risks.

Mr. Kissinger: Has the issue of the one-year projection of the situation with or without a cease-fire been settled?

Mr. Lynn: No. DOD and CIA have one view. Others are more pessimistic about the outlook.

Mr. Packard: Our view is that our position will be better in a year if we continue operations.

Amb. Sullivan: We think that we will not be significantly better off.

Gen. Cushman: What happens if we propose a cease-fire and it is rejected?

Mr. Kissinger: Why would we be significantly better off in a year?

Mr. Packard: We can offer some reasons.

Mr. Lynn: The one-year projection is the hardest part of the study. We need some help on this. The working group just took a rough cut at it.

Mr. Kissinger: If you pose the question of a cease-fire a year from now, when there will be no U.S. combat forces present, what would be the answer?

Amb. Sullivan: If the circumstances are like the present—a U.S. drawdown and the NVA following a protracted warfare strategy—the situation will be about the same as now. However, if there has been a significant rise in NVA main force activity, we will be worse off.

Mr. Kissinger: Why won't that happen even without a cease-fire?

Mr. Lynn: With a cease-fire all main force operations on our side cease.

Mr. Packard: And small units have more freedom to maneuver.

Mr. Lynn: The results will not look much better in a year. Our main force power—which constitutes our principal advantage—will be gone.

Mr. Packard: Our biggest advantage this past year has been the influence we have had on pacification.

Mr. Kissinger: Can we do without the main force activities?

Mr. Lynn: We have been most successful when our units engage in joint operations with local and provincial force units.

Mr. Packard: We have not had troops operating in IV Corps. The experience there gives some confidence that the South Vietnamese can manage by themselves.

Mr. Lynn: In IV Corps, GVN control is improving in four provinces, declining in eight, and in four is about the same.

Mr. Carver: The NVA put in five regiments and a division headquarters there. Without these reinforcements, the GVN would have

done even better in IV Corps. Generally speaking, the VSSG paper suggests a degree of certitude that is not felt by many observers. There are a number of imponderables, such as the calibre of provincial chiefs.

Mr. Lynn: We have tried to assess the contribution of the leadership factor under current conditions.

Mr. Carver: But it is subject to change.

Mr. Kissinger: How long will it take to get the paper in a form suitable to give to the President?

Mr. Lynn: When do you want it?

Mr. Kissinger: By July 8.

Mr. Lynn: We can have a much better version by then. It can include a description of the terms of engagement under each package, and we can grind in assumptions on various withdrawal schedules (one year vs. the existing schedule). We can also get from Defense some assumptions about the success of Vietnamization, and we can specify best, probable, and worst outcomes.

Amb. Sullivan: You might explicitly state how much the assumption of a one-year withdrawal affects the estimate of the outcome under the various cease-fire packages.

Mr. Kissinger: We will do that.

Amb. Johnson: What kind of a dialogue have we had with the GVN on these various cease-fire hypotheses?

Amb. Sullivan: We have discussed the matter a good deal with the GVN. Thieu prefers a standstill arrangement.

Mr. Kissinger: Why?

Amb. Sullivan: I imagine he thinks a standstill would make the U.S. public tolerate an indefinite U.S. presence in Vietnam.

Mr. Packard: We could go slower on pulling out but could not stay indefinitely. We ought to consider how much slower we can withdraw if we are not fighting.

Mr. Carver: We know there has been a good deal of informal discussion within the GVN about a cease-fire. Some of them feel more confident about it.

Mr. Kissinger: Do they know what a standstill cease-fire means?

Amb. Sullivan: Thieu does. He is thinking of the 1954 situation.

Mr. Smyser: The earlier VSSG paper[5] assumed that the U.S. would propose a cease-fire. Is that true?

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[5] Smyser is apparently referring to the cease-fire section in the May 13 VSSG paper entitled, "The Situation in the Countryside." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–002, VSSG Meetings, 5/20/70)

Mr. Carver: No. The VSSG assumption is that a completely neutral party would make the proposal.

Mr. Kissinger: What difference does it make?

Mr. Lynn: It is a question of the psychological disadvantage incurred by the proposer.

Mr. Kissinger: You can argue that both ways. Some say that proposing a cease-fire would strengthen our domestic position.

Now let's take up the NSSM 94 study. This is a laundry list of options. We want to eliminate those that are clearly non-starters and leave only the reasonable ones for presentation to the President. Then we should get a full analysis of the reasonable options.

I have a number of questions about the paper. First, do we all agree that this is the time to launch an initiative? Or should we concentrate on exploiting our successes and delay any peace proposal?

Mr. Packard: In a month or so it might be a good time to take an initiative.

Amb. Johnson: I agree.

Adm. Moorer: I generally agree, but we would want to examine the matter very carefully and be sure what we would be conceding.

Mr. Kissinger: Assuming we wish to take an initiative, should we limit our effort to Vietnam or broaden it to include Indochina as a whole?

Mr. Packard: Given the Cambodian developments, the situation in Laos, and the Thai involvement, I believe it should deal with Indochina as a whole.

Gen. Cushman, Amb. Johnson, and Adm. Moorer: I agree.

Mr. Kissinger: Should our initiative consist of a bilateral approach to Hanoi or should it be in a broader framework? There are several alternatives to a bilateral approach. We could go through the French, the Geneva Co-Chairmen, U Thant, or the Djakarta Conference Group.

Mr. Packard: If we are going to address something more than just Vietnam, we will need a broader base.

Mr. Kissinger: There are a number of choices. One would be a public call by the President. Another would be to have the President ask U Thant, the French, the Co-Chairmen, or all three together. We could try secret talks with the Soviets or talk directly with the North Vietnamese in Paris.

Mr. Packard: There would be no sense having a conference in which the North Vietnamese were not involved.

Mr. Kissinger: It would be an interesting conference if it included the Soviets and not the North Vietnamese.

Amb. Johnson: There are two aspects to the question. One is the public posture we wish to take. The other is what we may wish to do privately.

Mr. Packard: The key question is what is most likely to move the North Vietnamese.

Mr. Kissinger: But we also want to consider which forum would be the most manageable for us. The two are not necessarily the same. Alex, what do you think?

Amb. Johnson: I am open-minded. The Djakarta Group has a good deal of appeal but offers no chance of getting North Vietnamese participation. If we go through the Geneva Co-Chairmen, we won't be able to get the Chinese.

Mr. Kissinger: It would be a strange conference if Hanoi has to maneuver publicly between the Chinese and the Soviets.

Amb. Johnson: U Thant and the UN seem a weak reed. We could start out bilaterally but would then have to expand the talks to cover all Indochina.

Adm. Moorer: With the new government we might get the British in the act.

Amb. Sullivan: The British are still a weak reed.

Amb. Johnson: The bilateral talks in Paris constitute the one existing channel. We would have to decide where we wanted to proceed from there.

Amb. Sullivan: The Soviet channel is always open.

Amb. Johnson: As a private channel but not for a public initiative.

Gen. Cushman: What have the French proposed?

Amb. Johnson: Not much. They have just said that there ought to be negotiations.

Mr. Kissinger: Would it be best to try Paris or at least begin there?

Mr. Packard: Why not? We want to upgrade the talks.

Amb. Johnson: I would tend to prefer Paris.

Mr. Kissinger: What do we do there?

Mr. Packard: We could propose a conference to discuss the whole Indochina problem.

Amb. Sullivan: The drafters of the NSSM 94 paper think we are unlikely to get a conference that would include all the needed membership. If we publicly called for a conference, there might be some psychological and political effect in terms of domestic opinion in the United States and putting the onus on the other side. But there is no reason for great hope that a conference would actually materialize.

Mr. Kissinger: At what level would it be possible for us to achieve something?

Amb. Sullivan: Bilaterally in Paris with the North Vietnamese and in secret negotiations with the Soviets. In Paris the North Vietnamese are highly suspicious and always think that any step we take is aimed at deceiving them. We might be able to dispel some of this mistrust by our public posture and through secret talks with the Soviets.

Mr. Packard: What about a public appeal to the prospective attendees of a conference?

Gen. Cushman: They have all said no.

Amb. Sullivan: The North Vietnamese have been careful to leave the question open. They said they did not want a conference *at this time.*

Mr. Kissinger: The Soviets have taken the same position.

Mr. Carver: The North Vietnamese mind-set at this time is such that if you really want to explore the prospects for a settlement, you have to show willingness to discuss the division of political power in South Vietnam. After Cambodia, they don't want to appear to be operating from weakness.

Mr. Kissinger: But when they are in a strong position, they have the same attitude.

Mr. Carver: For them, negotiations are not the principal objective; they are interested in political power.

Mr. Kissinger: Then under every conceivable circumstance, a division of political power is the only way to get the North Vietnamese to the conference table?

Mr. Carver: Yes.

Amb. Sullivan: That is their public position. But they might talk privately about military matters.

Amb. Johnson: I agree.

Mr. Carver: The North Vietnamese will insist on having a high-level U.S. representative.

Amb. Johnson: The North Vietnamese have two concerns—achieving political power and securing the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

Mr. Carver: Politically they are not interested in a free competition which they might lose.

Mr. Kissinger: Would we have to give up something fundamental?

Mr. Carver: Yes.

Mr. Kissinger: If it is true that under no circumstances will the North Vietnamese negotiate, then the question is to decide what is the propaganda proposal best calculated to place the onus of preventing a peace settlement on the enemy. Admittedly the question doesn't seem to make much difference to our own public. On the other hand, if there is some prospect of getting negotiations started, we need to decide what combination of forums and proposals would best protect our interests.

If we are aiming only at a propaganda advantage, what forum and what type of proposal would be best?

Amb. Sullivan: We would need to have a senior man go to Paris. We can say he is going for an Indochina conference, or we can say he will discuss with the North Vietnamese matters affecting all of Indochina.

Mr. Smyser: If we say he is going to talk about Indochina as a whole, won't that make Lon Nol nervous?

Amb. Sullivan: It won't bother Souvanna, and it won't make Lon Nol any more nervous than he is now.

Mr. Kissinger: Do we have to say anything at all about the purpose of appointing a senior man?

Amb. Johnson: No.

Mr. Carver: Appointing a senior representative would show we are at least trying to explore a settlement.

Mr. Kissinger: There would be a delay of several weeks before he would actually go to Paris.

Amb. Johnson: We don't have to state the objective publicly.

Mr. Kissinger: We all agree that sending a senior man to Paris would be a significant initiative and that the subject matter of the Paris talks would have to be expanded to include all Indochina. We are not agreed that this should be done publicly or on the forum for launching expanded talks. Could our representative start by raising the matter privately with the North Vietnamese?

Mr. Carver: They would not be receptive.

Amb. Sullivan: I don't agree. Of course, there may be delay. The senior man might have to come back. They may wait a while to respond. In the meantime, we just say that we will have interesting things to talk about.

Mr. Kissinger: Should we address our initiative to any particular forum? U Thant would not be acceptable to the North Vietnamese and the Chinese. The Co-Chairmen are not acceptable to the Chinese. The North Vietnamese and Chinese would reject the Djakarta Group. And we don't want the French.

If we just make a public call for a conference, we can be ready whenever a conference can be constructed. In the meantime, we can talk privately to both Hanoi and the Soviets.

Amb. Sullivan: The President will have his own views on what would be desirable in the light of the domestic situation.

Mr. Packard: Just naming a high-level negotiator would have some favorable domestic impact. By the time he gets to Paris we might be prepared to propose a cease-fire. Our man goes to Paris, Le Duc Tho

returns, then we might propose a cease-fire and conference. This gives us two months to see what happens in Vietnam. We can be doing some further work on our studies.

Amb. Johnson: That seems very sensible.

Mr. Smyser: We should decide whom we want at a conference.

Amb. Johnson: In our own minds we should decide.

Amb. Sullivan: We won't get a conference anyway.

Mr. Kissinger: We might for our own use have a list prepared of the optimum reasonable composition of a conference.

Mr. Packard: We ought to consider the things we could do in Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand that might make it acceptable to go a little further toward a settlement in South Vietnam.

Mr. Kissinger: We would in any event have to consider Indochina as a whole. Can we have the arguments about the various types of a conference written up? We also ought to specify why the best public approach might be just a simple call for a conference (coupled with quiet talks with the Soviets). (to Sullivan) Could you give some thought to the optimum composition of a conference?

Amb. Sullivan: We have already looked at this. We think 15 countries might be included: the five powers (U.S., U.K., USSR, France, China), the three ICC countries, the GVN, the PRG, the Lon Nol regime, Sihanouk, Souvanna, Souphanavong, and the North Vietnamese. That stacks up eight to seven.

Mr. Packard: What about the Japanese?

Amb. Sullivan: If we introduce the Djakarta group, many countries would have to be added.

Amb. Johnson: We can work out the exact list later. Our objective should be to get countries that are interested and have responsibilities.

Mr. Kissinger: Why not substitute Indonesia and Japan for Great Britain and France? It would be desirable to have the largest possible Asian participation.

Amb. Johnson: I agree.

Amb. Sullivan: If there is little likelihood of actually having a conference, why offend a lot of people by trying to invite certain countries and delete others?

Mr. Kissinger: How about inviting only the Djakarta Three?

Amb. Sullivan: In our own mind we could have an optimum list of participants.

Mr. Carver: We can call for maximum participation and let other countries turn down attendance if they wish.

Mr. Kissinger: Let's talk about proposals. NSSM 94 has three cease-fire proposals, two of which are different from those analyzed by the

VSSG. The two different proposals should be analyzed in terms of the criteria used in the VSSG study. The VSSG working group can undertake this.

Amb. Sullivan: Our group was not unanimous that these two cease-fire proposals merited serious consideration. They were included at the insistence of one member.

Mr. Kissinger: A local cease-fire is an interesting option. Who proposed including these cease-fires?

Amb. Sullivan: ISA.

Mr. Smyser: NSSM 94 also includes an all-Indochina cease-fire.

Amb. Johnson: That is worthwhile looking at.

Mr. Kissinger: Both the local cease-fire and the all-Indochina cease-fire are interesting proposals. The President has talked about a local cease-fire. Let's take a look at the NSSM 94 list of proposals the U.S. might make to induce a conference.

Amb. Sullivan: We think that the option of accepting the NLF Ten Points would be contrary to our interests and therefore not worth proposing.

Mr. Kissinger: Let's drop it then.

Amb. Johnson: Would it be possible for us to arrive at some interpretation of the Ten Points which we could use?

Mr. Carver: We might do that. But as interpreted by the NLF, the Ten Points would not be in our interest.

Mr. Kissinger: There is no reason why we have to accept the Ten Points if they want to talk. Our public position already is that we will discuss anything. This should be dropped. The President won't accept it anyway. The same is true of a unilateral and unconditional withdrawal.

Amb. Johnson: Aren't we already on that road?

Mr. Kissinger: If we set a deadline for withdrawal, then what are they required to do?

Amb. Johnson: We can set conditions to our offer to withdraw.

Mr. Kissinger: We have always said that if there is a settlement we will withdraw in one year. However, that is not unilateral and unconditional withdrawal. Unless they pay some price for non-compliance with our withdrawal proposal, we are giving them an alternative to negotiations.

Amb. Sullivan: Our option originally included a quid pro quo. If we maintain this option, we should rewrite it so that we bargain withdrawal in exchange for some concession from them.

Mr. Kissinger: That's an interesting suggestion. Can you rewrite the option along those lines?

Amb. Sullivan: Yes.

Amb. Johnson: The only thing available for bargaining is the timing of withdrawal.

Mr. Carver: There would also be the possibility that we would indefinitely maintain a residual force in Vietnam. The North Vietnamese don't want to end up facing a viable ARVN.

Adm. Moorer: What do we do if they don't comply with a settlement after we withdraw?

Adm. Johnson: That is one of the risks of the game.

(There was a break in the meeting at this point, during which there was some informal discussion of steps being taken to reorganize the economic section of the Embassy in Saigon.)

Col. Kennedy: The question of unilateral withdrawal relates to Proposal Seven [setting a time limit for getting negotiations started while continuing withdrawals].[6]

Mr. Kissinger: Let me suggest that in redrafting the paper a distinction be made between what we pay to get a conference and what we pay to get a settlement. I think we should pay very little for a conference. They have already sold negotiations many times over. We have paid by halting bombing and by allowing the NLF to participate.

One of the suggested proposals is that "we show readiness to make concessions on a political settlement." Just what can we propose as an incentive beyond the April 20 statement?

Amb. Sullivan: Our panel was rather cynical on this point. We can't get much without throwing the baby out with the bath water. Some people feel, however, that we could flesh out the April 20 proposals by giving specifics on a territorial accommodation.

Mr. Kissinger: Who suggested this?

Amb. Sullivan: Some of the lower-level members of our negotiating team.

Mr. Kissinger: Can you spell out exactly what you propose? One practical consequence of a standstill cease-fire would have to be territorial accommodations.

There are thus three possibilities—a standstill cease-fire involving a territorial accommodation, a territorial accommodation without a standstill cease-fire, and a combination.

Amb. Johnson: Can you have an accommodation without a cease-fire?

Mr. Kissinger: It might be done on a local basis. As territorial accommodations are reached in different localities, cease-fires are established.

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[6] Brackets in the source text.

Mr. Smyser: Hanoi is not interested in a local settlement. They want power in Saigon.

Mr. Kissinger: To sum up, the paper should be redrafted to provide a discussion of (1) forums for getting a conference started, (2) the role to be played by a new senior negotiator, and (3) what would be necessary to induce a conference as compared to what we might pay in order to negotiate a settlement. The non-starters among the options should be taken out. This should be completed by July 14. If you prefer, we can try an initial draft and turn it over to you.

Amb. Sullivan: That would be all right.

Mr. Kissinger: In that case Kennedy and Smyser can do the preliminary draft.

Amb. Johnson: Could we discuss the situation in Thailand? Our position there is in a mess as a result of the accelerated withdrawal of our forces. We might want to maintain substantial forces in Thailand, but the Defense Department has budget problems. I have held up a telegram to Ambassador Unger instructing him to raise the matter with the Thais.

Mr. Kissinger: We have a study in preparation on air operations in Southeast Asia.

Mr. Lynn: The NSSM 51 study is about ready.[7]

Amb. Johnson: We are going to get some backlash from the Thais.

Mr. Kissinger: I am disturbed about the problem. We need the Thai bases.

Mr. Packard: Perhaps there is some way of conducting discussions. We might just discuss the first step of our programs with the Thais, without raising the whole package.

Amb. Johnson: That would help if you can live with it.

Mr. Kissinger: The President shares Alex's concern. He thought the tactical air study might pre-empt our position.

Mr. Packard: Our tactical air study might allow a drawdown in our forces while improving tactical air support.

Amb. Johnson: I am disturbed about going to the Thais with a big package and then coming back later with a turnaround.

Mr. Packard: The tactical air study could result in improvements, such as more effective aircraft and laser-guided bombs. Theses improvements could be made while reducing our total forces.

Amb. Johnson: The immediate operational problem is how we talk to the Thais.

Mr. Kissinger: We can coordinate on this.

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[7] The study, August 5, was in response to NSSM 51, April 26, 1969, which called for an analysis of U.S. programs in Thailand. (National Archives. RG 59, S/S–I Files: Lot 80 D 212, NSSM 51)

337. Diplomatic Note From the United States Government to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam[1]

Washington, undated.

The note of June 5[2] has been studied with great care. The U.S. Government agrees that the negotiations to be fruitful should be conducted free of pressure by either side. The appointment of a new Ambassador to the Paris peace conference is a sign of its good will and serious attitude. In the temporarily suspended talks between Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy on one side, and Kissinger on the other, it was agreed that these meetings would establish a framework of basic principles for implementation in the formal sessions. For this reason, the U.S. Government proposes a new meeting between Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy on one side and Mr. Kissinger on the other to develop new approaches to peace in Vietnam. Mr. Kissinger can meet in Paris on any weekend from July 25 onwards.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 853, For the President's File—Vietnam Negotiations, Sensitive, Camp David, Vol. V. No classification marking. A note on the top of the page reads: "Typed Jul 1, 1970 & cy [copy] given Gen. Walters." Walters delivered the message on July 5.

[2] Printed as an attachment to Document 320.

338. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

San Clemente, July 3, 1970.

SUBJECT

Your Meeting with Acting Secretary Johnson and Ambassadors Bruce and Habib, Saturday, July 4, 10:00 a.m.[2]

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 189, Paris Peace Talks/Meetings, 1 July 1970–September 1970. Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. A notation on the first page reads: "The President has seen."

[2] The President and Kissinger met with Bunker, Habib, and Johnson from 9:56 to 11:52 p.m. There were two breaks in the meeting: from 10:03 to 10:08 apparently for press photographers and from 11:45 to 11:52 a.m. when the President and Bunker made brief statements to the press corps. (Ibid., White House Central Files, Daily Diary) The texts of the statements are in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970*, p. 562. No other record of the meeting has been found.

You will be meeting on July 4 with Acting Secretary U. Alexis Johnson, Ambassador David K.E. Bruce, and Ambassador Philip C. Habib. The meeting is in part designed to underline our peace initiative. It also gives you the chance to outline your basic views to your negotiators in the presence of Alex Johnson and against the background of recent unhelpful press reports on possible changes in our position.

I suggest you meet for about an hour and a half in your office and that you then take Ambassador Bruce and me to your house for a private session from about 11:30 to 12:30. (Alexis Johnson and Phil Habib know that you plan to do this.) This will give you a chance to talk frankly to Bruce about:

—Your general philosophy about the negotiations
—The manner in which you want Ambassador Bruce to conduct them and the procedures you plan to follow.

Their Positions

—*Ambassador Bruce* will be mainly interested in informing himself about the current state of the talks, what the problems are, and what the prospects are. He will also wish to know how he can best prepare himself for this mission.

—*Ambassador Habib* will want to brief you and Ambassador Bruce on the current situation in Paris. His recent views on the prospects for the talks have not been optimistic, since he doubts that the present framework of negotiations can cover all the problems which need to be discussed for a settlement throughout Indochina.[3]

—*Alexis Johnson* may raise a negotiating initiative which the State Department is seriously considering. Their proposal, as framed by Ambassador Sullivan, would essentially combine the offer of a ceasefire with a stipulated time period for withdrawal of US/Allied forces.[4]

Your Positions:

You may wish to make the following points:

—Any public or private statements by either Ambassador should emphasize that we see this change in our representation as a substantive move, made against a background of repeated reports that the level

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[3] On June 3 Habib sent Kissinger a letter outlining his views of the objectives of the negotiations and suggesting five options which were not mutually exclusive: 1) relying on Vietnamization and gearing for the long run; 2) wider conference in Paris; 3) cease-fire and wider Paris conference; 4) wider conference, supervised cease-fire, offer to withdraw U.S. and Third Country forces within fixed time; and 5) cease-fire and withdrawal with no formal conference. (Attached to a July 2 letter from Kissinger to Habib; National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 189, Paris Peace Talks/Meetings, 1 July 1970–September 1970)

[4] The proposal was presented formally to the President in Document 345.

of our representation in Paris was a bar to serious negotiations. We have now removed that bar. We do not regard this merely as cosmetics, but as a sign of our sincere desire to find a negotiated settlement. We wish to see what the other side will do now.

—You should emphasize that there has been too much loose talk recently about new U.S. initiatives, including a possible change in our position on a coalition government. You made your views clear on this issue in your Wednesday night TV interview.[5] You want all departmental spokesmen to stay mum on possible U.S. moves in the Paris negotiations, in particular, on the questions of a coalition government or a fixed unilateral U.S. withdrawal.

—*You believe our essential negotiating position is sound*.

• We should steer away from talk of a coalition government.
• Linkage of a ceasefire and a fixed U.S. withdrawal timetable in effect accepts the other side's demand that we take out our forces unilaterally in return only for a guarantee of their safe passage.
• In any event, as you pointed out on television, a fixed timetable for our withdrawals removes the incentive for the other side to negotiate.
• As for ceasefire itself, you don't think it should be linked to our unilateral withdrawals. You might be willing to consider a separate ceasefire initiative in late summer, but first you want to let the South Vietnamese continue their pacification efforts in the wake of the Cambodian operations.

—You would welcome Ambassador Habib's views on the negotiations and what we might expect from Hanoi in terms of their delegation and their positions.

—You wish to thank Ambassador Habib for the outstanding job he has done as Acting Chief of Delegation through a most difficult period. You hope that he will stay on for a few months to assist Ambassador Bruce in getting started.

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[5] Reference is to the President's conversation on July 1 in Los Angeles with television journalists Howard K. Smith of the American Broadcasting Company, John Chancellor of the National Broadcasting Company, and Eric Sevareid of the Columbia Broadcasting Company. At the beginning of this question and answer session, Nixon announced the appointment of Bruce. Text of the conversation is in *Public Papers: Nixon, 1970*, pp. 543–559.

Status of Talks

You may wish also to give Ambassador Bruce our general impression of where the talks stand at this time, recognizing that he will be receiving more detailed briefings later:

—At present, the talks are completely deadlocked and the gaps between the respective positions are very wide.

—*We* have taken the following basic positions on key issues:

• *Military Issues*. We have indicated our readiness to withdraw all our forces in twelve months as part of an overall settlement including their reciprocal withdrawals. We do not expect them to announce their withdrawals publicly, but we cannot leave while North Vietnamese forces remain.

• *Political Issues*. We believe that this is a subject which the South Vietnamese should work out among themselves. Given the GVN–NLF stalemate, however, we have said that we are willing to discuss a political settlement but that the South Vietnamese must participate in the discussions as serious negotiations proceed. We and the GVN have proposed free elections, internationally supervised, with an electoral commission to ensure fairness. The NLF could sit on this commission and participate in the elections. We would accept the outcome.

• *POWs*. We attach great importance to this issue. We think that an early exchange of prisoners should be arranged. Barring that, we want to use whatever means we can to ensure proper treatment.

—The *North Vietnamese* and *Viet Cong* have taken the following positions:

• *Military*. They say that we must pull out all our forces in six months and that in exchange they will guarantee the safety of the withdrawing forces. They also have demanded as a precondition that we should state our calendar for unilateral withdrawal before they will negotiate seriously. (This is almost the position that Ambassador Sullivan is suggesting except that he would envisage a longer timetable, i.e. eighteen months, for our withdrawals.)

• *Political*. They propose the formation of a temporary coalition government to run elections, which would lead to a permanent coalition. They want to determine who can be in these coalitions. They also have stated as a precondition that we must abandon the South Vietnamese government before they will negotiate seriously.

Attached at Tab A is biographic information on Ambassador Bruce.[6]

[6] Attached but not printed.

339. Memorandum From President Nixon to the Chairman of the Washington Special Actions Group (Kissinger)[1]

Washington, July 7, 1970.

SUBJECT

U.S. Operations in Cambodia

Upon the successful conclusion of U.S. ground operations in Cambodia, I want to re-emphasize to you and, through you, to the Washington Special Actions Group and the Departments concerned, that I place great emphasis on the need to redouble our efforts to provide appropriate military equipment and supplies to the Government of Cambodia.

I continue to believe that it is in our best interest to prevent Cambodia from falling under Communist control and I expect the Washington Special Actions Group to concentrate its efforts toward that end.

Termination of U.S. ground operations in Cambodia also underlines the desirability of maintaining maximum pressure on the enemy in Cambodia through U.S. and allied air efforts. For this reason, I want to reaffirm until further notice, all authorities heretofore promulgated for the conduct of U.S. air operations over Cambodia.

Richard Nixon

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 510, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VIII, 20 June 1970–20 July 1970. Secret; Sensitive; Exclusively Eyes Only. On July 9 Kissinger, who had drafted this memorandum on July 4 at Nixon's request, sent it to Rogers, Laird, Moorer, Helms, Johnson, and Packard. (Ibid.)

340. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, July 10, 1970, 11 a.m.

SUBJECT

Support for Cambodia

PARTICIPATION

Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger

CIA
Mr. Richard Helms
Mr. Thomas Karamessines
Mr. Nelson

JCS
Admiral Thomas Moorer
General Vogt

Defense
Mr. Nutter
Admiral Flanagan

State
Ambassador Johnson
Mr. Moore
Mr. Tom Pickering

NSC Staff
Col. Richard Kennedy
Mr. John Holdridge

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

Dr. Kissinger spoke first on several matters related to military aid to Cambodia before turning to the funding question. On paramilitary operations in South Laos and Northeastern Cambodia, Admiral Moorer said that a JCS plan had been developed which had been sent to MACV and CINCPAC for comments.[2] *Dr. Kissinger called for an end to the study process by the following week so that a decision could be reached, and called on State and Defense to coordinate on this.*

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Meeting Minutes, Originals, 1970, 7/17/70. Top Secret; Nodis. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room.

[2] JCS telegram Tango 34 to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV, July 3, the cable and a summary of it are ibid., Box H–78, WSAG Meeting, 7/10/70.

Admiral Moorer described a JCS communications report or plan which proposed installation of a multi-channel scatterwave tropospheric system for use by the U.S. mission in Phnom Penh to communicate externally with Bangkok and Saigon. This was essential to deal with the communications load. Installation would be by 34 U.S. military personnel, with operation later by civilians. In addition, provision of U.S. spare parts or replacements for existing Cambodian equipment was called for in the report. These costs were estimated at $1.2 million. *Dr. Kissinger directed that the figure for Cambodian MAP to be given to the President should include such communications equipment as a top priority matter. He requested that the JCS communications plan for the scatterwave system be circulated to all those present so that it could be taken up at the next WSAG meeting; everyone should reflect on the political implications of the U.S. military personnel to install the system*. (He suggested that these might commute from Saigon by air, and at night.)

Turning to funding, Dr. Kissinger first brought up Thai activities with respect to Cambodia. It emerged that Senator Russell did not want CIA to finance Thai activities in Cambodia, and that Senator Stennis on the other hand believed that CIA rather than Defense should finance these activities. On the equipment costs for the Thai/Khmer regiment ($1.2 million) following a discussion of alternatives including Cambodian MAP, CIA funds, Thai MASF, or PL–480 trade-offs, *the decision favored using prior-year Thai MASF, but with the possibility of using some Cambodian MAP. Action was assigned to Mr. Nutter*.

In addressing the question of [*less than 1 line of source text not declassified*] operations in Western Cambodia, *it was agreed that RTAF operations took precedence over providing the initial equipment for an RCT*. The initial equipment costs for the RCT seemed highly loaded. *The funding route of using prior-year Thai MASF, with replacement of run-downs via PL–480 funds used to make purchases from U.S. military sale was agreed upon*. This would be used first to support a sortie rate by the RTAF of 900 per month. Ambassador Unger would be asked to discuss this with the Thai, and also to review with them the requirements for the RCT. *This cable should reflect the urgency of the need for Thai air support*. In the course of this discussion it was brought out that there was no economic justification of a PL–480 program for Thailand, *but that there was no choice other than to go for a PL–480 program up to $20 million as a source of funds for trade-offs.*

The issue of Thai training for 15,000 Cambodian troops was raised, with several members questioning the effectiveness of such training. It was generally accepted that all training should be carried out in South Vietnam, where the job could be done more effectively, more quickly, and more cheaply. *However Admiral Moorer would be asked to look into a comparison of South Vietnam versus Thailand for training Cambodians, to include an estimate of the training times required*.

The question of pay and allowances for the Khmer Krom and the Thai/Khmer units was addressed, with the alternatives being Defense funds, AID supporting assistance, the AID contingency funds, or CIA funds. *The decision was made to rely on Defense funds for the 1st quarter of FY 71 and AID supporting assistance used later, subject to the views of the Secretary of Defense*. (This was based on the assumption that an increase in the AID appropriation for general supporting assistance would not get through Congress at this time; Mr. Nutter, however, quoted Secretary Laird as believing that the issue should be carried to the Hill now.) A Defense switchback would be required to pay separation allowances of $1.7 million for the Thai/Khmer *and Mr. Nutter agreed to talk to Mr. Packard on this*. The size of the Cambodian MAP was considered. The consensus was to go for a Presidential Decision calling for a $40 million Cambodian program to be drawn from other programs and to ask for a supplemental later when Congressional response might be better. The $40 million was estimated as being sufficient to carry through January or February 1971. Admiral Moorer felt that this sum was insufficient.

The meeting agreed to consider the retention of Thai forces in Laos at the next session. Agreement was noted on providing SAR operations in Cambodia for the RTAF, and on providing communications jeeps to Cambodia for use in air-to-ground control.

[Omitted here are the 10-page minutes of the meeting.]

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341. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, July 14, 1970.

SUBJECT

Reassuring Report From Our Political and Military Counsellor in Phnom Penh

We have received a report from Mr. Ladd, our political and military counsellor in Phnom Penh, which presents a reassuring picture of

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 510, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VIII, 20 June 1970–20 July 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information. A notation on the memorandum reads: "The President has seen."

the strategic situation in Cambodia and of future developments. (The full text of the message is at Tab A.)[2]

Mr. Ladd begins by discussing the earlier military situation in Cambodia, noting that our operations against the sanctuaries forced the enemy to develop his plans too rapidly to implement the plan for Cambodia which he then appeared to want to carry out, which was to bring about the rapid downfall of the Lon Nol Government. The enemy struck at many different Cambodian centers at the same time, but in doing so his forces became dispersed, his logistical support was not viable, he did not have time to prepare his battlefields, his communications were spotty, and he lacked a functioning infrastructure and the support of the people. Against this, the Cambodians could and did fight despite their lack of training, weapons, and experience. Together with U.S. and South Vietnamese assistance, they were able to hold, while the enemy was unable to take and hold any of the strategic points which he attacked. The enemy's hope of bringing down the Lon Nol Government quickly has now failed.

Looking ahead, Mr. Ladd believes that further enemy attacks can certainly be expected, but that the NVA/VC forces will attempt to organize themselves better and that this will require time. The Cambodians will be able to utilize this time to reinforce critical garrisons, distribute supplies and munitions, improve communications, coordinate defensive plans, work out South Vietnamese and Thai assistance, train troops, and gain support from other nations.

Meanwhile, the enemy is faced with the strategic choice of either bringing more pressure to bear against Cambodians, in which case he cannot exert a maximum effort against Vietnam and against Vietnamization, or redeploying at least some of the enemy forces now in Cambodia to Vietnam, thus relieving to some extent the current pressures against Cambodia. In either case he must operate over greatly extended lines of communications and in an environment generally lacking in local cooperation and intelligence factors. At the same time, it will become increasingly evident that his operations in Cambodia are nothing but absolute aggression which should put NVA/VC operations in Cambodia in ever-growing unfavorable light.

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[2] Dated July 10; attached but not printed. Haig sent Kissinger a July 11 memorandum commenting on Ladd's report. Haig thought the report to be "extremely optimistic, maybe too much. But on the other hand, I think it accurately portrays the strategic importance of the Cambodian decision and the dilemma now faced by Hanoi. I am especially sympathetic because it confirms the original assessment I made during my visit to Phnom Penh in April." See Document 219. Kissinger asked Haig to prepare a memorandum for the President. Haig had Howe do it on a "rush" basis.

Finally, Mr. Ladd considers that the Cambodian situation has the very positive aspects of inspiring free Asian nations to help work together against a common regional enemy. He cites the assistance being provided by the South Vietnamese, the Thais, and Australians and then assumes that other countries may join in this effort. The United States' role can be limited to providing a helping hand without the involvement of U.S. forces or U.S. military advisory missions.

Comment: While I do not believe we should allow ourselves to become euphoric about Cambodia, I agree with the general line put forward by Mr. Ladd. Undoubtedly a hard fight lies ahead in Cambodia, but the enemy's strategic and practical military problems are considerable, and the Cambodians do appear to be pulling themselves together.

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342. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon[1]

Washington, July 14, 1970.

SUBJECT

Thoughts on Cambodia Policy From Our Chargé in Phnom Penh

Our Chargé in Phnom Penh, Rives, set forth his views on the Cambodian situation and the U.S. policy in preparation for an East Asian U.S. Chiefs of Mission Conference which has just taken place in Tokyo (Tab A).[2]

You may find his views of some interest. In brief, he says:

He is more sanguine than a few weeks ago, as a result of Cambodian efforts plus U.S. and other outside help.

The positive factors are Cambodian nationalism, continued support of the GOC by vital opinion groups, VC/NVA failure to win over the peasants in their areas, continued unity within the GOC, general high morale, the fact that the Khmer are a homogeneous race, recognizably fighting external aggression, and supply and organizational difficulties being experienced by the VC/NVA.

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 510, Country Files, Far East, Cambodia, Vol. VIII, 20 June 1970–20 July 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive. Sent for information.

[2] Tab A, a retyped copy of telegram 1519 from Phnom Penh, July 7, is attached but not printed.

He notes also the Asian support for Lon Nol, and the prospect that most countries, even France and the USSR, wish for a peaceful settlement and may influence Hanoi.

Among the negative factors, Rives lists FANK weakness, the poor economic situation, and the failure of the GOC officials to get out into the countryside.

Rives also expresses disappointment at the failure of most Asian countries to make a truly regional effort to protect one of their own members.

As to U.S. policy, Rives suggests:

—that we continue to act within the Nixon Doctrine, avoid direct military ground support and resist the temptation to move in and run things.[3]

—that we plan on FY 71 MAP support of at least $75 million.[4]

—that we launch an economic assistance program in cooperation with other sources, planning on a U.S. contribution of some $15–20 million.

—that we help with English teaching to enable the Cambodians to communicate with their neighbors and with us.

—that we redouble our diplomatic effort to persuade Asian countries to give concrete help and diplomatic support. (He wonders why we can't persuade India to be less unhelpful, given our enormous assistance program.)

—that we encourage closer coordination between Cambodia and its three neighbors.

—that we institute limited guerrilla type interdiction efforts along Cambodia's northern border.

Over the longer term, Rives believes that a military takeover is possible. If on the other hand, the nation moves towards a republic, it could either remain strongly pro U.S. or move towards a nationalistic and rather radical line. Much of the present support for the Lon Nol Government comes from opponents of Sihanouk who in normal times would be quite radical. Rives suggests that we look toward encouraging the flow of private capital in the post-war period, and plan for reconstruction of the Cambodian infrastructure together with interested states such as France and Japan.[5]

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[3] Nixon wrote "(correct)" in the margin next to this suggestion.

[4] Nixon wrote "(probably needed)" in the margin next to this suggestion and underlined the phrase, "plan on FY 71 MAP support of at least $75 million."

[5] Nixon underlined the last clause of this sentence and wrote: "This report makes a great deal of sense."

343. Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting[1]

Washington, July 17, 1970, 4:11–5:05 p.m.

SUBJECT

Cambodia

PARTICIPATION

Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger

State
Mr. U. Alexis Johnson
Mr. Marshall Green
Mr. Thomas Pickering

Defense
Mr. G. Warren Nutter
Mr. Dennis Doolin

JCS
Adm. Thomas H. Moorer
Gen. John Vogt

CIA
Mr. Cord Meyer
Mr. William Nelson
Mr. William Wells

NSC Staff
Col. Richard T. Kennedy
Mr. John H. Holdridge
Mr. Keith Guthrie

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

1. *MAP for Cambodia.* The WSAG was informed of the President's desire not to request Congress at this time to make any addition to MAP appropriations to provide funds for Cambodia. Instead, he favors allocating as much as $50 million from existing appropriations to Cambodia by means of a Presidential determination. The amount may have to be limited to $40 million because of the serious effects of further reductions to other programs if the additional $10 million is allocated to Cambodia now.

[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H–114, WSAG Minutes, Originals, 1969–1970, 7/17/70. Top Secret; Nodis. The meeting was held in the White House Situation Room. Jeanne Davis sent these minutes to Kissinger on July 25; he initialed her covering memorandum.

Dr. Kissinger requested that the forthcoming Under Secretaries Committee report on the overall MAP point out the possible need to request a supplemental appropriation including additional authorization for Cambodia about January 1971.

2. *Interdiction in Southern Laos and Northeast Cambodia.* The WSAG was informed of plans already under way to recruit, train, and equip additional Lao special guerrilla units. The WSAG approved going ahead with a program to set up four battalions of Cambodian irregulars for use in interdiction operations in Southern Laos. The State Department will sound out Souvanna about increasing the strength and depth of interdiction operations in Laos involving South Vietnamese and Cambodian personnel, and the JCS will obtain General Abrams' views on the feasibility of conducting expanded interdiction operations with largely Vietnamese personnel and without US personnel. The WSAG agreed that Defense and CIA should work out arrangements to upgrade weapons for existing special guerrilla units.

3. *Communications Equipment for Cambodia.* State, Defense, and CIA will examine the feasibility of alternatives to the proposed tropospheric scatter system for out-of-country communications involving fewer American personnel than the proposal prepared by JCS. State will ask views of Embassy Phnom Penh. A report will be submitted to Dr. Kissinger by July 21.

4. *Funding for Thai-Khmer and Khmer Krom Units.* The WSAG was informed that Defense had agreed to provide $929,000 for Khmer Krom units. Defense will examine the possibility of providing $862,000 for Thai-Khmers on the basis that AID will arrange an offset in South Vietnamese programs after passage of the AID appropriation bill later this year.

5. *Armored Vehicles for Cambodia.* The WSAG concluded that, in view of maintenance and training difficulties for Cambodia associated with such vehicles, they should not be provided at this time.

6. *AK–47 Ammunition.* Defense will prepare prior to the next WSAG meeting a study of the problems involved in obtaining AK–47 ammunition for Cambodia. In light of the AK–47 ammunition shortage, the proposed Indonesian shipment of AK–47 rifles to Cambodia will be re-examined and consideration will be given to direct US shipment of weapons to Cambodia.

7. *Thai Troops in Laos.* The WSAG agreed in principle that the Thai troops should be retained, but noted that the Laos Ad Hoc Group was reviewing this matter and will have a report completed by July 23. A decision was deferred pending WSAG review of the Ad Hoc Group report.

8. *US Search and Rescue for Recovery of Cambodian Air Crews.* The WSAG agreed that the US should be willing to assist with search and rescue if requested by the Cambodians through the South Vietnamese (VNAF). However, the Cambodians are not to be informed that this is the US position.

[Omitted here are the 10-page minutes of the meeting.]

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344. Record of Meeting[1]

Washington, July 18, 1970, 10:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

RECORD OF PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH THE FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD

PARTICIPANTS

The President

Board Members:
Chairman, George W. Anderson, Jr.
Gordon Gray
Franklin B. Lincoln, Jr.
(Dr.) Franklin D. Murphy
Robert D. Murphy

Other:
Henry A. Kissinger
B/Gen. Alexander M. Haig
Gerard P. Burke (Exec. Sec. PFIAB)

SUBJECT

Southeast Asia

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[1] Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 276, Agency Files, President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, Vol. V, 1 August 1970–31 December 1970. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. According to an August 4 covering memorandum by Lord, this was a "boiled down" version of the meeting. Lord wrote in a postscript: "This is pretty dicey, close-hold material." A full version of the meeting is ibid. Haig prepared a summarized version of the meeting, July 18. (Ibid., Vol. IV, 1 May 1970–31 July 1970)

The members of the PFIAB met with the President to report on their recent visits to Southeast Asia.[2] Following is a summary record of the highlights of the meeting.

Intelligence for Cambodia. The Board members believed there had been no significant improvement in our intelligence capabilities in Cambodia as of their July 5 visit, and the President expressed his displeasure. Dr. Kissinger noted interagency disagreements on the facilities required; he said that local communications had been improved but those between Phnom Penh and the outside were still unresolved due to State's desire to maintain a low-US visibility. The President stated that more COMINT on Cambodia was needed and that Mr. Fred Ladd's arrival in Phnom Penh had greatly improved the reporting from there.

US Personnel in Cambodia. The Board confirmed the President's impression that US Chargé Rives was in over his head in Cambodia and that Mr. Ladd was doing an exceptionally good job, although overworked and needing some help. The President asked Dr. Kissinger to accelerate Ambassador-designate Swank's Senate hearings and get him to Phnom Penh.

Sihanoukville. The President asked the PFIAB to look very carefully into the entire background of the intelligence community's misreading of the importance of Sihanoukville as an entry point for communist supplies in Cambodia. Although the military had consistently maintained that Sihanoukville received a very substantial amount of communist material the civilian agencies persisted in discounting its importance until we had begun our sanctuary operations. CIA had described the flow of materials through Sihanoukville as only a trickle while evidence now indicates that about 70% of communist supplies in Cambodia had been brought in through this port. The President wondered, if such mistakes could be made on a fairly straightforward issue such as this one, how we should judge CIA's assessments of more important developments such as Chinese communist military capabilities. He emphasized again later in the meeting that the Board should give very close attention to the case of Sihanoukville which represented one of the worst records ever compiled by the intelligence community.

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[2] Four members of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board visited Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and CINCPAC in early June. The members and their special interests were Admiral Anderson (military matters), Gordon Gray (American and foreign intelligence capabilities), and Franklin Murphy (economic, civil action, and public affairs). Franklin Lincoln, another member of the Board, did a separate 3-week survey of U.S. intelligence operations in Vietnam, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan during May and June. The five members wanted to meet with the President to give their impressions prior to submitting a formal report. (Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, undated; ibid.)

CINCPAC Plan for Cambodia. The Board thought that phase I, which is concerned with preserving the southern half of the country, seemed generally practicable although it had some defects, i.e. third country mercenaries rather than Americans should be used as helicopter pilots. The Board could not support phase II which would involve offensive actions in northern Cambodia. Dr. Murphy noted that Admiral McCain's estimate of $85 million per year for phase I could be substantially on the low side.

Dr. Kissinger explained that the CINCPAC plan was still in the bureaucracy although the WSAG was moving generally in the same direction and was informed about parts of the plan. The problem was to transform the plan into a complete integrated proposal that was useful to the President. The President stated that none of our planning for Cambodia had any clear conceptual base or long-range perspective. He added that he had asked Admiral Moorer to submit a complete plan, that it should include intelligence requirements, and that he must have the proposal soon because of its budgetary aspects. He added that there were ways of making funds available indirectly for Cambodia if Congress is unwilling to supply them directly.

US Air Support in Cambodia. In reply to Admiral Anderson's comment that the US should be as liberal as possible with its air support, the President said he understood fully and was thinking along the same lines. The President later said that he fully agreed with Mr. Gray's view that if the US is to provide tactical air support in Cambodia we should get away from the notion that it can only be in the form of interdiction in support of our own troops.

US Bombing of North Vietnam. Admiral Anderson said the group was very concerned about the restrictions placed on the US military since the October 1968 bombing halt. He said that a resumption of the bombing could be the only blue chip that the US has left in trying to achieve a settlement and recalled the civilian-military disagreement over the bombing's effectiveness in stopping the input of communist supplies to South Vietnam. The President remarked that this chip had already been spent for domestic political reasons and he could no longer play it unless given sufficient provocation. Dr. Murphy said it was important that the President be given an accurate fix on the effectiveness of the bombing, particularly now that other supply routes were eliminated, at least for the time being. He thought that the military should be asked to develop a plan for bombing resumption for contingency purposes in case the communists gave the President sufficiently serious provocation. The President said this was a very good point and noted it.

Overall Approach to Southeast Asia. Dr. Murphy believed there was no integrated economic/military/political approach to Southeast

Asian problems and that a high level government group should examine the region and propose coordinated actions to the President. There was a particular need to explain the Nixon Doctrine and the context of US withdrawals from the area.

US Intelligence. The President stated that the US is spending $6 billion per year on intelligence and deserves to receive a lot more for its money than it has been getting. He could not put up with people lying to him about intelligence or giving warped evaluations; he wanted to know if intelligence was inadequate or if it depicted a bad situation. Many reports from the intelligence community were cautiously bland and therefore completely meaningless, while others were written to fit a preconceived philosophy. He believed that those responsible for deliberate slanting of reports should be fired. The time may be coming when he would have to read the riot act to the entire intelligence community. He said that perhaps the most important function for the PFIAB would be to help eradicate subjective judgments from intelligence reports.

Miscellaneous. Several other subjects were touched upon. The President commented that the Cambodian operations had shown real teamwork at last among the various South Vietnamese forces. The Chairman noted that Vang Pao often risked his personal safety in combat and the President said we should prevent him from doing this in view of his importance to the effort in Laos. The Chairman declared that our knowledge of the intentions of Peking and Hanoi were essentially nonexistent; for example, we might be passing over too casually the possibility of Chinese communist volunteers in Southeast Asia. The Chairman also stated that the critical factor in Eastern Asia during the next few years will be the Russian decision about what to do about Chinese nuclear weapons delivery developments. The President agreed with Dr. Murphy that Indonesia was a key country with whom we should maintain a good relationship.

Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976

Volume VI

Vietnam, January 1969–July 1970

Editors Edward C. Keefer
Carolyn Yee

General Editor Edward C. Keefer

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Preface

The *Foreign Relations of the United States* series presents the official documentary historical record of major foreign policy decisions and significant diplomatic activity of the United States Government. The Historian of the Department of State is charged with the responsibility for the preparation of the *Foreign Relations* series. The staff of the Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, under the direction of the General Editor of the *Foreign Relations* series, plans, researches, compiles, and edits the volumes in the series. Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg first promulgated official regulations codifying specific standards for the selection and editing of documents for the series on March 26, 1925. These regulations, with minor modifications, guided the series through 1991.

Public Law 102–138, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, established a new statutory charter for the preparation of the series which was signed by President George H.W. Bush on October 28, 1991. Section 198 of P.L. 102–138 added a new Title IV to the Department of State's Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 4351, et seq.).

The statute requires that the *Foreign Relations* series be a thorough, accurate, and reliable record of major United States foreign policy decisions and significant United States diplomatic activity. The volumes of the series should include all records needed to provide comprehensive documentation of major foreign policy decisions and actions of the United States Government. The statute also confirms the editing principles established by Secretary Kellogg: the *Foreign Relations* series is guided by the principles of historical objectivity and accuracy; records should not be altered or deletions made without indicating in the published text that a deletion has been made; the published record should omit no facts that were of major importance in reaching a decision; and nothing should be omitted for the purposes of concealing a defect in policy. The statute also requires that the *Foreign Relations* series be published not more than 30 years after the events recorded. The editors are convinced that this volume meets all regulatory, statutory, and scholarly standards of selection and editing.

Structure and Scope of the Foreign Relations Series

This volume is part of a subseries of volumes of the *Foreign Relations* series that documents the most important issues in the foreign policy of the administrations of Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford. This volume documents U.S. policy towards the war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from January 1969 to July 1970.

Focus of Research and Principles of Selection for Foreign Relations, 1969–1976, Volume VI

The scope of this volume is different from previous volumes on Vietnam in the *Foreign Relations* series. For the years 1955–1968 the series produced volumes exclusively on U.S. policy towards Vietnam and documented U.S. policy towards Laos and Cambodia in separate volumes. With the Nixon administration's decision to take the war to the enemy in Cambodia and integrate more fully the secret war in Laos into its strategy for Vietnam, this format was no longer valid. This volume covers Vietnam in the context of the larger war that included the conflicts in Laos and Cambodia, and in the case of the former, also the role of Thailand in Laos. Consequently, the editors had to make choices about what to cover. When Vietnam was the main concern of President Nixon and his principal advisers—primarily Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger and his NSC Staff; Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker in Saigon; Commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, General Creighton Abrams; and Chief Paris Peace Talks negotiator, Henry Cabot Lodge—the focus is on Vietnam strategy, planning and operations. The focus of the volume later shifts to the issue of the deterioration of the secret war in Laos in March 1970. In March and April 1970, after the overthrow of Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia and his replacement by pro-American General Lon Nol, the volume moves its focus to Cambodia, culminating with the U.S.-South Vietnamese invasion of that country in an effort to attack the North Vietnamese troops in their sanctuaries. The volume concludes with the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia.

In addition to this shifting emphasis on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, the volume has as one of its principal themes the search for a negotiated settlement to the Vietnam War. In early 1969, the Nixon administration attempted to use the private sessions of the Paris Peace Talks as a potential venue for serious negotiations. When the administration concluded that this format was not productive, peace talks shifted to secret meetings between Henry Kissinger and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam Chief of the Paris delegation, Xuan Thuy and the Special Adviser, Le Duc Tho. The volume covers these initial secret talks in detail. Also, as part of the Nixon strategy for a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, Nixon and Kissinger pressed the Soviet Union to moderate the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's demands in the peace negotiations by linking US–USSR détente with the supposed success of their efforts.

President Nixon was determined to use force to encourage the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to agree to a settlement in Vietnam. Coverage of war strategy to this end is also a theme of the volume but only in the broadest sense. Policy decisions to secretly bomb Cambo-

dia, to expand the bombing in Laos, to request and expedite the sending of Thai troops for fighting in Laos, to shore up the Lon Nol government, and to attack the North Vietnamese in Cambodia are documented as they reach the President and his principal advisers for decision. The implementation and the course of these campaigns are covered only as they are reported to the President or other senior officials. U.S. relations with the Republic of Vietnam, a major theme of many previous Vietnam volumes, is a secondary subject in this volume mainly because South Vietnam was in a period of relative political and social quiet at the time. Consultation with President Thieu and Vice President Ky is emphasized when it was significant. Nixon's desire to use covert operations more effectively in support of the war in Vietnam is documented, as is a program of clandestine support for the creation of a grass roots political organization to support President Thieu.

The question of the October 1969 nuclear alert and its relationship to the war in Vietnam is covered only briefly in this volume. Full coverage of the alert will be printed in *Foreign Relations,* 1969–1976, Volume XXXIV, National Security Policy, 1969–1972.

Editorial Methodology

The documents are presented chronologically according to Washington time. Memoranda of conversation are placed according to the time and date of the conversation, rather than the date the memorandum was drafted.

Editorial treatment of the documents published in the *Foreign Relations* series follows Office style guidelines, supplemented by guidance from the General Editor. The documents are reproduced as exactly as possible, including marginalia or other notations, which are described in the footnotes. Texts are transcribed and printed according to accepted conventions for the publication of historical documents within the limitations of modern typography. A heading has been supplied by the editors for each document included in the volume. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are retained as found in the original text, except that obvious typographical errors are silently corrected. Other mistakes and omissions in the documents are corrected by bracketed insertions: a correction is set in italic type; an addition in roman type. Words or phrases underlined in the source text are printed in italics. Abbreviations and contractions are preserved as found in the original text, and a list of abbreviations is included in the front matter of each volume.

Bracketed insertions are also used to indicate omitted text that deals with an unrelated subject (in roman type) or that remains classified after declassification review (in italic type). The amount and, where possible, the nature of the material not declassified has been noted by indicating the number of lines or pages of text that were omitted.

Entire documents withheld for declassification purposes have been accounted for and are listed with headings, source notes, and number of pages not declassified in their chronological place. All brackets that appear in the original text are so identified in footnotes.

The first footnote to each document indicates the source of the document, original classification, distribution, and drafting information. This note also provides the background of important documents and policies and indicates whether the President or his major policy advisers read the document.

Editorial notes and additional annotation summarize pertinent material not printed in the volume, indicate the location of additional documentary sources, provide references to important related documents printed in other volumes, describe key events, and provide summaries of and citations to public statements that supplement and elucidate the printed documents. Information derived from memoirs and other first-hand accounts has been used when appropriate to supplement or explicate the official record.

The numbers in the index refer to document numbers rather than to page numbers.

Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation

The Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation, established under the *Foreign Relations* statute, reviews records, advises, and makes recommendations concerning the *Foreign Relations* series. The Historical Advisory Committee monitors the overall compilation and editorial process of the series and advises on all aspects of the preparation and declassification of the series. The Historical Advisory Committee does not necessarily review the contents of individual volumes in the series, but it makes recommendations on issues that come to its attention and reviews volumes as it deems necessary to fulfill its advisory and statutory obligations.

Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act Review

Under the terms of the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act (PRMPA) of 1974 (44 U.S.C. 2111 note), the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has custody of the Nixon Presidential historical materials. The requirements of the PRMPA and implementing regulations govern access to the Nixon Presidential historical materials. The PRMPA and implementing public access regulations require NARA to review for additional restrictions in order to ensure the protection of the privacy rights of former Nixon White House officials, since these officials were not given the opportunity to separate their personal materials from public papers. Thus, the PRMPA and implementing public access regulations require NARA to formally notify the Nixon Estate and former Nixon White House

staff members that the agency is scheduling for public release Nixon White House historical materials. The Nixon Estate and former White House staff members have 30 days to contest the release of Nixon historical materials in which they were a participant or are mentioned. Further, the PRMPA and implementing regulations require NARA to segregate and return to the creator of files private and personal materials. All *Foreign Relations* volumes that include materials from NARA's Nixon Presidential Materials Project are processed and released in accordance with the PRMPA.

Declassification Review

The Office of Information Programs and Services, Bureau of Administration, conducted the declassification review for the Department of State of the documents published in this volume. The review was conducted in accordance with the standards set forth in Executive Order 12958 on Classified National Security Information and applicable laws.

The principle guiding declassification review is to release all information, subject only to the current requirements of national security as embodied in law and regulation. Declassification decisions entailed concurrence of the appropriate geographic and functional bureaus in the Department of State, other concerned agencies of the U.S. Government, and the appropriate foreign governments regarding specific documents of those governments. The declassification review of this volume, which began in 2000 and was completed in 2003, resulted in the decision to withhold 1 document in full, excise a paragraph or more in 6 documents, and make minor excisions of less than a paragraph in 28 documents.

The Office of the Historian is confident, on the basis of the research conducted in preparing this volume and as a result of the declassification review process described above, that the documentation and editorial notes presented here provide an accurate and comprehensive—given limitations of space—account of the Nixon administration's Vietnam war policy from January 1969 to July 1970.

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to acknowledge the assistance of officials at the Nixon Presidential Materials Project of the National Archives and Records Administration (Archives II), at College Park, Maryland. The editors wish to express gratitude to the Richard Nixon Estate and the Richard Nixon Library & Birthplace for facilitating access to Nixon administration historical materials for this documentary series. Special thanks are due to Scott Koch, formerly of the Historical Staff of the Central Intelligence Agency, who was extremely helpful in arranging full access to the files of the Central Intelligence Agency. John Haynes

of the Library of Congress was responsible for expediting access to the Kissinger Papers, including the transcripts of Henry Kissinger's telephone conversations. The editors were able to use the Kissinger Papers, including the transcripts of telephone conversations, with the kind permission of Henry Kissinger. The editors would like to also thank Sandy Meagher for her valuable assistance in expediting the use of files of the Department of Defense.

Carolyn Yee collected the documentation for this volume for 1969, made an initial selection, and edited the documents she selected based on the assumption that the volume would only cover 1969. Edward C. Keefer, then Chief of the Asia and Americas Division, selected the documents for 1970, and revised and reedited the entire volume with its current coverage of just over a year and a half. Susan C. Weetman, Chief of the Declassification and Publishing Division, coordinated the declassification review. Vicki E. Futscher and Florence M. Segura did the copy and technical editing. Max Franke prepared the index.

Marc J. Susser
The Historian
Bureau of Public Affairs

December 2005

Contents

Preface III
Sources XI
Abbreviations and Terms XXI
Persons XXVII
Note on U.S. Covert Actions XXXIII
Vietnam, January 1969–July 1970 1
Index 1145

Sources

Sources for the Foreign Relations Series

The *Foreign Relations* statute requires that the published record in the *Foreign Relations* series include all records needed to provide comprehensive documentation on major U.S. foreign policy decisions and significant U.S. diplomatic activity. It further requires that government agencies, departments, and other entities of the U.S. Government engaged in foreign policy formulation, execution, or support cooperate with the Department of State Historian by providing full and complete access to records pertinent to foreign policy decisions and actions and by providing copies of selected records. Most of the sources consulted in the preparation of this volume have been declassified and are available for review at the National Archives and Records Administration.

The editors of the *Foreign Relations* series have complete access to all the retired records and papers of the Department of State: the central files of the Department; the special decentralized files ("lot files") of the Department at the bureau, office, and division levels; the files of the Department's Executive Secretariat, which contain the records of international conferences and high-level official visits, correspondence with foreign leaders by the President and Secretary of State, and memoranda of conversations between the President and Secretary of State and foreign officials; and the files of overseas diplomatic posts. All the Department's indexed central files through July 1973 have been permanently transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland (Archives II). Many of the Department's decentralized office (or lot) files covering the 1969–1976 period, which the National Archives deems worthy of permanent retention, have been transferred or are in the process of being transferred from the Department's custody to Archives II.

The editors of the *Foreign Relations* series also have full access to the papers of President Nixon and other White House foreign policy records. Presidential papers maintained and preserved at the Presidential libraries and the Nixon Presidential Materials Project at Archives II include some of the most significant foreign affairs-related documentation from the Department of State and other Federal agencies including the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Dr. Henry Kissinger has approved access to his papers at the Library of Congress. The papers are a key source for the Nixon-Ford subseries of *Foreign Relations.*

Research for this volume was completed through special access to restricted documents at the Nixon Presidential Materials Project, the Library of Congress, and other agencies. While all the material printed in this volume has been declassified, some of it is extracted from still-classified documents. The Nixon Presidential Materials staff is processing and declassifying many of the documents used in this volume, but they may not be available in their entirety at the time of publication.

Sources for Foreign Relations, 1969–1976, Volume VI

In preparing this volume, the editors made extensive use of Presidential papers and other White House records at the Nixon Presidential Materials Project, which proved to be the single most useful collection bearing on the Nixon administration's management of the Vietnam war and its search for a negotiated peace in Southeast Asia. The collection of most value within the Nixon materials is the National Security Council (NSC) Files. Two files within the NSC Files provided the richest source of documentation: the Vietnam Subject Files and the Country Files for Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Only slightly less important are the Country Files for Thailand, and the special File on Cambodian Operations. Also of importance in the NSC Files are the Paris/Talks Meeting Files, which relate to the formal Paris Peace Negotiations both public and private. The records of the Kissinger–Xuan Thuy and Le Duc Tho secret negotiations are in the NSC Files, For the President, China/Vietnam Negotiations, C.D. [Camp David]. A final negotiations file of note are the private channel talks between Henry Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin, which are in the NSC Files, President's Trip File, Dobrynin/Kissinger. Their private discussions often related to Vietnam.

Of next importance are a group of files in the NSC Files. The first are the Backchannel Files. President Nixon and Kissinger communicated secretly with the Ambassador to Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, through backchannel messages that did not involve the rest of the bureaucracy. For 1969, however, backchannel communications to and from Bunker are filed in the Vietnam Subject File. Also in the NSC Files are the Kissinger Office Files, the Subject Files, the Agency Files, the Haig Special and Chronological Files, Presidential/HAK Mem Cons, the President's Daily Briefing Files, and the Unfiled Materials.

Of equal importance in the NSC Files of the Nixon Presidential Materials are the National Security Council Institutional Files (H-Files), which are part of the NSC Files but are not to be confused with the NSC Institutional Matters File. The NSC Institutional Files (H-Files) contain the minutes of NSC Council Meetings, and such NSC subgroups as the Review Group/Senior Review Group and Washington Special Actions Group. For each set of meeting minutes there are corresponding folders that contain the papers that Kissinger, who chaired

all of these groups, used in preparation for the meetings. Also of value in the NSC Institutional Files (H-Files) are the National Security Study Memorandum and National Security Decision Memorandum files, containing the request for studies, the studies themselves, and the decision memoranda resulting from the process.

The most useful collections in the White House Special Files are the President's Personal Files, especially Memoranda for the President and the Haldeman Files. The Nixon Presidential Diary in the White House Central Files is an essential tool for researchers and is in the White House Central Files, Staff Member and Office Files.

After the records in the Nixon Presidential Materials Project, the Papers of Henry Kissinger at the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress are second in importance. While the Kissinger Papers often replicate documentation found in other collections, especially the NSC File of the Nixon Presidential Materials, they proved valuable and important documents unique to that collection, especially in the Geopolitical File, the file on Memoranda to the President, and the Presidential File. The Papers also contain the records of Kissinger's telephone conversations, copies of which have been given by Dr. Kissinger to the National Archives. These telephone transcripts are a key source that are open at the National Archives and are part of the Nixon Presidential Materials.

The Department of State, Department of Defense, and to a lesser extent the Central Intelligence Agency, strong bureaucratic players in past Vietnam volumes, play a much reduced role under President Nixon and Henry Kissinger, who concentrated policy in their own hands. The files of the Department of State, especially the Central Files and some Lot Files, are most valuable for describing what was happening in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, or at the Paris talks. There are far fewer Department of State files that trace policy decisions, since the Secretary of State and his department were essentially excluded from key policy decision-making on Vietnam. Still, some of the Central Files most useful for developments in the field are POL 27 CAMB/KHMER, POL 27 LAOS, and POL 27 VIET S. Only in the early days of the Nixon administration, when it seemed as if the private sessions at the Paris Peace Talks might be a venue for real negotiation, are Lot Files of any value.

The Central Intelligence Agency records are valuable for intelligence on Vietnam and the war in Southeast Asia, however, the most important intelligence records can be found in the Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files. Collections under CIA custody of note are the National Intelligence Council (NIC) Files, the Records of George Carver, and the DCI Helms and DCI Executive Registry Files. The National Intelligence Council's publication on intelligence in Vietnam, *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948–1975,* contains a good selection of

intelligence estimates on Vietnam for this period. Usually only the summaries of the National Intelligence and Special Intelligence estimates are published in this volume. The full text is in the NIC publication. Intelligence Files for the Nixon administration, containing the records of the 303 Committee, cited as under the custody of the National Security Council but destined for the Nixon Presidential Materials, were particularly valuable for covert operations and unconventional warfare.

The Department of Defense and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird were key players on policy towards Vietnam, but official Defense records did not prove particularly valuable. Laird's key memoranda are almost always found in the Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files. At the Ford Library, there is a collection of documents that cover Laird's tenure as Secretary of Defense. His staff chose these Laird Papers at the end of his term as Secretary of Defense with a view to documenting his major decisions. A major portion of this collection concerns Vietnam, Cambodia, and POWs/MIAs. The Laird Papers provided a useful mechanism to check against the documentation included in the volume. Defense related records that were not available at the time that this volume was researched, but that deserve mention as potential sources, are the Official Records of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Earle G. Wheeler, RG 218, at the National Archives.

This *Foreign Relations* volume covers a period for which there were no White House Presidential tape recordings. Their absence places a premium on the Kissinger telephone transcripts and the Haldeman diaries to provide the contemporary and unrevised records behind the official documentation.

The following list identifies the particular files and collections used in the preparation of this volume. The declassification and transfer to the National Archives of the Department of State records is in process, and most of these records are already available for public review at the National Archives.

Unpublished Sources

Department of State

Central Files. *See* National Archives and Records Administration below.

Lot Files. For other lot files already transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland, Record Group 59, see National Archives and Records Administration below.

INR/IL Historical Files

Files of the Office of Intelligence Coordination, containing records from the 1940s through the 1980s, maintained by the Office of Intelligence Liaison, Bureau of Intelligence and Research

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland

Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State

Central Files

AID (US) VIET S: U.S. economic aid to South Vietnam, general
DEF 19 THAI–LAOS: Thai military assistance to Laos
DEF 19 US–CAMB: US military assistance to Cambodia
DEF US–VIET S: US military assistance to South Vietnam, general
E VIET S: general economic affairs of South Vietnam
FN 10 VIET S: foreign exchange, South Vietnam
ORG 7 S: administration and organization, visits by Secretary of State
POL 27 ASIA SE: military operations in Southeast Asia
POL 27–14 ASIA SE: ceasefire in Southeast Asia
POL CAMB: general policy, Cambodia
POL 15 CAMB: Cambodian Government
POL 15–1 CAMB: head of state, Cambodia
POL 27 CAMB: military operations in Cambodia
POL 32 CAMB: Cambodia's territories and boundaries
POL 1 CAMB–US: US-Cambodian relations, general
POL 17 CAMB–US: diplomatic relations between Cambodia and US
POL CAMB/KHMER: general policy, Cambodia/Khmer Republic
POL 27 CAMB/KHMER: military operations, Cambodia/Khmer Republic
POL CAMB–VIET S: Cambodia-South Vietnamese relations
POL 32–1 CAMB–VIET: Cambodia-South Vietnam territory and boundaries
POL 1 LAOS: general policy, Laos
POL 7 LAOS: meetings with Lao leaders
POL 12 LAOS: political parties in Laos
POL 15 LAOS: Government of Laos
POL 15–1 LAOS: Lao head of state, executive branch
POL 27 LAOS: military operations in Laos
POL 27–14 LAOS: ceasefire in Laos
POL 27–7 VIET: prisoners of war in Vietnam
POL 27–14 VIET: ceasefire in Vietnam
POL 1 VIET S: general policy, South Vietnam
POL 7 VIET S: meetings with South Vietnamese leaders
POL 12 VIET S: political parties in South Vietnam
POL 15 VIET S: Government of South Vietnam
POL 15–1 VIET S: South Vietnamese head of state, executive branch
POL 18 VIET S: provincial governments in South Vietnam
POL 23–9 VIET S: civil disturbances and revolts in South Vietnam
POL 27–7 VIET S: prisoners of war in South Vietnam
POL 27–14 VIET S: ceasefire in South Vietnam
POL 27–7 VIET S: military operations in South Vietnam;
POL 1 US–VIET S: general relations between South Vietnam and the US

Lot Files

A/IM Files: Lot 93 D 82

Correspondence, telegrams, and records of the HARVAN (Harriman and Vance) mission to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam, 1968–1969

Bundy Files: Lot 85 D 240

Files of William P. Bundy as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 1964–1968

Bunker Files: Lot 74 D 417

Files of Ellsworth Bunker, including telegrams, personal and official correspondence

Conference Files, 1966–1972 (Entry No. 3051B)

Files of the meetings and conferences of the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, and Under Secretary of State, 1966–1972. Formerly S/S Lot Files 67 D 586, 68 D 453, 69 D 182, 70 D 387, 71 D 227, and 73 D 323

EA/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 28

Files relating to Vietnam peace negotiations, 1964–March 1969, maintained by the Office of Asian Communist Affairs, Bureau of East Asian Affairs

EA/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 47

Files relating to Vietnam peace negotiations, October 1968–July 1969, including Nodis cables to and from Paris, maintained by the Office of Asian Communist Affairs, Bureau of East Asian Affairs

EA/ACA Files: Lot 70 D 380

Files relating to Vietnam peace negotiations, 1964–February 1969, maintained by the Office of Asian Communist Affairs, Bureau of East Asian Affairs

IS/OIS Files: Lot 90 D 345

Chronological records of the cables to and from the Paris Peace Delegation, 1968–1969

Johnson Files: Lot 90 D 410

Files of U. Alexis Johnson, 1958–1973, including both personal and official records

Lord Files: Lot 77 D 112

Records of Winston Lord, 1969–1977, as member of the National Security Council Staff and then as Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the Department of State

Pedersen Files: Lot 75 D 229

Files of Richard Pedersen, Counselor of the Department of State, January 1969–July 1973

Rogers Files: Lot 73 D 443 (Entry No. 5439)

Office files of Secretary of State William Rogers, 1969–1973, including official correspondence, statements and speeches, memoranda of conversations, and personal papers

S/S National Security Decision Memoranda Files: Lot 83 D 305

Department of State copies of National Security Decision Memoranda and related documents, NSDM 1 through NSDM 348, 1969–1977

S/S National Security Council Files: Lot 82 D 212

Department of State copies of National Security Study Memoranda and related documents, NSSM 1 through NSSM 248, 1969–1977

Nixon Presidential Materials Project

National Security Council Files

Agency Files

Backchannel Files

Country Files, Far East: Cambodia, Cambodian Operations, Indochina, Laos, Thailand, Thais in Laos, Vietnam

Files for the President, Vietnam Negotiations

Haig Chronological Files

Haig Special File

Howe Chronological Files

Lake Chronological Files

Kissinger Office Files: Administrative and Staff Files; Country Files, Far East: General, Cambodia, Vietnam-Negotiations General, Vietnam-South Vietnam, Vietnam-Negotiations, Camp David Documents

Paris Peace Talks

President's Daily Briefings

President's Trip Files

Presidential Correspondence

Presidential/HAK Memorandum of Conversations

Subject Files: Items to Discuss with the President; NSSMs and NSDMs

Vietnam Subject Files

Unfiled Material

National Security Council Institutional Files (H-Files)

National Security Council Minutes

National Security Council Meetings

National Security Council Draft Minutes

Policy Papers, National Security Decision Memoranda

Review Group/Senior Review Group Minutes

Review Group/Senior Review Group Meetings

Study Memoranda

Under Secretaries Committee Files

Vietnam Ad Hoc Group Minutes

Vietnam Special Study Group Meetings

Washington Special Actions Group Minutes

Washington Special Actions Group Meetings

White House Special Files

Staff Members and Office Files

H. R. Haldeman Files

President's Office Files

President's Personal Files

White House Central Files

Staff Members and Office Files: President's Daily Diary

Ford Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Melvin Laird Papers: Cambodia; POW–MIA; Vietnam

National Security Council

Nixon Administration Intelligence Files

Central Intelligence Agency

DCI (Helms) Files: Job 80–B1285A, files of Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms

DCI's Executive Registry Files: Jobs 80–R01284A and 80–B01086A, executive files of the Director of Central Intelligence

DDO/ISG/IARP Files: Job 74–425

DDO/ISS/IP Files: Job 75–251

George A. Carver (GAC) Files: Jobs 80–R01440R, 80–R01720R, and 80–R01721R, files of the Director of Central Intelligence's Special Assistant on Vietnam Affairs

National Intelligence Council (NIC) Files: Job 74–R1012A, intelligence memoranda, estimates and special estimates

Library of Congress

Papers of W. Averell Harriman

Special Files of Public Service, Kennedy and Johnson Administrations

Papers of Henry A. Kissinger

Chronological File

Geopolitical File: Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam

Memoranda of Conversations

Memoranda to the President

National Security Council: 303 Committee, 1969–1970, National Security Council Meetings, Senior Review Group Meetings, Washington Special Actions Group Meetings

Telephone Records: Telephone Conversations

Papers of Eliot Richardson

Memoranda of Conversations

Telephone Conversations

Massachusetts Historical Society

Papers of Henry Cabot Lodge II: Correspondence File; Vietnam Papers

Washington National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland

OASD/ISA Files: FRC 330 2 6308 and FRC 330 72 6309

Top secret and secret subject decimal files of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, 1969

OSD Files: FRC 330 75 0089 and FRC 330 75 0103

Secret and top subject decimal files of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Under Secretary of Defense, and their assistants, 1969

OSD Files: FRC 330 76 0067 and FRC 330 76 0076

Secret and top secret subject decimal files of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Under Secretary of Defense, and their assistants, 1970

ISA/Vietnam Task Force: FRC 330 75 0013

Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Task Force Files, 1964–1971

Secretary Laird File: FRC 330 74 0142

Immediate files of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird's vault, 1969–1972

Secretary Laird's Staff Meetings: FRC 330 76 0028

Minutes of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird's morning staff meetings, 1969–1973

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Abbreviations and Terms

A–1, U.S.-made single engine, propeller driven, attack aircraft
AAA, anti-aircraft artillery
ABF, attacks by fire
ABM, anti-ballistic missile
ACA, Office of Asian Communist Affairs, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State
AF, Air Force
AID, Agency for International Development
AK–47, Soviet-designed Kalashnikov assault weapon
Amb, Ambassador
AMH, Alexander Meigs Haig, Jr.
ANZUS, Australia, New Zealand, United States
APC, Accelerated Pacification Campaign
Arc Light, code name for U.S. B–52 bombing strikes in Southeast Asia
ARDF, Aerial Radio Direction Finding
ARVN, Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam
ASAP, as soon as possible
ASD, Assistant Secretary of Defense
ASPAC, Asian and Pacific Council

B–52, all weather, intercontinental, strategic heavy bomber
Backchannel, a method of communication outside normal bureaucratic procedure; the White House, for instance, used "backchannel" messages to bypass the Department of State.
Barrel Roll, code name for U.S. Air Force-Navy interdiction of North Vietnamese infiltration routed in northern Laos
BOB, Bureau of the Budget
BPP, Border Patrol Police (Thailand)
Breakfast, code name for initial secret U.S. bombing campaign in Cambodia

C–47, propeller-driven, twin engine, low-wing aircraft used for cargo or troop transportation
C–123, high-wing, 2 prop engine transport aircraft
C–130, high-wing, 4 turbo prop engine aircraft used for rapid transportation of troops and/or equipment.
C–141, high-wing, 4 turbo prop engine, long-range transport aircraft
CAP, Combined Action Platoon
CAS, Controlled American Source
Cherokee, special telegraphic distribution channel for the Secretary of State
CH–47, heavy transport helicopter ("Chinook")
ChiCom, Chinese Communist(s)
CIA, Central Intelligence Agency
CINCPAC, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific
CIP, Commodities Import Program
CJCS, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
CL, classified
CM, Chairman's (of JCS) memorandum
CMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps
CNO, Chief of Naval Operations

Cobras, U.S. helicopter gunship
CODEL, Congressional delegation
COMINT, communications intelligence
COMUSMACTHAI, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Thailand
COMUSMACV, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
CONUS, Continental United States
CORDS, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support
COSVN, Central Office for South Vietnam
CPDC, Central Pacification and Development Council
CSA, Chief of Staff of the Army
CSAF, Chief of Staff of the Air Force
CTZ, corps tactical zone
CVA, attack aircraft carrier
CVT, Confederation of Vietnamese Labor (*Travail*)
CY, calendar year

Daniel Boone (DB), MACV reconnaissance operations in Cambodia
DAO, Defense Attaché Office
DCI, Director of Central Intelligence
DCM, Deputy Chief of Mission
DDI, Deputy Directorate for Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency
DIA, Defense Intelligence Agency
del, delegate; delegation
Delto, Delegation to (telegram series indicator from the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam)
DMZ, demilitarized zone
DOD, Department of Defense
DOD/ISA, Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
DOS, Department of State
DPRG, Defense Program Review Group
DRV (also DRVN), Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)

EAP, (also EA), Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State
EAP/ACA, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Office of Asian Communist Affairs
EC–121, unarmed, four engine propeller-driven reconnaissance aircraft
ECM, electronic counter measures
Embtel, Embassy telegram
EOB, Executive Office Building
EST, eastern standard time
Exdis, exclusive distribution (extremely limited distribution)

FAL, forward air liaison
FANK, Forces Armées Nationales Khmeres (Khmer National Armed Forces)
FARK, Forces Armées Royales Khmeres (Royal Khmer Armed Forces)
FDF, Free Democratic Forces (of South Vietnam)
FE, Division for Far East, Directorate of Operations, Central Intelligence Agency
FEOP, Foreign Exchange Operations Fund
Flash, indicates message of highest priority requiring the attention of the Secretary of State
FMS, foreign military sales
FUNK, National United Front of Kampuchea
FWF, Free World forces

FY, fiscal year
FYI, for your information

GMT, Greenwich Mean Time
GOC, Government of Cambodia
GRC, Government of China
GVN, Government of Vietnam
GVR, Government of the Republic of Vietnam

HAK, Henry A. Kissinger
HES, Hamlet Evaluation System
HEW, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
hq, headquarters

ICC, International Supervision and Control Commission
ICRC, International Committee of the Red Cross
IG, Interdepartmental Group
IMF, International Monetary Fund
INR, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State
INR/IL, Office of Information Liaison, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
ISA, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

JCS, Joint Chiefs of Staff
JCSM, Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum
JGS, General Joint Staff, Vietnamese Armed Forces
JHH, John Herbert Holdridge
JUSMAG, Joint United States Military Assistance Group
JUSPAO, Joint United States Public Affairs Office

K, Kissinger
KK, Khmer Krom
KIA, killed in action
KW, kilowatt

LCM, landing craft, mechanized
LCT, landing craft, tracked
LCU, landing craft, utility
Lien Minh, Vietnamese acronym for National Social Democratic Front
Limdis, limited distribution
LOC, lines of communication

M–1, World War II-era U.S. military rifle
M–14, semi-automatic U.S. military rifle
MAAG, Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAC, Military Assistance Command
MACTHAI, Military Assistance Command, Thailand
MACV, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MASF, Military Assistance Sales Funded
MAP, Military Assistance Program
Market Time, code name for coastal interdiction of South Vietnam
MAT(s), Mobile Advisory Team(s)
MENU, code name for U.S. bombings in Cambodia
MIG, Soviet fighter aircraft
MR, Military Region

MSTS, Military Sea Transport Ship

NASA, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO, non-commissioned officer
NIE, National Intelligence Estimate
NLF, National Liberation Front
NLHX, Neo Lao Hat Xat, political organization of the Pathet Lao
Nodis, no distribution (other than to persons indicated)
Noforn, no foreign dissemination
Notal, not to all
NSA, National Security Agency
NSAM, National Security Action Memorandum
NSC, National Security Council
NSDF, National Social Democratic Front (of South Vietnam)
NSDM, National Security Decision Memorandum
NSF, National Salvation Front (of South Vietnam)
NSSM, National Security Study Memorandum
NVA (also NVNA), North Vietnamese Army
NVN, North Vietnam

OASD/ISA, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
OEP, Office of Emergency Preparedness
ONE, Office of National Estimates, Central Intelligence Agency
OSD, Office of the Secretary of Defense

P, President Nixon
PARU, police aerial resupply unit (Thailand, paramilitary arm of BBP)
PAVN, People's Army of Vietnam
PBR, river boat patrol
p.c., press conference
PDJ, Plaine des Jarres
PF, Popular Forces
PFIAB, President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board
Phoenix, American name for the Phuong Hoang program to destroy the Viet Cong infrastructure
PL, Pathet Lao
PL–480, Public Law 480 (Food for Peace)
POL, petroleum, oil, and lubricants
POL, political issues in the Department of State Central Files
POW, prisoner of war
PR, public relations
Prairie Fire (PF), code name for U.S.-led South Vietnamese reconnaissance teams sent into Laos to seek targets for U.S bombing operations of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and to assess bombing damage
PRG, Provisional Revolutionary Government
PRU, Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (South Vietnam unit of the Phoung Hoang program to destroy the Viet Cong infrastructure)
PSDF, (also PS/DF), People's Self Defense Force
PSYOPS(s), psychological operation(s)

RCT, regimental combat team
RD, rural development

Recce, reconnaissance
Reftel, reference telegram
RF/PF, Regional Forces/Popular Forces
RG, Record Group
RKG, Royal Khmer (Cambodian) Government
RLA, Royal Lao Army
RLAF, Royal Lao Air Force; Royal Lao Armed Forces
RLG, Royal Lao Government
RLGAF, Royal Lao Government Armed Forces
RN, Richard Nixon
ROK, Republic of Korea
RTAF, Royal Thai Air Force
RVN, Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces

SAC, Strategic Air Command
Salem House, code name for U.S.-led intelligence missions into Cambodia (formerly known as Daniel Boone)
SALT, Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SAM, surface-to-air missile
SEACOORDS, Southeast Asia Coordinating Group
SEATO, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
Secto, series indicator for telegrams from the Secretary of State or his party to the Department of State
Septel, separate telegram
SGU(s), Special Group Unit(s)
Sierra Romeo, code name for Thai artillery units in Laos
SNIE, Special National Intelligence Estimate
SR, strategic reserve
SR–71, U.S. high altitude reconnaissance aircraft
S/S, Executive Secretariat of the Department of State
Steel Tiger, U.S. Air Force-Navy interdiction of North Vietnamese infiltration routes in southern Laos
SVN, South Vietnam

T–28, single engine 1950s-era propeller-driven trainer aircraft converted for tactical combat
Tacair, tactical air strikes
TAC, Tactical Air Command
TCC, Troop Contributing (to South Vietnam) Countries
TDY, temporary duty
TOT, time of target
TS, Top Secret

U, Office of the Under Secretary of State
UAR, United Arab Republic
UN, United Nations
US, United States
USA, United States Army
USAF, United States Air Force
USG, United States Government
USIA, United States Information Agency
USMC, United States Marine Corps
USN, United States Navy

VC, Viet Cong
VCI, Viet Cong Infrastructure
VC/VN, Viet Cong/North Vietnamese
VN, Vietnam
VNAF, Vietnam Air Force
VSSG, Vietnam Special Studies Group

WH, White House
WHO, White House Office (series indicator for White House messages)
WIA, wounded in action
WSAG, Washington Special Actions Group

Z, Zulu (Greenwich Mean) Time

Persons

Abrams, General Creighton W., USA, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
Agnew, Spiro T., Vice President of the United States from January 20, 1969

Behr, Colonel Robert M., USAF, member, Operations Staff for Scientific Affairs, National Security Council
Berger, Samuel R., Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam after March 1969
Binh, Madame, *see* Ngyuen Thi Binh
Bruce, David K. E., U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom; head of the U.S. delegation to the Paris Peace Talks after July 1, 1970
Bundy, William P., Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs until May 4, 1969
Bunker, Ellsworth, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam
Bui Diem, Republic of Vietnam Ambassador to the United States
Butterfield, Alexander, Deputy Assistant to the President

Carver, George A., Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs to the Director of Central Intelligence
Cau Van Vien, General, Chairman, Joint General Staff, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
Chapman, General Leonard, Marine Corps Commandant
Colby, William E., Director, Civil Operations and Rural Development Support, Vietnam
Corcoran, Thomas J., Country Director for Laos, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State
Cushman, Lieutenant General Robert E., Jr., USMC, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence after May 1969

Dobrynin, Anatoliy F., Soviet Ambassador to the United States
Doolin, Dennis J., Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs responsible for East Asia and Pacific affairs

Eagleburger, Lawrence, Staff Member, Office of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Eliot, Theodore L., Jr., Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and Executive Secretary of the Department of State from August 1969

Fulbright, J. William, Senator (D–Arkansas), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Godley, G. McMurtrie, Ambassador to Laos after July 24, 1969
Goodpaster, Lieutenant General Andrew J., USA, Deputy Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam until April 1969
Grant, Lindsey, member, Operations Staff, East Asia Division, National Security Council
Green, Marshall, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs from May 5, 1969; also Chairman, Special Group on Southeast Asia from May 1970
Groton, John G., Prime Minister of Australia

Ha Van Lau, Deputy Head of Democratic Republic of Vietnam Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam

Habib, Philip C., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs until May 1969; thereafter Deputy Head of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam.

Haig, Alexander M., Jr., Colonel and Brigadier General, USA, Senior Military Adviser to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, January 1969–June 1970; then Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Haldeman, H.R., Assistant to the President

Halperin, Morton, Assistant for Programs, National Security Council Staff until September 1969

Harlow, Bryce N., Assistant to the President, January 1969–January 1970; thereafter Counselor to the President

Harriman, W. Averell, Ambassador at Large; head of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam until January 17, 1969

Helms, Richard M., Director of Central Intelligence

Henkin, Daniel Z., Spokesman of the Department of Defense

Ho Chi Minh, leader of the Lao Dong Party and President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam until his death on September 3, 1969

Holyoake, Sir Keith, Prime Minister of New Zealand

Houdek, Robert, Staff Member, Office of the Assistant for National Security Affairs, National Security Council

Howe, Jonathan, Lieutenant Commander, USN, member of the Office of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 1970

Huong, *see* Tran Van Huong

Holdridge, John H., Director, East Asian Division, Operations Staff, National Security Council Staff

Hughes, Thomas L., Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, until August 1969

Johnson, Vice Admiral Nels C., USN, Director of the Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Johnson, U. Alexis, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from February 7, 1969

Karamessines, Thomas H., Deputy Director for Plans, Central Intelligence Agency

Khiem, *see* Tran Thien Khiem

Kennedy, Colonel Richard T., USA, member, Planning Group, National Security Council Staff

Kissinger, Henry A., Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs from January 20, 1969

Kosygin, Aleksei N., Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union

Ky, Nguyen Cao, Vice President of the Republic of Vietnam

Ladd, Colonel Jonathan "Fred", USA, ret., Political/Military Affairs Officer, Political Section, Embassy in Cambodia, in charge of coordinating U.S. military assistance to Cambodia

Laird, Melvin R., Secretary of Defense after January 22, 1969

Lake, W. Anthony, member, Planning Group, National Security Council Staff

Lau, *see* Ha Van Lau

Le Duan, Secretary General of the Lao Dong Party and Senior Member of the Politburo of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam after the death of Ho Chi Minh on September 3, 1969

Le Duc Tho, Member of the Politburo of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and Special Adviser to the DRV Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam

Lincoln, George A., Director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness

Lodge, Henry Cabot, II, Head of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam, January 20–November 20, 1969

Lon Nol, Gen., FARK, First Vice President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Defense of Cambodia; Acting Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, June 1969; Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense after March 18, 1970
Lon Non, Head of the Phnom Penh Police and younger brother of Lon Nol
Lord, Winston, member, Planning Group, National Security Council Staff; staff member for United Nations Affairs of the Operations Staff of the NSC until April 1970
Lynn, Laurence E., Director, Program Analysis Staff, National Security Council Staff

Mai Van Bo, Democratic Republic of Vietnam's Delegate General in France
Malik, Adam, Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mansfield, Mike, Senator (D-Montana), Senate Majority Leader
Marcos, Ferdinand, President of the Philippines
McCain, Admiral John S., Jr., USN, Commander in Chief, Pacific
McCloskey, Robert J., Spokesman of the Department of State
McConnell, General John P., USAF, Chief of Staff of the Air Force until August 1, 1969
McPherson, Lieutenant General John B., USAF, Assistant to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Mitchell, John, Attorney General, after January 1969
Moor, E. Dean, member, Operations Staff, East Asia Division, National Security Council Staff
Moore, Jonathan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, September 1969–June 1970
Moorer, Admiral Thomas H., USN, Chief of Naval Operations until July 1, 1970; thereafter, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Morris, Roger, member, Planning Group, National Security Council Staff until April 1970

Nelson, William, Director, Office of Asian Affairs, Directorate of Operations, Central Intelligence Agency
Nguyen Cao Ky, Vice President of the Republic of Vietnam
Nguyen Minh Vy, Adviser to the Head of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam
Nguyen Thi Binh, Head of the Provisional Revolutionary Government's Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam
Nguyen Van Thieu, President of the Republic of Vietnam
Nguyen Xuan Phong, member, Republic of Vietnam Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam
Nixon, Richard M., President of the United States from January 20, 1969
Nutter, G. Warren, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs from March 1969

Oberemko, Valentin, Minister-Counselor of the Soviet Embassy in France

Packard, David, Deputy Secretary of Defense from January 24, 1969
Pam Dang Lam, Head of the Republic of Vietnam Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam
Pedersen, Richard F., Counselor of the Department of State after January 24, 1969
Perot, Ross, President and Chief Executive Officer of EDS Corporation
Pham Van Dong, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Pursley, Brigadier General Robert E., USAF, Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense

Read, Benjamin H., Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and Executive Secretary of the Department of State until February 14, 1969

Richardson, Elliot L., Under Secretary of State, January 23, 1969–June 23, 1970; thereafter, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare
Rives, Lloyd M., Chargé d'Affaires ad interim at the Embassy in Phnom Penh after August 16, 1969
Rogers, William P., Secretary of State from January 21, 1969

Sambaur, *see* Yem Sambaur
Sanson, Robert L., member, Program Analysis Staff, National Security Council Staff
Sainteny, Jean, former French official with contacts to the leadership of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Savang Vatthana, King of Laos
Sihanouk, Prince Norodom, head of state of Cambodia until March 18, 1970
Sirik Matak, Sisowath, First Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia in Charge of Interior, Order, Security, Education and Religious Affairs August 1969–July 1970; thereafter, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the Office of the Prime Minister
Smith, R. Jack, Deputy Director for Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency
Smyser, W. Richard, adviser to the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam, 1969; member of the Operations Staff, East Asia Division, National Security Council Staff, after 1970
Sneider, Richard L., member, Operations Staff, East Asia Division, National Security Council Staff, May 1969–September 1969
Souvanna Phouma, Prince, Prime Minister of Laos
Suharto, President of Indonesia
Sullivan, William H., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs from April 1969; also Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam
Symington, Stuart, Senator (D-Missouri), Chairman, Subcommittee of U.S. Security Arrangements and Commitments Abroad, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Taylor, Vice Admiral Rufus L., USN, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence until February 1, 1969
Thanat Khoman, Foreign Minister of Thailand
Thanom Kittikachorn, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand
Thieu, Nguyen Van, President of the Republic of Vietnam
Thompson, Sir Robert, British counterinsurgency expert
Tran Buu Kiem, member of the Provisional Revolutionary Government's Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks
Tran Thien Khiem, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vietnam until late 1969
Tran Van Huong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vietnam after late 1969
Trueheart, William C., Deputy Director for Coordination, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, until September 1969

Unger, Leonard, Ambassador to Thailand

Vance, Cyrus R., Deputy Head of the U.S. Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam until January 20; thereafter, adviser to the talks until February 1969
Vang Pao, Gen., RLA, Commander of Military Region II and leader of the Hmong (Meo) forces
Vo Nguyen Giap, General, PAVN, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, Democratic Republic of Vietnam
Vien, *see* Cao Van Vien
Vogt, Lieutenant General John W., Jr., USAF, Director for Operations, Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Vy, *see* Nguyen Minh Vy

Walters, Brigadier General Vernon, USA, Senior Defense Attaché to France
Walsh, Lawrence E., Deputy Head of the Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam, January 20–November 21, 1969
Ware, Richard A., Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Watts, William, Staff Secretary of the National Security Council Secretariat until April 1970
Westmoreland, General William C., USA, Army Chief of Staff
Wheeler, General Earle G., USA, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Xuan Thuy, Head of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam

Yem Sambaur, Cambodian Minister of Justice, October 1969; Deputy Prime Minister in Charge of Justice, Health, Social Affairs, Labor, Land Development, and Parliamentary Affairs in March 1970; also Foreign Minister in April 1970

Ziegler, Ronald L., Press Secretary to President Nixon
Zorin, Valerian, Soviet Ambassador to France

Note on U.S. Covert Actions

In compliance with the *Foreign Relations of the United States* statute that requires inclusion in the *Foreign Relations* series of comprehensive documentation on major foreign policy decisions and actions, the editors have identified key documents regarding major covert actions and intelligence activities. The following note will provide readers with some organizational context on how covert actions and special intelligence operations in support of U.S. foreign policy were planned and approved within the U.S. Government. It describes, on the basis of declassified documents, the changing and developing procedures during the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford Presidencies.

Management of Covert Actions in the Truman Presidency

The Truman administration's concern over Soviet "psychological warfare" prompted the new National Security Council to authorize, in NSC 4–A of December 1947, the launching of peacetime covert action operations. NSC 4–A made the Director of Central Intelligence responsible for psychological warfare, establishing at the same time the principle that covert action was an exclusively Executive Branch function. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) certainly was a natural choice but it was assigned this function at least in part because the Agency controlled unvouchered funds, by which operations could be funded with minimal risk of exposure in Washington.[1]

CIA's early use of its new covert action mandate dissatisfied officials at the Departments of State and Defense. The Department of State, believing this role too important to be left to the CIA alone and concerned that the military might create a new rival covert action office in the Pentagon, pressed to reopen the issue of where responsibility for covert action activities should reside. Consequently, on June 18, 1948, a new NSC directive, NSC 10/2, superseded NSC 4–A.

NSC 10/2 directed CIA to conduct "covert" rather than merely "psychological" operations, defining them as all activities "which are conducted or sponsored by this Government against hostile foreign states or groups or in support of friendly foreign states or groups but which are so planned and executed that any US Government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons and that if uncovered the US Government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them."

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[1] NSC 4–A, December 17, 1947, is printed in *Foreign Relations,* 1945–1950, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment, Document 257.

The type of clandestine activities enumerated under the new directive included: "propaganda; economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberations [*sic*] groups, and support of indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries of the free world. Such operations should not include armed conflict by recognized military forces, espionage, counter-espionage, and cover and deception for military operations."[2]

The Office of Policy Coordination (OPC), newly established in the CIA on September 1, 1948, in accordance with NSC 10/2, assumed responsibility for organizing and managing covert actions. OPC, which was to take its guidance from the Department of State in peacetime and from the military in wartime, initially had direct access to the State Department and to the military without having to proceed through CIA's administrative hierarchy, provided the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) was informed of all important projects and decisions.[3] In 1950 this arrangement was modified to ensure that policy guidance came to OPC through the DCI.

During the Korean conflict the OPC grew quickly. Wartime commitments and other missions soon made covert action the most expensive and bureaucratically prominent of CIA's activities. Concerned about this situation, DCI Walter Bedell Smith in early 1951 asked the NSC for enhanced policy guidance and a ruling on the proper "scope and magnitude" of CIA operations. The White House responded with two initiatives. In April 1951 President Truman created the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) under the NSC to coordinate government-wide psychological warfare strategy. NSC 10/5, issued in October 1951, reaffirmed the covert action mandate given in NSC 10/2 and expanded CIA's authority over guerrilla warfare.[4] The PSB was soon abolished by the incoming Eisenhower administration, but the expansion of CIA's covert action writ in NSC 10/5 helped ensure that covert action would remain a major function of the Agency.

As the Truman administration ended, CIA was near the peak of its independence and authority in the field of covert action. Although CIA continued to seek and receive advice on specific projects from the NSC, the PSB, and the departmental representatives originally dele-

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[2] NSC 10/2, June 18, 1948, printed ibid., Document 292.

[3] Memorandum of conversation by Frank G. Wisner, "Implementation of NSC–10/2," August 12, 1948, printed ibid., Document 298.

[4] NSC 10/5, "Scope and Pace of Covert Operations," October 23, 1951, in Michael Warner, editor, *The CIA Under Harry Truman* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1994), pp. 437–439.

gated to advise OPC, no group or officer outside of the DCI and the President himself had authority to order, approve, manage, or curtail operations.

NSC 5412 Special Group; 5412/2 Special Group; 303 Committee

The Eisenhower administration began narrowing CIA's latitude in 1954. In accordance with a series of National Security Council directives, the responsibility of the Director of Central Intelligence for the conduct of covert operations was further clarified. President Eisenhower approved NSC 5412 on March 15, 1954, reaffirming the Central Intelligence Agency's responsibility for conducting covert actions abroad. A definition of covert actions was set forth; the DCI was made responsible for coordinating with designated representatives of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense to ensure that covert operations were planned and conducted in a manner consistent with U.S. foreign and military policies; and the Operations Coordinating Board was designated the normal channel for coordinating support for covert operations among State, Defense, and CIA. Representatives of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the President were to be advised in advance of major covert action programs initiated by the CIA under this policy and were to give policy approval for such programs and secure coordination of support among the Departments of State and Defense and the CIA.[5]

A year later, on March 12, 1955, NSC 5412/1 was issued, identical to NSC 5412 except for designating the Planning Coordination Group as the body responsible for coordinating covert operations. NSC 5412/2 of December 28, 1955, assigned to representatives (of the rank of assistant secretary) of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the President responsibility for coordinating covert actions. By the end of the Eisenhower administration, this group, which became known as the "NSC 5412/2 Special Group" or simply "Special Group," emerged as the executive body to review and approve covert action programs initiated by the CIA.[6] The membership of the Special Group varied depending upon the situation faced. Meetings were infrequent until 1959 when weekly meetings began to be held. Neither the CIA nor the Special Group adopted fixed criteria for bringing projects before the group; initiative

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[5] William M. Leary, editor, *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents* (The University of Alabama Press, 1984), p. 63; the text of NSC 5412 is scheduled for publication in *Foreign Relations,* 1950–1955, Development of the Intelligence Community.

[6] Leary, *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents,* pp. 63, 147–148; *Final Report of the Select Committee To Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate,* Book I, *Foreign and Military Intelligence* (1976), pp. 50–51. The texts of NSC 5412/1 and NSC 5412/2 are scheduled for publication in *Foreign Relations,* 1950–1955, Development of the Intelligence Community.

remained with the CIA, as members representing other agencies frequently were unable to judge the feasibility of particular projects.[7]

After the Bay of Pigs failure in April 1961, General Maxwell Taylor reviewed U.S. paramilitary capabilities at President Kennedy's request and submitted a report in June that recommended strengthening high-level direction of covert operations. As a result of the Taylor Report, the Special Group, chaired by the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, and including Deputy Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric, Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Lyman Lemnitzer, assumed greater responsibility for planning and reviewing covert operations. Until 1963 the DCI determined whether a CIA-originated project was submitted to the Special Group. In 1963 the Special Group developed general but informal criteria, including risk, possibility of success, potential for exposure, political sensitivity, and cost (a threshold of $25,000 was adopted by the CIA), for determining whether covert action projects were submitted to the Special Group.[8]

From November 1961 to October 1962 a Special Group (Augmented), whose membership was the same as the Special Group plus Attorney General Robert Kennedy and General Taylor (as Chairman), exercised responsibility for Operation Mongoose, a major covert action program aimed at overthrowing the Castro regime in Cuba. When President Kennedy authorized the program in November, he designated Brigadier General Edward G. Lansdale, Assistant for Special Operations to the Secretary of Defense, to act as chief of operations, and Lansdale coordinated the Mongoose activities among the CIA and the Departments of State and Defense. CIA units in Washington and Miami had primary responsibility for implementing Mongoose operations, which included military, sabotage, and political propaganda programs.[9]

President Kennedy also established a Special Group (Counter-Insurgency) on January 18, 1962, when he signed NSAM No. 124. The Special Group (CI), set up to coordinate counter-insurgency activities separate from the mechanism for implementing NSC 5412/2, was to confine itself to establishing broad policies aimed at preventing and resisting subversive insurgency and other forms of indirect aggression in friendly countries. In early 1966, in NSAM No. 341, President Johnson assigned responsibility for the direction and coordination of counter-insurgency activities overseas to the Secretary of State, who

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[7] Leary, *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents,* p. 63.

[8] Ibid., p. 82.

[9] See *Foreign Relations,* 1961–1963, vol. X, Documents 270 and 278.

established a Senior Interdepartmental Group to assist in discharging these responsibilities.[10]

NSAM No. 303, June 2, 1964, from Bundy to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the DCI, changed the name of "Special Group 5412" to "303 Committee" but did not alter its composition, functions, or responsibility. Bundy was the chairman of the 303 Committee.[11]

The Special Group and the 303 Committee approved 163 covert actions during the Kennedy administration and 142 during the Johnson administration through February 1967. The 1976 Final Report of the Church Committee, however, estimated that of the several thousand projects undertaken by the CIA since 1961, only 14 percent were considered on a case-by-case basis by the 303 Committee and its predecessors (and successors). Those not reviewed by the 303 Committee were low-risk and low-cost operations. The Final Report also cited a February 1967 CIA memorandum that included a description of the mode of policy arbitration of decisions on covert actions within the 303 Committee system. CIA presentations were questioned, amended, and even on occasion denied, despite protests from the DCI. Department of State objections modified or nullified proposed operations, and the 303 Committee sometimes decided that some agency other than CIA should undertake an operation or that CIA actions requested by Ambassadors on the scene should be rejected.[12]

The effectiveness of covert action has always been difficult for any administration to gauge, given concerns about security and the difficulty of judging the impact of U.S. initiatives on events. In October 1969 the new Nixon administration required annual 303 Committee reviews for all covert actions that the Committee had approved and automatic termination of any operation not reviewed after 12 months. On February 17, 1970, President Nixon signed National Security Decision Memorandum 40,[13] which superseded NSC 5412/2 and changed the name of the covert action approval group to the 40 Committee, in part because the 303 Committee had been named in the media. The Attorney General was also added to the membership of the Committee. NSDM 40 reaffirmed the DCI's responsibility for the coordination, control, and conduct of covert operations and directed him to obtain policy approval from the

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[10] For text of NSAM No. 124, see ibid., vol. VIII, Document 68. NSAM No. 341, March 2, 1966, is printed ibid., 1964–1968, vol. XXXIII, Document 56.

[11] For text of NSAM No. 303, see ibid., Document 204.

[12] *Final Report of the Select Committee To Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate,* Book I, *Foreign and Military Intelligence,* pp. 56–57.

[13] The text of NSDM 40, February 17, 1970, is printed in *Foreign Relations*, 1969–1976, vol. II, Organization and Management of U.S. Foreign Policy, 1969–1972, Document 202.

40 Committee for all major and "politically sensitive" covert operations. He was also made responsible for ensuring an annual review by the 40 Committee of all approved covert operations.

The 40 Committee met regularly early in the Nixon administration, but over time the number of formal meetings declined and business came to be conducted via couriers and telephone votes. The Committee actually met only for major new proposals. As required, the DCI submitted annual status reports to the 40 Committee for each approved operation. According to the 1976 Church Committee Final Report, the 40 Committee considered only about 25 percent of the CIA's individual covert action projects, concentrating on major projects that provided broad policy guidelines for all covert actions. Congress received briefings on only a few proposed projects. Not all major operations, moreover, were brought before the 40 Committee: President Nixon in 1970 instructed the DCI to promote a coup d' etat against Chilean President Salvador Allende without Committee coordination or approval.[14]

Presidential Findings Since 1974 and the Operations Advisory Group

The Hughes-Ryan amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 brought about a major change in the way the U.S. Government approved covert actions, requiring explicit approval by the President for each action and expanding Congressional oversight and control of the CIA. The CIA was authorized to spend appropriated funds on covert actions only after the President had signed a "finding" and informed Congress that the proposed operation was important to national security.[15]

Executive Order 11905, issued by President Ford on February 18, 1976, in the wake of major Congressional investigations of CIA activities by the Church and Pike Committees, replaced the 40 Committee with the Operations Advisory Group, composed of the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the DCI, who retained responsibility for the planning and implementation of covert operations. The OAG was required to hold formal meetings to develop recommendations for the President regarding a covert action and to conduct periodic reviews of previously-approved operations. EO 11905 also banned all U.S. Government employees from involvement in political assassinations, a prohibition that was retained in succeeding executive orders, and prohibited involvement in domestic intelligence activities.[16]

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[14] Final Report of the Select Committee To Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate, Book I, Foreign and Military Intelligence, pp. 54–55, 57.

[15] Public Law 93–559.

[16] Executive Order 11905, "United States Foreign Intelligence Activities," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents,* Vol. 12, No. 8, February 23, 1976.

Index

Note: All references are to document numbers

Abrams, Gen. Creighton W., 62, 100, 103, 243, 270, 310, 331
  Cambodia:
    Asian support for Lon Nol government, U.S. program for, 313
    Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 22, 23, 41, 215
    Communist use of Cambodian territory for operations in Vietnam, 202
    Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 244, 278, 292
    Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 233, 325, 326
    Thai military involvement, 313, 325
    U.S. military liaison for, 313
  Cambodian cross-border campaign, 248
    ARVN operations, guidance for, 217
    Bunker/Abrams endorsement of, 224
    Cambodian cooperation with, 221
    COSVN target, 296, 313
    Course of operations, assessments of, 263, 282, 313
    Divisions within Nixon administration re, 254
    Fish Hook operation (base area *352/353*), 265, 266
    Northeast Cambodia operations, 314
    Options for operations, assessments of, 273, 279
    Public information policy re, 313
    Seam Reap operation, 321
    Troop totals for, 313
  Cease-fire issue, 118, 120
  Laos:
    Bombing of Communist forces, 187, 203
    U.S. gunships for, 207
  Military situation in Vietnam:
    Chieu Hoi program, 313
    Communist infiltration from DRV, 120, 187

Abrams, Gen. Creighton W.—*Continued*
  Military situation in Vietnam—*Continued*
    DRV as target of U.S. operations, 120, 313
    Joint planning, 187
    Laird's assessment of, 38, 221
    Provincial Reconnaissance Unit program, 157, 165
    Retaliation for Communist attacks, 24, 26, 30, 37
    Strategy and tactics governing U.S. operations, 100
  Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces:
    Abrams's assessment of, 313
    Improvement and Modernization Program, 100
    Leadership and motivation problems, 10, 187
    Regional Forces and Popular Forces, 81
  Rogers's assessment of, 77
  Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces, 81
    Announcements of withdrawals, 70, 80
    Force structure of RVNAF for, 195
    Fourth withdrawal increment, 217, 228
    Long-term planning, 187
    Morale of U.S. troops and, 120
    1969 withdrawal package, 100
    1970 withdrawal package, 147
    1971 withdrawal package, 313
    Problems related to, 236
    Security concerns of U.S. forces, 187
    Speed-up of withdrawals issue, 312
    Timetable for, 120
Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam, 59, 91, 96, 154, 172
  Formulation of, 21
Ad Hoc PSYOP Committee, 315
Afghanistan, 102
Agnew, Spiro T., 10, 44, 49, 51, 77, 120, 123, 132, 194, 248
Alsop, Joseph, 236

Anderson, George W., Jr., 344
Anti-war movement in United States, 117, 119, 120, 126, 135, 137, 149, 189, 190
  Cambodian cross-border campaign and, 277, 287

Ball, Thomas, 277
Bartch, Carl E., 66
Beam, Jacob, 220
Beecher, William, 257
Behr, Col. Robert M., 127, 131, 172, 203, 207, 209, 211, 212, 213, 234
Berger, Samuel D., 38, 47, 103, 145, 278, 286, 301
Binh, Madame. *See* Nguyen Thi Binh, Madame.
Black, Eugene, 18
Blount, 77
Bo. *See* Mai Van Bo.
Bonsal, William M., 18
Borman, Frank, 177
Bowles, Chester, 18
Britten, Lt. Col. Gerald H., 207, 209, 213, 230, 233, 234
Brown, Gen. George, 37
Brown, John, 175
Bruce, David K. E., 338, 345, 346, 348
Bruns, William H., 102
Bui Diem, 9, 54, 69, 76, 88, 151
Bunche, Ralph, 168
Bundy, William P., 6, 10, 24, 26, 28, 30, 46, 49
Bunker, Ellsworth, 3, 54, 95, 103, 345
  Cambodia:
    Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 22, 215
    Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 348
    Communist takeover, U.S. contingency planning re, 251
    Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 251
    Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 233, 257
  Cambodian cross-border campaign, 248
    ARVN operations, guidance for, 217
    Bunker/Abrams endorsement of, 224
    Fish Hook operation (base area *352/353*), 265, 266
    RVN policy re, 310

Bunker, Ellsworth—*Continued*
  Cease-fire issue:
    Bunker's views on, 142
    Positions of U.S. officials re, 118
    U.S. internal debate on, 120
  Midway meeting, 76
  Military situation in Vietnam:
    Bunker's assessment of, 142
    Communist infiltration from DRV, 120
    Communist strategy and objectives, 29
    Communist takeover in Cambodia, possible consequences of, 251
    Joint planning, 187
    Laird's assessment of, 38
    Pacification program, 120, 142, 295
    Provincial Reconnaissance Unit program, 157
    Retaliation for Communist attacks, 24, 26, 30
    Thompson's assessment of, 137
    U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 318
  Nixon's first meeting with, 49
  Nixon's "silent majority" speech, 144
  Paris peace talks, 295
    Bunker's assessment of, 7, 198
    Duration of, 49
    Instructions for U.S. negotiators, 109
    Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 49, 68, 78, 198
    Nixon peace plan, 68
    Political settlement issue, 69, 151
    Private talks, 83
    RVN preparedness problem, 69
    Thieu's attitude toward, 198
    U.S.–RVN relations in, 7
  Political settlement in Vietnam:
    Elections issue, 88
    Thieu's attitude toward, 49
  Republic of Vietnam:
    Chau treason case, 198
    Corruption problem, 175, 295
    Economic situation, 142, 295
    Government reorganization, 120
    Lien Minh political organization, 19, 47
    National Social Democratic Front, 182
    Political situation, 7, 142, 295

Bunker, Ellsworth—*Continued*
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, 49
Rogers's assessment of, 77
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces, 49, 102, 295
Announcements of withdrawals, 70, 71, 76, 80
Bunker's assessment of, 142, 198
Fourth withdrawal increment, 228
Long-term planning, 187
1970 withdrawal package, 147
Replacement of U.S. forces with RVN troops, 141
Security concerns of U.S. forces, 187
Timetable for, 120
Burke, Gerard P., 344
Burke, John R., 26
Burma, 10, 102
Butterfield, Alexander, 63, 177, 192

Calhoun, Archibald, 26
Cambodia (*see also* Cambodian cross-border campaign; Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China), 10
Asian support for Lon Nol government, U.S. program for, 313, 326
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 19, 22, 23, 25, 62, 110, 135, 215
Onset of, 39, 40, 41
Border declaration re, 18, 48, 66
CIA officer's report on, 238
CIA operations in, 42, 47
CINCPAC plan for, 344
Communications equipment for, 217, 271, 272, 325, 340, 343
Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 203, 205, 227, 238, 240, 244, 253, 289, 331, 341, 348
Communist takeover, U.S. contingency planning re, 241, 251, 253, 313
Communist use of Cambodian territory for operations in Vietnam, 18, 37, 38, 44, 202, 226, 238
Coup by Lon Nol against Sihanouk, 202, 205, 220, 222, 238
DRV objectives and courses of action in, 216, 268
Economic situation, 202, 322
Haig's fact-finding mission, 306, 307, 308
Cambodia—*Continued*
Intelligence collection in, 321, 325, 326, 329, 344
International initiatives re, 262, 271, 275, 278, 289
Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 244, 249, 251, 253, 257, 274, 275, 278, 282, 286, 288, 290, 292, 297, 300, 303, 304, 311, 314, 317, 331, 340, 343
Ladd's reports on, 328, 341
Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 208, 225, 230, 232, 233, 235, 238, 240, 244, 253, 255, 257, 262, 269, 271, 272, 278, 281, 282, 284, 285, 286, 288, 290, 293, 297, 300, 304, 314, 322, 325, 326, 328, 329, 331, 339, 340, 343
NSC staffers' proposals re, 250
Paris discussions re, 201, 222, 223
Political/military situation, 306
Psychological warfare, 298
Quarantine option, 45, 136
Rives's policy recommendations, 342
Sihanouk, popular attitude toward, 326
Sihanouk's criticism of Lon Nol government, 246
Sihanouk's five aims for, 222
Sihanoukville as entry point for Communist supplies, 344
Strategic importance to United States, 326
Thai military involvement, 304, 311, 313, 314, 317, 325, 326, 329, 331, 340
U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, appointment of, 326, 344
U.S. funding problems for Cambodian programs, 334, 340, 343
U.S. military liaison for, 281, 313, 326
U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 294, 313, 318, 319, 322
U.S. relations with, 10, 17, 18, 40, 48, 179, 180, 196, 206
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 220
U.S. support for Lon Nol government (*see also* Military assistance for Lon Nol government *above*), 205, 208, 229, 237, 239, 241, 245, 250, 285, 298

Cambodia—*Continued*
U.S. tactical air support in, 344
Cambodian Army (FARK), 232, 326, 328
Cambodian cross-border campaign, 252
Air operations, 297, 302, 326, 328
Anti-war movement in United States and, 277, 287
ARVN operations, guidance for, 217, 227, 243, 288, 292, 297, 301, 302, 312, 326
ARVN troops to remain in Cambodia after U.S. withdrawal, 331
Bunker/Abrams endorsement of, 224
Cambodian cooperation with, 221, 240
Casualties, 255, 275
Communist actions in Vietnam in response to, 289
Communist weapons, capture of, 332
Congressional interest in, 255, 256, 278, 288, 290
COSVN target (*see also* Fish Hook operation *below*), 256, 296, 313
Course of operations, assessments of, 253, 255, 257, 258, 263, 275, 278, 281, 282, 284, 286, 287, 288, 313
Divisions within Nixon administration re, 254
DRV political and diplomatic problems related to, 299
DRV reaction, 316
DRV warned about, 242
Fish Hook operation (base area *352/353*), 259, 261, 265, 266, 267, 269
International reaction, 272, 274, 275, 313
Kissinger's endorsement of, 245
Laird's recommendations, 263
MACV plan for, 219
Market Time operations, 274, 281, 282, 284, 290, 292
McCain's assessment of, 239
Nixon's authorization for, 248, 249, 260, 270
Nixon's consultation with Laird re, 291
Nixon's speech on, 271, 272
Northeast Cambodia operations, 297, 314
NSC staffers' criticism of, 250
Options for operations, assessments of, 219, 253, 264, 273, 279
Prisoners and refugees, 292, 300
Cambodian cross-border campaign—*Continued*
Psychological warfare, 331
Public information policy re, 255, 257, 269, 271, 272, 274, 275, 282, 285, 287, 292, 313, 331
Road-opening operations, 327, 331
RVN policy re, 310
Seam Reap operation, 321
Shelling across border, 164
Soviet assessment of, 323
Soviet Union warned about, 247
Steel Tiger operation, 297
Troop totals for, 313
U.S. military license issue, 283
Washington Special Actions Group as implementing authority, 249, 260, 261, 263, 270
Westmoreland's endorsement of, 241, 244
Cargo, William, 127
Carver, George A., 157, 170, 336
Cau Van Vien, Gen., 37, 301
Cease-fire issue:
Bunker's views on, 142
Communist position, 163
Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China and, 335, 336
Laos, 203, 204
Paris discussions re, 2, 10, 346
Positions of U.S. officials, 118
Thompson's assessment of, 153
U.S. internal debate on, 96, 120, 145, 148, 150, 152, 154, 221, 348
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 123, 151
Vietnam Special Studies Group analysis of cease-fire options, 330, 335, 336
Ceausescu, Nicolae, 104
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (*see also* Helms, Richard M.), 24
Cambodia:
CIA officer's report on, 238
CIA operations in, 42, 47
Communications equipment for, 217
Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 238
Communist use of Cambodian territory for operations in Vietnam, 226, 238
Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 225, 232, 238

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—*Continued*
Cambodia—*Continued*
Sihanoukville as entry point for Communist supplies, 344
Cambodian cross-border campaign, 332
Democratic Republic of Vietnam:
Leadership changes after Ho's death, 128
Morale situation, 85
Laos:
Bombing of Communist forces, 172, 184
Chinese roadbuilding, U.S. actions targeting, 172
CIA activities in, 194, 197
Interdiction operations in, 343
Thai military involvement, 207, 212, 213, 331
U.S. control of military planning, 146
U.S. military assistance, 112
Military situation in Vietnam:
Communist infiltration from DRV, 44
Communist manpower, 44
Covert operations to undermine Communist morale, 156
DRV as target of U.S. operations, 98, 186
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 6
Interdiction operations, 44
Pacification program, 1, 44
Phoenix program, 74
Prisoners of war, 177
Provincial Reconnaissance Unit program, 74, 157
Paris peace talks:
CIA assessment of DRV outlook, 61
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 6
Ten-point peace plan of NLF, 67
Republic of Vietnam political situation, 44
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces:
Capabilities against Communist forces, 44
Manpower shortage, 89
Thailand border police program, 74

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—*Continued*
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces, 87, 176
World-wide covert activities, 235
Ceylon, 102
Chancellor, John, 338
Chapin, Dwight, 248
Chapin, Frank M., 156, 225
Chapman, Gen. Leonard F., 136
Cheng Heng, 205, 206
China, People's Republic of, 272, 299, 316, 348
DRV, relations with, 44, 103
Laos, U.S. actions targeting Chinese roadbuilding in, 172, 174, 210
U.S. attacks on DRV, potential response to, 129
U.S. reconnaissance flights over, 10, 12
China, Republic of, 10
Chinh. *See* Truong Chinh.
Chou En-lai, 299
Church, Frank, 326
Churchill, Winston, 169
Clifford, Clark, 3, 103, 119, 190
Colby, William, 10, 38
Cole, Ken, 16
Communist insurgency. *See* Communist *subheadings under* Cambodia; Cambodian cross-border campaign; Laos; Military situation in Vietnam.
Congress, U.S., 155
Cambodia, military assistance for, 286, 288
Cambodian cross-border campaign, 255, 256, 278, 288, 290
Laos, 203, 213
U.S. public information policy re, 193, 194, 197
Paris peace talks, hearings on, 149
Republic of Vietnam corruption problem, 175
Cooper, Charles, 318
Corcoran, Thomas J., 132
Corry, Andrew V., 102
Court, John C., 178
Cushman, Lt. Gen. Robert E., Jr., 38, 93, 98, 211, 212, 213, 234, 235, 254, 282, 284, 292, 325, 336

Davis, Jeanne, 44
Davis, Col. Bennie L., 172

Dawee, Air Marshal, 297
De-Americanization program. *See* Vietnamization program/ withdrawal of U.S. forces.
DeLuce, Dan, 200
Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) (*see also* Paris peace talks; Communist *and* DRV *subheadings under* Cambodia; Cambodian cross-border campaign; Laos; Military situation in Vietnam):
  China, relations with, 44, 103
  Leadership changes after Ho's death, 116, 120, 128
  Leadership factions, 44
  Morale situation, 49, 85, 120
  Soviet Union, relations with, 44
Diem. *See* Bui Diem.
Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China, 305, 324, 329, 335, 336, 346
  Scenarios for, 345
Dobrynin, Anatoliy F.
  Cambodia, 220
  Cambodian cross-border campaign, 323
  Kissinger's meetings with, 53, 60, 84, 125, 162, 323
  Military situation in Vietnam, 24, 32, 60, 84, 162
  Nixon's meeting with, 139
  Paris peace talks, 32, 35, 162
  Political settlement in Vietnam, 53, 84, 323
  Rogers's meetings with, 24, 32, 35, 220
  U.S.-Soviet relations, Vietnam's impact on, 84, 125, 139
Don. *See* Tran Van Don.
Dong. *See* Pham Van Dong.
Doolin, Dennis J., 203, 288, 290, 292, 297, 301, 343
Duan. *See* Le Duan.
Duong Van Minh, Gen., 119, 151

Eagleburger, Lawrence, 16
Eaton, Cyrus, 190
Eckhardt, Maj. Gen., 38
Ehrlichman, John, 177, 277
Eisenhower, Dwight D., 54
Eliot, Theodore L., Jr., 132, 146, 160, 203, 214, 286, 301, 324, 345
Ellender, Allen, 313
Firyubin, Nikolai P., 220
Flanagan, Adm., 340
40 Committee, 182, 225
France, Anatole, 222
Friday, William C., 277
Froehlke, William, 38
Fulbright, J. William, 149, 193, 194, 196, 255, 311

Galbraith, Frank, 271
Gaulle, Charles de, 28, 88
Giap, Gen. *See* Vo Nguyen Giap, Gen.
Glick, Gen., 325
Godley, G. McMurtrie, 82, 102, 112, 124, 130, 132, 172, 174, 183, 184, 203, 204, 207, 211, 214, 234, 274, 278
Goldberg, Arthur, 168
Goodpaster, Lt. Gen. Andrew J., 10, 38, 49
Gorman, Col. Paul, 78
Grant, Lindsey, 56, 86, 202
Gray, Gordon, 344
Green, Marshall (*see also* Washington Special Actions Group), 3, 27, 69, 82, 103, 132, 144, 145, 148, 164, 165, 225, 237, 285, 348
Guthrie, Keith, 172, 203, 207, 209, 212, 213, 230, 233, 234, 336, 343

Habib, Philip C., 3, 27, 31, 190, 221, 338, 345, 348
  Cease-fire issue:
    Positions of U.S. officials re, 118
    U.S. internal debate on, 120
  Paris peace talks:
    De-escalation issue, 49
    Duration of, 49
    Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 10
    Habib's assessment of, 49, 120
    Instructions for U.S. negotiators, 50, 109
    Lodge's resignation from, 151
    Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 49
    Plenary sessions, 49
    Political settlement issue, 108
    Prisoners of war issue, 199
    Private talks, 49, 105
    Public comments on, 49
    U.S. negotiating strategy, 104
    U.S.–RVN relations in, 10
Hai, Col., 157

Haig, Brig. Gen. Alexander M., Jr., 10, 12, 22, 31, 34, 49, 58, 62, 72, 73, 90, 120, 130, 155, 159, 163, 181, 185, 195, 202, 207, 208, 209, 211, 212, 213, 216, 217, 219, 221, 224, 225, 228, 233, 234, 235, 272, 274, 276, 278, 279, 294, 313, 318, 328, 331, 341, 344
  Fact-finding mission to Cambodia and Vietnam, 306, 307, 308, 309
Haldeman, H. R., 30, 35, 68, 80, 197, 211, 261, 277, 278, 291
Halperin, Morton, 94, 96
Hannah, Norman, 102
Harlow, Bryce N., 10, 90, 155, 194, 213, 297
Harriman, W. Averell, 3, 5, 13, 27, 34, 169
Harrington, Fred H., 277
Ha Van Lau, 26, 31
Heard, G. Alexander, 277
Heath, Edward, 331
Helms, Richard M., 1, 4, 5, 6, 44, 51, 121, 123, 124, 132, 133, 138, 146, 157, 174, 225, 235, 252, 262, 271, 280, 302, 326, 339, 340
  Cambodia, 10
    Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 19
    CIA operations in, 42
    Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 289
    International initiatives re, 289
    Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 274, 275, 278, 288, 290, 304
    Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 208, 232, 255, 257, 272, 281, 288
    Psychological warfare, 298
    U.S. military liaison for, 281
    U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 319
    U.S. support for Lon Nol government, 208, 229, 237, 298
  Cambodian cross-border campaign:
    Air operations, 302
    ARVN operations, guidance for, 302
    Communist actions in Vietnam in response to, 289
    Congressional interest in, 255
    Course of operations, assessments of, 255, 288
Helms, Richard M.—*Continued*
  Cambodian cross-border campaign—*Continued*
    Divisions within Nixon administration re, 254
    DRV warned about, 242
    Fish Hook operation (base area *352/353*), 259
    Market Time operations, 281
    Nixon's authorization for, 248, 249, 260, 270
    Northeast Cambodia operations, 297
    Public information policy re, 331
  Cease-fire issue, 118
  Democratic Republic of Vietnam:
    Leadership changes after Ho's death, 120
    Morale situation, 49, 120
  Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China, 305
  Laos, 10
    Bombing of Communist forces, 184, 204
    Cease-fire issue, 204
    CIA activities in, 194
    Communist campaign against Laotian Government, 99
    Long Tieng campaign, 204, 207, 211
    Thai military involvement, 204, 207, 211, 274, 275, 282
    U.S. gunships for, 204
    U.S. public information policy re, 194
  Military situation in Vietnam:
    Communist strategy and objectives, 10
    DRV as target of U.S. operations, 73, 186
    Psychological warfare, 315
    U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 318
  Paris peace talks, 46
    CIA assessment of DRV outlook, 61
    Future prospects, Helms's assessment of, 348
    Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 68
    Nixon peace plan, 68
  Republic of Vietnam's Lien Minh political organization, 19
  Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, 49
  Southeast Asia, U.S. image in, 10

Helms, Richard M.—*Continued*
Thailand, 10
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces, 58, 59
Hershey, Gen. Lewis B., 135
Hitch, Charles C., 277
Ho Chi Minh, 132
Death of, 116
Nixon's communications with, 97, 111
Holbrooke, Richard, 78
Holdridge, John H., 96, 116, 118, 127, 128, 130, 131, 137, 138, 144, 145, 147, 148, 151, 153, 160, 161, 163, 172, 179, 203, 204, 205, 207, 209, 211, 212, 213, 216, 219, 225, 230, 231, 233, 234, 238, 240, 268, 297, 300, 303, 311, 314, 315, 316, 317, 321, 324, 325, 326, 327, 334, 340, 343
Home, Alec, 331
Howe, Lt. Cmdr. Jonathan, 235, 243, 341
Hughes, Gen. James D., 239
Hughes, Thomas L., 1, 43
Hummel, Arthur W., 102
Humphrey, Hubert H., 27, 135, 190
Huong. *See* Tran Van Huong.
Hyland, William G., 127

India, 203
Indonesia, 10, 230
International initiatives re Cambodia, 262, 271, 275, 278, 289
Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 232, 240, 255, 272, 314, 326, 329
Intelligence community, Nixon's criticism of, 344
International guarantees for Vietnam, 59, 91, 96
International Monetary Fund (IMF), 92

Japan, 10, 237, 313
Johnson, Lyndon B., 137
Johnson, Vice Adm. Nels C. (*see also* Washington Special Actions Group), 127, 131, 172
Johnson, U. Alexis (*see also* Washington Special Actions Group), 3, 10, 19, 82, 98, 182, 214, 225, 231, 285, 289, 294, 301, 338, 339, 340, 348
Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) (*see also* Wheeler, Gen. Earle G.), 170, 273
Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)—*Continued*
Cambodia:
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 62, 215
Communications equipment for, 340
Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 227
Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 253
Quarantine option, 45
U.S. relations with, 18
Cambodian cross-border campaign, 248
Laos:
Thai military involvement, 203, 207, 212
U.S. military assistance, 131
Military situation in Vietnam:
B–52 strikes, effectiveness of, 44
Communist manpower, 44
DRV as target of U.S. operations, 134, 136
Interdiction operations, 44
Pacification program, 44
Provincial Reconnaissance Unit program, 157
Strategy and tactics governing U.S. operations, 100
Termination (T-Day) planning, 38
Paris peace talks, 46
Republic of Vietnam:
Internal security situation, 94
Political situation, 44
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, 44
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces:
Air and naval forces, 114
Combat capability and, 44
Fourth withdrawal increment, 217, 228
JCS plan, 87, 114
1969 withdrawal package, 87
Problems related to, 236
Residual force levels, 114
Timetable for, 114

Kaplan, Harold, 78, 104
Karamessines, Thomas H. (*see also* Washington Special Actions Group), 196, 225, 294
Kearney, Paul, 273
Kennedy, Edward M., 10, 77

Kennedy, John F., 68
Kennedy, Col. Richard T., 209, 211, 212, 213, 230, 231, 233, 234, 252, 255, 257, 262, 269, 272, 274, 275, 278, 281, 282, 284, 286, 288, 290, 292, 294, 297, 298, 300, 301, 326, 335, 336, 340, 343, 348
Kent State demonstrations, 277
Keogh, James, 77
Khiem. *See* Tran Thien Khiem.
Kiem. *See* Tran Buu Kiem.
Kissinger, Henry A. (*see also* Washington Special Actions Group), 3, 6, 28, 30, 31, 102, 187, 235, 239, 240, 273, 280, 285, 301, 345
  Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam, formulation of, 21
  Anti-war movement in United States, 117, 119, 126, 135, 149
    Cambodian cross-border campaign and, 277, 287
  Cambodia:
    Asian support for Lon Nol government, U.S. program for, 313
    Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 19, 22, 23, 25, 39, 40, 41, 62, 110, 135, 215
    Border declaration re, 48, 66
    CIA officer's report on, 238
    CIA operations in, 42
    CINCPAC plan for, 344
    Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 205, 227, 238, 253, 289, 341
    Communist takeover, U.S. contingency planning re, 241, 251, 253
    Communist use of Cambodian territory for operations in Vietnam, 202, 226, 238
    Coup by Lon Nol against Sihanouk, 202, 205, 222, 238
    DRV objectives and courses of action in, 216, 268
    Economic situation, 202
    Intelligence collection in, 329, 344
    Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 253
    Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 208, 225, 232, 238, 253, 329
    NSC staffers' proposals re, 250
    Paris discussions re, 201, 222, 223
Kissinger, Henry A.—*Continued*
  Cambodia—*Continued*
    Political/military situation, 306
    Psychological warfare, 298
    Quarantine option, 45
    Rives's policy recommendations, 342
    Sihanouk's criticism of Lon Nol government, 246
    Thai military involvement, 329
    U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, appointment of, 344
    U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 294, 313, 318, 319
    U.S. relations with, 17, 18, 40, 48, 179, 180, 196, 206
    U.S. support for Lon Nol government, 205, 208, 229, 237, 239, 241, 250, 298
  Cambodian cross-border campaign:
    Air operations, 302
    Anti-war movement in United States and, 277, 287
    ARVN operations, guidance for, 217, 227, 243, 302, 312
    Bunker/Abrams endorsement of, 224
    Communist weapons, capture of, 332
    Congressional interest in, 256
    COSVN target, 256
    Course of operations, assessments of, 253, 258, 287, 313
    Divisions within Nixon administration re, 254
    DRV political and diplomatic problems related to, 299
    DRV reaction, 316
    DRV warned about, 242
    Fish Hook operation (base area *352/353*), 259, 261, 265, 266, 267
    Kissinger's endorsement of, 245
    Laird's recommendations, 263
    MACV plan for, 219
    Nixon's authorization for, 248
    Nixon's consultation with Laird re, 291
    NSC staffers' criticism of, 250
    Options for operations, assessments of, 219, 253, 264, 279
    Public information policy re, 287
    Road-opening operations, 327

Kissinger, Henry A.—*Continued*
Cambodian cross-border campaign—*Continued*
Shelling across border, 164
Soviet assessment of, 323
Soviet Union warned about, 247
U.S. military license issue, 283
Westmoreland's endorsement of, 241, 244
Cease-fire issue:
Bunker's views on, 142
Communist position, 163
Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China and, 335
Paris discussions re, 2, 346
Positions of U.S. officials re, 118
Thompson's assessment of, 153
U.S. internal debate on, 96, 145, 148, 150, 152, 154, 348
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 123, 151
Vietnam Special Studies Group analysis of cease-fire options, 330, 335
Democratic Republic of Vietnam:
Leadership changes after Ho's death, 116, 120, 128
Morale situation, 85
Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China, 305, 324, 329, 335, 346
Dobrynin's meetings with, 53, 60, 84, 125, 162, 323
Haig's fact-finding mission to Cambodia and Vietnam, 306, 307, 308, 309
International guarantees for Vietnam, 59, 91, 96
Ky's meeting with, 54
Laos, 132, 133
Bombing of Communist forces, 56, 173, 183, 184, 193
Chinese roadbuilding, U.S. actions targeting, 210
CIA activities in, 197
Communist campaign against Laotian Government, 86, 112, 131
Communist objectives in, 181
Communist takeover, U.S. contingency planning re, 112, 124
Long Tieng campaign, 214
Lord's assessment of U.S. policy, 130

Kissinger, Henry A.—*Continued*
Laos—*Continued*
Paris discussions re, 56, 190, 201, 222, 223
Political settlement issue, 197
Thai military involvement, 214, 231, 331
U.S. and Communist strategic concerns in, 56
U.S. control of military planning, 146
U.S. military assistance, 112, 121
U.S. military escalation, 82
U.S. public information policy re, 193, 194, 197
Midway meeting, 76, 79, 81, 88
Military situation in Vietnam:
Bunker's assessment of, 142
Casualties, 10
Communist defectors, 10
Communist infiltration from DRV, 96, 178
Communist lull in fighting, 93
Communist manpower, 178
Communist rocket attacks on cities, 40
Communist strategy and objectives, 29, 65, 117, 167, 188, 333
Communist takeover in Cambodia, possible consequences of, 241, 251, 253
Communist withdrawals from RVN, 161
Countryside control, 171
Covert operations to undermine Communist morale, 156
De-escalation issue, 10, 34
DRV as target of U.S. operations, 73, 98, 120, 129, 134, 136, 140, 186
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 4, 8, 10, 11
Humphrey's support for Nixon's policy, 135
Interlocking options for U.S. re negotiations, Vietnamization, and military actions, 119
Laird's assessment of, 38, 221
My Lai atrocity, 155
Pacification program, 4, 10, 142, 295
Phoenix program, 74

Kissinger, Henry A.—*Continued*
Military situation in Vietnam—*Continued*
Pressure tactics, development of, 12, 15
Prisoners of war, 10, 168, 177, 199
Provincial Reconnaissance Unit program, 74
Psychological warfare, 315
Reconnaissance flights over China, 12
Retaliation for Communist attacks, 30, 33
Sortie levels, 235, 312
Thompson's assessment of, 137, 153, 158
U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 318
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 60, 84, 162
U.S. threats of escalation, 60
Nixon Doctrine, 101
Nixon–Ho communications, 97, 111
Nixon's "silent majority"speech, 144
Paris peace talks, 72, 295
Agreed objectives/work program proposal, 189, 190
Alternative approaches, U.S. study of, 160
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia and, 40, 41
Bombing of DRV as spur to negotiations, 55
Bruce's appointment as chief U.S. negotiator, 338, 346
Bunker's assessment of, 198
Cambodia issue, 201, 222, 223
Cease-fire issue, 2, 346
CIA assessment of DRV outlook, 61
Communist objectives, 119
Conditions necessary for U.S. success, 52
Congressional hearings on, 149
Deadline for negotiations issue, 222
De-escalation issue, 46, 49
DRV's moderation of demands, 64
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11
Habib's assessment of, 120
Historical record of, 63

Kissinger, Henry A.—*Continued*
Paris peace talks—*Continued*
Instructions for U.S. negotiators, 36, 50, 90, 109
Interlocking options for U.S. re negotiations, Vietnamization, and military actions, 119, 347
Interruption in negotiations, 222, 223, 320
Kissinger's assessment of, 223
Laos issue, 56, 190, 201, 222, 223
Linkage of political and military matters, 33, 35, 201
Lodge's assessment of, 108
Media coverage, 16
Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 8, 46, 49, 59, 68, 91, 96, 106, 190, 192, 198, 200, 201, 222, 223
Nixon peace plan, 68
Nixon's pre-inauguration communications with DRV re, 14
Nixon's September *16* speech and, 122
Nixon's visit with U.S. delegation, 27
November *1* deadline for progress, 106, 108
Political settlement issue, 106, 151, 189, 190, 191, 222, 223
Prisoners of war issue, 199
Private talks, 33, 35, 36, 83, 150, 159, 166, 169;
Kissinger's meetings, 105, 106, 108, 185, 189, 190, 191, 200, 201, 218, 222, 223
Problems within U.S. negotiating team, 52, 78
Procedural concerns, 201
Secrecy concerns, 189
Soviet involvement, 107, 346
Soviet involvement/Moscow talks package plan, 52, 53, 60
Special contact proposal, 106
Ten-point peace plan of NLF, 67, 106
Thieu's attitude toward, 198
U.S. lack of chief negotiator problem, 190, 222
U.S. negotiating strategy, 46, 104, 192, 200, 346
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81

Kissinger, Henry A.—*Continued*
Paris peace talks—*Continued*
U.S.–RVN relations in, 192
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 35, 162
Political settlement in Vietnam, 8
Elections issue, 88, 93, 96, 119
Local political power, focus on, 96
Peace cabinet option, 96
Soviet views on, 323
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 53, 84
U.S. study re, 59, 91, 96
Vietnamization program and, 93
Republic of Vietnam:
Corruption problem, 175, 295
Economic situation, 92, 142, 295
Government reorganization, 120
Internal security situation, 94, 96, 119
Lien Minh political organization, 19, 47
National Social Democratic Front, 182
Partition option, 8
Political situation, 4, 79, 117, 119, 142, 295
U.S.–RVN relations, 9
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, 4, 89, 119
Sihanouk's letter to Mansfield, 246
Soviet-U.S. relations, Vietnam's impact on, 84, 125, 139
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces, 295
Announcements of withdrawals, 70, 71, 76, 80
Assumptions underlying, 143
Bunker's assessment of, 142, 198
CIA assessment of, 176
Clifford's advocacy of withdrawal, 119
Communist de facto withdrawals and, 161
De-escalation issue and, 34
Economic consequences, 94
Force structure of RVNAF for, 195
Fourth withdrawal increment, 228
Interlocking options for U.S. re negotiations, Vietnamization, and military actions, 119, 347
JCS plan, 87
Kissinger's assessment of, 117
Kissinger, Henry A.—*Continued*
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces—*Continued*
Long-term planning, 148
Modalities of withdrawal, 59, 91
1969 withdrawal package, 93
1970 withdrawal package, 147, 148
Optimistic reporting re, 170
Political settlement in Vietnam and, 93
Problems related to, 236
Public information policy re, 10, 103, 123
Reactions to, 188
Replacement of U.S. forces with RVN troops, 8, 141
Speed-up of withdrawals issue, 312
Thompson's assessment of, 153
Timetable for, 58, 119, 120
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 151
Vietnam Special Studies Group, establishment of, 115
Wheeler's Vietnam visit, 100
Korea, Republic of, 10
Kosygin, Aleksei N., 197, 204
Kraft, Gen., 331
Kraft, Joseph, 34, 189
Ky. *See* Nguyen Cao Ky.

Ladd, Col. Jonathan, 306, 313, 326, 328, 341, 344
Laird, Melvin R., 4, 44, 51, 54, 62, 93, 99, 119, 123, 124, 132, 133, 138, 146, 174, 243, 273, 285, 302, 339
Cambodia:
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 22, 23, 25, 41, 215
Communications equipment for, 217
Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 227
Communist use of Cambodian territory for operations in Vietnam, 38
Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 244
Quarantine option, 45, 136
Thai military involvement, 313
U.S. military liaison for, 313
U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 313, 319
Cambodian cross-border campaign:
Air operations, 302

Laird, Melvin R.—*Continued*
Cambodian cross-border campaign—*Continued*
ARVN operations, guidance for, 217, 297, 302
Cambodian cooperation with, 221
Course of operations, assessments of, 263, 313
Divisions within Nixon administration re, 254
Fish Hook operation (base area *352/353*), 259, 261, 267
Laird's recommendations, 263
MACV plan for, 219
Nixon's authorization for, 248, 249, 260, 270
Nixon's consultation with Laird re, 291
Options for operations, assessments of, 219
Public information policy re, 313
Troop totals for, 313
U.S. military license issue, 283
Washington Special Actions Group as implementing authority, 261, 263
Westmoreland's endorsement of, 244
Cease-fire issue:
Positions of U.S. officials re, 118
U.S. internal debate on, 120, 154, 221, 348
Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China, 305
Laos:
Bombing of Communist forces, 136, 172, 173, 183, 184, 187, 193, 194, 235
Chinese roadbuilding, U.S. actions targeting, 210
CIA activities in, 194
U.S. military assistance, 121
U.S. public information policy re, 193, 194
Military situation in Vietnam:
Casualties, 221
Communist defectors, 10
Communist infiltration from DRV, 120, 187, 221
Communist lull in fighting, 136
Communist offensive of *1969*, 38
Communist rocket attacks on cities, 38
Communist strategy and objectives, 38

Laird, Melvin R.—*Continued*
Military situation in Vietnam—*Continued*
DRV as target of U.S. operations, 55, 134, 140, 217, 235
Economic impact on United States, 221
Joint planning, 187
Laird's assessment of, 38, 187, 221
Ordnance expenditures, 38
Pacification program, 38, 114, 221
Phoenix program, 38
Pressure tactics, development of, 12, 15
Prisoners of war, 168, 187, 221
Provincial Reconnaissance Unit program, 157
Psychological warfare, 315
Retaliation for Communist attacks, 37, 38
Sortie levels, 235, 312
Strategy and tactics governing U.S. operations, 100
Termination (T-Day) planning, 38
Troop contributing countries, 221
U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 318
Wheeler's assessment of, 37
Nixon's "silent majority"speech, 144
Paris peace talks:
De-escalation issue, 49
Habib's assessment of, 120
Laird's recommendations re, 221
Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 46, 68
Nixon peace plan, 68
Problems within U.S. negotiating team, 78
Soviet involvement, 107
Republic of Vietnam political/economic situation, 221
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces:
Improvement and Modernization Program, 10, 38, 49, 87, 114
Leadership and motivation problems, 187, 221
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces, 38, 59
Air and naval forces, 114
Announcements of withdrawals, 76, 80, 187
Economic consequences, 114, 187
Fourth withdrawal increment, 217, 228

Laird, Melvin R.—*Continued*
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces—*Continued*
Funding for, 221
JCS plan, 87, 114
Laird's assessment of, 187, 221
Long-term planning, 38, 87, 148, 187
1969 withdrawal package, 87, 93
1971 withdrawal package, 313
Nomenclature for, 49
Pacification program and, 114
Problems related to, 236
Public information policy re, 187
Reactions to, 87
Residual force levels, 114
Security concerns of U.S. forces, 187
Speed-up of withdrawals issue, 312
Thieu's attitude toward, 38, 187
Timetable for, 58, 114, 120
U.S.–RVN coordination, 114
Vietnam Special Studies Group, establishment of, 115
Vietnam visits, 38, 187, 221
Wheeler's Vietnam visit, 100
Laise, Carol, 102
Lake, W. Anthony, 88, 104, 106, 130, 189, 190, 201, 222, 250
Lam. *See* Pham Dang Lam.
Laos (*see also* Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China), 10, 19
Asian nations' assistance for, 130
Bombing of Communist forces, 4, 44, 56, 82, 130, 133, 136, 172, 173, 183, 184, 187, 193, 194, 203, 204, 207, 325
Cease-fire issue, 203, 204
Chinese roadbuilding, U.S. actions targeting, 172, 174, 210
CIA activities in, 194, 197
Communist campaign against Laotian Government (*see also* Long Tieng campaign *below*), 43, 86, 99, 102, 112, 127, 131, 132, 313
Communist objectives in, 181
Communist takeover, U.S. contingency planning re, 112, 124, 127, 207
Communist use of Laotian territory for operations in Vietnam, 37, 44
Elephants of, 194
Laos—*Continued*
Geneva Agreements initiatives re, 132, 204
Godley's assessment of U.S. policy, 102
Interdiction operations in, 343
Long Tieng campaign, 203, 204, 207, 209, 211, 212, 213, 214
Lord's assessment of U.S. policy, 130
Paris discussions re, 56, 190, 201, 222, 223
Political settlement issue, 197
Psychological operations in, 131
Reconnaissance operations over, 131, 138
Soviet role in, 132
Thai military involvement, 131, 138, 203, 204, 207, 209, 211, 212, 213, 214, 231, 234, 274, 275, 278, 282, 331, 343
U.S. and Communist strategic concerns in, 56
U.S. control of military planning, 146
U.S. ground forces in, 204
U.S. gunships for, 204, 207
U.S. military assistance, 112, 121, 130, 131, 132, 133, 138
U.S. military escalation, 82
U.S. public information policy re, 130, 133, 193, 194, 197
Lau. *See* Ha Van Lau.
Le Duan, 116, 120, 128, 299, 316
Le Duc Tho, 90
Paris peace talks:
Agreed objectives/work program proposal, 190
Cambodia issue, 201, 222
Format for negotiations, 69, 75
Interruption in negotiations, 222, 320
Laos issue, 190, 201, 222
Linkage of political and military matters, 201
Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 201
Political settlement issue, 190, 222
Private talks, 13; Kissinger's meetings, 185, 189, 190, 191, 201, 218, 222, 223; Lodge's meetings, 75, 78, 80, 83
Procedural concerns, 201
Secrecy concerns, 189

Le Duc Tho—*Continued*
Paris peace talks—*Continued*
U.S. lack of chief negotiator problem, 190
Lee Kuan Yew, 10, 102, 137
Levi, Edward, 277
Lincoln, Franklin B., Jr., 344
Lincoln, Gen. George A., 10, 44, 49, 51, 248, 348
Lindquist, Robert S., 102
Lin Piao, 299
Lodge, Henry Cabot, II, 3, 28, 60, 64
Cease-fire issue:
Paris discussions re, 2
U.S. internal debate on, 120
Military situation in Vietnam, 26, 30
Nixon's "silent majority" speech, 144
Paris peace talks:
Breaking off option, 90
Bunker's assessment of, 7
Cease-fire issue, 2
DRV strategy to create U.S.–RVN friction, 75
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 5
Format for negotiations, 69, 75
Instructions for U.S. negotiators, 2, 50, 90, 109
Lodge's assessment of, 108
Lodge's resignation from, 151
Media coverage, 16
Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 68, 72, 78, 108
Nixon peace plan, 68
Nixon's visit with U.S. delegation, 20, 27
November *1* deadline for progress, 108
Political settlement issue, 20, 69, 108, 151
Prisoners of war issue, 72
Private talks, 20, 36, 108; Lodge's meetings, 30, 31, 75, 78, 80, 83
Problems within U.S. negotiating team, 78
RVN–NLF talks, proposed, 28
RVN preparedness problem, 69
U.S. casualties in Vietnam and, 20
U.S. negotiating strategy, 104
U.S. protests re attacks in Vietnam, 30, 31
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 28
U.S.–RVN relations in, 7
Lodge, Henry Cabot, II—*Continued*
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces, 68
Lon Nol, Gen., 306, 328
Cambodia:
Communist use of Cambodian territory for operations in Vietnam, 238
Coup by Lon Nol against Sihanouk, 202, 205, 238
Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 253, 257
Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 225, 238, 240, 293
Cambodian cross-border campaign, 240
Haig's meeting with, 307
Lon Non, 225
Lord, Winston, 96, 216, 235, 240, 250, 324, 344
Laos paper, 130
Lowenstein, James, 255, 257, 278, 286
Lynn, Laurence E., 115, 134, 153, 171, 178, 195, 221, 228, 233, 235, 318, 335, 336, 348
Ly Vong Sar, Col., 240

Mahon, George, 136, 313
Mai Van Bo, 14, 97, 106, 159, 185, 189, 190, 201, 222, 242, 276
Malaysia, 102
Malik, Adam, 255, 262, 271, 272, 275
Mansfield, Mike, 66, 110, 148, 179, 196, 205, 246, 255
Mao Tse-tung, 299
Marcos, Ferdinand, 10, 18
Marcy, Carl, 286
Matak. *See* Sirik Matak, Sisowath.
McCain, Adm. John S., Jr., 38, 62, 80, 100, 118, 120, 184, 187, 204, 207, 211, 217, 239, 243, 270, 273, 313, 344
McConnell, Gen. John P., 49
McManis, David, 224
McNamara, Robert, 196
Meir, Golda, 137
Meyer, Cord, 343
Midway meeting, 76, 77, 79, 81, 88
Military situation in Vietnam (*see also* Cambodia; Cambodian cross-border campaign; Cease-fire issue; Laos; Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces; Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces):
B–*52* strikes, effectiveness of, 44

Military situation in Vietnam—*Continued*
Bunker's assessment of, 142
Casualties, 10, 20, 221
Chieu Hoi program, 239, 313
Civilian population, damage to, 44
Communist capabilities for large-scale offensive, 44
Communist defectors, 10
Communist infiltration from DRV, 44, 96, 120, 178, 187, 221
Communist lull in fighting, 93, 136
Communist manpower, 44, 178
Communist offensive of *1969,* 38
Communist rocket attacks on cities, 38, 39, 40
Communist strategy and objectives, 10, 29, 38, 65, 117, 167, 188, 333
Communist takeover in Cambodia, possible consequences of, 241, 251, 253
Communist withdrawals from RVN, 161
Countryside control, 171
Covert operations to undermine Communist morale, 156
De-escalation issue, 10, 34
Deployments of U.S. forces, 44
DMZ activities, 10, 12, 37
DRV as target of U.S. operations, 55, 73, 98, 120, 129, 134, 136, 140, 186, 217, 235, 239, 313, 344
Economic impact on United States, 221
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 44
Ho's views on, 111
Humphrey's support for Nixon's policy, 135
Interdiction operations, 10, 44
Interlocking options for U.S. re negotiations, Vietnamization, and military actions, 119
International opinion on U.S. policy, 137
Joint planning, 187
Ky's assessment of, 28
Laird's assessment of, 38, 187, 221
My Lai atrocity, 113, 155
Ordnance expenditures, 38
Pacification program, 1, 4, 10, 37, 38, 44, 114, 120, 142, 221, 295

Military situation in Vietnam—*Continued*
Phoenix program, 37, 38, 44, 74, 157
Pressure tactics, development of, 12, 15
Prisoners of war, 10, 168, 177, 187, 199, 221
Provincial Reconnaissance Unit program, 74, 157, 165
Psychological warfare, 315
Reconnaissance flights over China, 10, 12
Restrictions on U.S. operations, 10
Retaliation for Communist attacks, 24, 26, 30, 33, 37, 38
Sortie levels, 235, 312
Souvanna's assessment of, 132
Strategy and tactics governing U.S. operations, 100
Termination (T-Day) planning, 38
Thompson's assessment of, 137, 153, 158
Troop contributing countries, 221
U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 318
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 24, 32, 60, 84, 162
U.S. threats of escalation, 60
VC infrastructure (VCI) program. *See* Phoenix program *above.*
Wheeler's assessment of, 37, 100
Minh. *See* Duong Van Minh, Gen.
Mitchell, John, 93, 98, 119, 120, 123, 136, 148, 154, 182, 194, 225, 249, 259, 260, 267, 270, 302, 348
Montiero, Ernest Steven, 17
Moor, E. Dean, 24, 63, 72, 74, 89, 92, 94
Moore, Jonathan (*see also* Washington Special Actions Group), 237, 340, 345
Moorer, Adm. Thomas H., 136, 183, 184, 244, 252, 254, 255, 257, 272, 273, 274, 275, 278, 286, 290, 291, 292, 296, 297, 309, 313, 325, 326, 331, 336, 339, 340, 343, 344
Moos, Malcolm, 277
Moose, Richard, 18, 48, 255, 257, 278, 286
Morris, Roger, 250
Moynihan, Daniel Patrick, 155
Murphy, Franklin D., 344
Murphy, Robert D., 10, 245
My Lai atrocity, 113, 155

National Security Council (NSC), 302
Cabinet-NSC meeting, 77
"Executive Committee" meeting, 93
Meetings, 5, 10, 49, 120, 194, 248, 348
National Security Decision Memoranda:
NSDM *9,* 51
NSDM *23,* 115
NSDM *36,* 154
NSDM *57,* 260, 263, 270
NSDM *58,* 270
NSDM *63,* 315
National Security Study Memoranda:
NSSM *1,* 4
Responses to, 44
NSSM *19,* 94
NSSM *36,* 58, 87
NSSM *37,* 59, 91, 96
NSSM *74,* 124
NSSM *94,* 305
NSSM *95,* 319
Negroponte, John, 31
Nelson, William, 19, 165, 211, 212, 213, 225, 230, 233, 234, 238, 297, 304, 340, 343
Nepal, 102
Neumann, Robert G., 102
Ne Win, 10, 102
Newsweek, 135
New York Times, 66
Nguyen Cao Ky, 7, 10, 19, 27, 37, 38, 103, 119, 187, 251, 295
Kissinger's meeting with, 54
Nixon's meeting with, 28
Rogers's meeting with, 77
Nguyen Cao Thang, 182
Nguyen Duy Trinh, 200
Nguyen Hui Loi, Col., 78
Nguyen Huu Tho, 31
Nguyen Minh Vy, 31, 103, 187
Nguyen Phu Duc, 81, 103
Nguyen Thi Binh, Madame, 189, 201
Nguyen Van Huong, 19
Nguyen Xuang Phong, 69
Nguyen Van Thieu, 37, 301
Cambodia:
Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 348
Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 331
Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 257, 262
Cambodian cross-border campaign, 217, 310
Cease-fire issue, 120, 142
Nguyen Van Thieu—*Continued*
Midway meeting, 76, 77, 81
Military situation in Vietnam:
Communist objectives, 38
Communist rocket attacks on cities, 38
Laird's assessment of, 38
Pacification program, 120
Prisoners of war, 221
Retaliation for Communist attacks, 38
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81
Nixon's assessment of, 137
Nixon's meetings with, 79, 81, 103
Nixon's "silent majority" speech, 144
Paris peace talks:
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia and, 41
Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 49, 68
Nixon peace plan, 68
Political settlement issue, 151
Thieu's attitude toward, 198
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81, 103
U.S.–RVN relations in, 7, 10
Personal qualities, 79
Political settlement in Vietnam:
Elections issue, 77, 81, 88, 93, 96
Thieu's attitude toward, 49
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81
Republic of Vietnam:
Chau treason case, 198
Corruption problem, 175
Government reorganization, 120
Lien Minh political organization, 19, 47
National Social Democratic Front, 182
Political situation, 7, 10, 79, 221, 295
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces:
Leadership and motivation problems, 187
Regional Forces and Popular Forces, 81
Rogers's meeting with, 77
Sihanouk, assessment of, 103
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces:
Announcements of withdrawals, 70, 71, 76, 187
1969 withdrawal package, 100
1970 withdrawal package, 147

Nguyen Van Thieu—*Continued*
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces—*Continued*
Replacement of U.S. forces with RVN troops, 10, 100, 141
Thieu's attitude toward, 38, 187
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81, 100, 103
Nixon, Richard M., 30, 37, 54, 187, 301, 328
Ad Hoc Group on Vietnam, formulation of, 21
Ambassadors to Asian countries, meeting with, 102
Anti-war movement in United States, 117, 119, 120, 126, 135, 137, 149
Cambodian cross-border campaign and, 277, 287
Bunker's first meeting with, 49
Cambodia:
Asian support for Lon Nol government, U.S. program for, 313, 326
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 22, 23, 25, 39, 40, 41, 62, 135, 215
Border declaration re, 48, 66
CIA operations in, 42, 47
CINCPAC plan for, 344
Communications equipment for, 217
Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 227, 253, 331, 341, 348
Communist takeover, U.S. contingency planning re, 253, 313
Communist use of Cambodian territory for operations in Vietnam, 202, 226
Coup by Lon Nol against Sihanouk, 205
DRV objectives and courses of action in, 216
Intelligence collection in, 326, 329, 344
Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 244, 253, 257, 286, 331
Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 235, 240, 253, 326, 329, 339
Political/military situation, 306
Psychological warfare, 298
Nixon, Richard M—*Continued*
Cambodia—*Continued*
Quarantine option, 45, 136
Rives's policy recommendations, 342
Sihanouk's criticism of Lon Nol government, 246
Sihanoukville as entry point for Communist supplies, 344
Strategic importance to United States, 326
Thai military involvement, 313, 326, 329, 331
U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, appointment of, 326, 344
U.S. military liaison for, 313
U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 313, 319
U.S. relations with, 10, 17, 18, 48, 179, 206
U.S. support for Lon Nol government, 205, 229, 237, 239, 241, 245, 298
U.S. tactical air support in, 344
Cambodian cross-border campaign:
Air operations, 302, 326
Anti-war movement in United States and, 277, 287
ARVN operations, guidance for, 217, 227, 302, 312, 326
ARVN troops to remain in Cambodia after U.S. withdrawal, 331
Communist weapons, capture of, 332
Congressional interest in, 256, 278
COSVN target, 256
Course of operations, assessments of, 253, 258, 287, 313
Divisions within Nixon administration re, 254
DRV political and diplomatic problems related to, 299
DRV reaction, 316
DRV warned about, 242
Fish Hook operation (base area *352/353*), 259, 261, 265, 266, 267
International reaction, 313
Kissinger's endorsement of, 245
McCain's assessment of, 239
Nixon's authorization for, 248, 249, 260, 270
Nixon's consultation with Laird re, 291
Nixon's speech on, 271, 272

Nixon, Richard M—*Continued*
Cambodian cross-border campaign—*Continued*
Options for operations, assessments of, 253, 264, 273, 279
Psychological warfare, 331
Public information policy re, 269, 285, 287, 313, 331
Road-opening operations, 327, 331
Shelling across border, 164
Soviet assessment of, 323
Soviet Union warned about, 247
Troop totals for, 313
Washington Special Actions Group as implementing authority, 249, 260, 270
Cease-fire issue, 348
Communist position, 163
Paris discussions re, 2, 10, 346
Positions of U.S. officials, 118
U.S. internal debate on, 120, 148, 150, 152, 154, 348
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 123
CIA world-wide covert activities, 235
Democratic Republic of Vietnam:
Leadership changes after Ho's death, 116
Morale situation, 49, 85, 120
Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China, 305, 329, 346
Dobrynin's meeting with, 139
Haig's fact-finding mission to Cambodia and Vietnam, 306, 307, 308, 309
Ho's communications with, 97, 111
Intelligence community, criticism of, 344
Ky's meeting with, 28
Laos:
Bombing of Communist forces, 133, 136, 173, 183, 184, 194, 235
Chinese roadbuilding, U.S. actions targeting, 174, 210
CIA activities in, 194, 197
Communist campaign against Laotian Government, 86, 99, 112, 132, 313
Communist objectives in, 181
Communist takeover, U.S. contingency planning re, 112, 124
Elephants of, 194
Geneva Agreements initiative re, 132, 204

Nixon, Richard M—*Continued*
Laos—*Continued*
Long Tieng campaign, 211, 212, 213, 214
Political settlement issue, 197
Soviet role in, 132
Thai military involvement, 207, 211, 212, 213, 214, 231, 331
U.S. and Communist strategic concerns in, 56
U.S. control of military planning, 146
U.S. military assistance, 112, 121, 131, 132, 133, 138
U.S. military escalation, 82
U.S. public information policy re, 130, 133, 193, 194, 197
Midway meeting, 76, 77, 79, 81
Military situation in Vietnam:
Bunker's assessment of, 142
Chieu Hoi program, 239, 313
Communist defectors, 10
Communist infiltration from DRV, 120, 178
Communist lull in fighting, 93, 136
Communist manpower, 178
Communist rocket attacks on cities, 39
Communist strategy and objectives, 29, 65, 117, 167, 188, 333
Communist takeover in Cambodia, possible consequences of, 253
Countryside control, 171
Covert operations to undermine Communist morale, 156
De-escalation issue, 34
DRV as target of U.S. operations, 55, 98, 120, 129, 134, 136, 140, 186, 217, 235, 239, 313, 344
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 8, 10, 11
Humphrey's support for Nixon's policy, 135
Interlocking options for U.S. re negotiations, Vietnamization, and military actions, 119
International opinion on U.S. policy, 137
Laird's assessment of, 38, 221
My Lai atrocity, 113, 155

Nixon, Richard M—*Continued*
Military situation in Vietnam—*Continued*
Pacification program, 10, 295
Pressure tactics, development of, 15
Prisoners of war, 10, 168, 177, 199
Psychological warfare, 315
Reconnaissance flights over China, 10
Restrictions on U.S. operations, 10
Retaliation for Communist attacks, 30, 33
Sortie levels, 235, 312
Souvanna's assessment of, 132
Thompson's assessment of, 137, 158
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 162
U.S. threats of escalation, 60
Nixon Doctrine, 101
Paris peace talks, 295
Alternative approaches, U.S. study of, 160
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia and, 41
Bombing of DRV as spur to negotiations, 55
Breaking off option, 95
Bruce's appointment as chief U.S. negotiator, 338, 346
Cease-fire issue, 2, 10, 346
CIA assessment of DRV outlook, 61
Conditions necessary for U.S. success, 52
Congressional hearings on, 149
De-escalation issue, 46, 49, 51
DRV objectives, 10, 119
DRV's moderation of demands, 64
Duration of, 49
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 5, 8, 10, 11
Future prospects, Helms's assessment of, 348
Habib's assessment of, 49, 120
Historical record of, 63
Instructions for U.S. negotiators, 2, 36, 50, 90, 109
Interlocking options for U.S. re negotiations, Vietnamization, and military actions, 119, 347
Kissinger's assessment of, 223

Nixon, Richard M—*Continued*
Paris peace talks—*Continued*
Linkage of political and military matters, 33
Lodge's resignation from, 151
Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 46, 49, 51, 68
Nixon peace plan, 68
Nixon's pre-inauguration communications with DRV re, 14
Nixon's September *16* speech and, 122
Nixon's visit with U.S. delegation, 20, 27
Political settlement issue, 20, 151
Prisoners of war issue, 199
Private talks, 20, 33, 35, 36, 41, 49, 83, 150, 159, 166, 169; Kissinger's meetings, 105, 185, 189, 190, 191, 200, 218, 223
Problems within U.S. negotiating team, 52, 57, 78
RVN–NLF talks, proposed, 28
Soviet involvement, 107, 346, 348
Soviet involvement/Moscow talks package plan, 52, 60
Special contact proposal, 106
Ten-point peace plan of NLF, 67
U.S. negotiating strategy, 46, 192, 200, 346
U.S. public information policy re, 16, 49, 348
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 28, 81, 103
U.S.–RVN relations in, 10, 192
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 162
Perot's meeting with, 177
Political settlement in Vietnam, 10
Elections issue, 81
Thieu's attitude toward, 49
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 53
Vietnamization program and, 93
Republic of Vietnam:
Corruption problem, 175, 295
Economic situation, 295
Government reorganization, 120
Internal security situation, 10, 94, 96
Lien Minh political organization, 47
Political situation, 77, 79, 117, 295
U.S.–RVN relations, 9

Nixon, Richard M—*Continued*
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces:
Abrams's assessment of, 313
Improvement and Modernization Program, 10, 49, 87
Regional Forces and Popular Forces, 81
Sihanouk's letter to Mansfield, 246
"Silent majority" speech, 135, 144
Southeast Asia, U.S. image in, 10
Souvanna's meetings with, 132, 133
Soviet-U.S. relations, Vietnam's impact on, 125, 139
Thieu, assessment of, 137
Thieu's meetings with, 79, 81, 103
Thompson's meeting with, 137
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces, 102, 295
Announcements of withdrawals, 70, 71, 76, 80, 122
Assumptions underlying, 143
CIA assessment of, 176
De-escalation issue and, 34
Force structure of RVNAF for, 195
Fourth withdrawal increment, 217, 228
Interlocking options for U.S. re negotiations, Vietnamization, and military actions, 119, 347
JCS plan, 87, 114
Kissinger's assessment of, 117
Long-term planning, 87, 148
Morale of U.S. troops and, 120
1969 withdrawal package, 87, 93
1970 withdrawal package, 147, 148
1971 withdrawal package, 313
Nixon's UN speech on withdrawals, 190
Nomenclature for, 49
Optimistic reporting re, 170
Political settlement in Vietnam and, 93
Problems related to, 236
Public information policy re, 10, 103, 120, 123
Reactions to, 87
Replacement of U.S. forces with RVN troops, 10, 141
Speed-up of withdrawals issue, 312
Timetable for, 10, 58, 119, 120
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81, 103
Vietnam Special Studies Group, establishment of, 115
Nixon, Richard M—*Continued*
Wheeler's Vietnam visit, 100
Nixon Doctrine, 101
Norred, Chris, 96
Nutter, G. Warren (*see also* Washington Special Actions Group), 96, 225, 340

Oberemko, Valentin, 3, 24, 27
Osgood, Robert E., 130

Pacification program. *See under* Military situation in Vietnam.
Packard, David (*see also* Washington Special Actions Group) 19, 22, 30, 33, 37, 98, 113, 155, 165, 180, 225, 273, 289, 313, 339
Pakse Mon, Gen., 306
Palmer, Desmond, 137, 153
Paris peace talks, 295
Agreed objectives/work program proposal, 189, 190
Alternative approaches, U.S. study of, 160
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia and, 40, 41
Bombing of DRV as spur to negotiations, 55
Breaking off option, 90, 95
Bruce's appointment as chief U.S. negotiator, 338, 346
Bunker's assessment of, 7, 198
Cambodia issue, 201, 222, 223
Cease-fire issue, 2, 10, 346
CIA assessment of DRV outlook, 61
Conditions necessary for U.S. success, 52
Congressional hearings on, 149
Deadline for negotiations issue, 222
De-escalation issue, 46, 49, 50, 51
DRV objectives, 10, 44, 119
DRV's moderation of demands, 64
DRV strategy to create U.S.–RVN friction, 75
Duration of, 49
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 44
Format for negotiations, 69, 75
Future prospects, Helms's assessment of, 348
Habib's assessment of, 49, 120
Harriman's advice for Nixon team, 3, 13

Paris peace talks—*Continued*
Historical record of, 63
Instructions for U.S. negotiators, 2, 36, 50, 90, 109
Interlocking options for U.S. re negotiations, Vietnamization, and military actions, 119, 347
Interruption in negotiations, 222, 223, 276, 320, 337
Kissinger's assessment of, 223
Laird's recommendations re, 221
Laos issue, 56, 190, 201, 222, 223
Linkage of political and military matters, 32, 33, 35, 189, 201
Lodge's assessment of, 108
Lodge's resignation from, 151
Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 8, 10, 46, 49, 50, 51, 59, 68, 72, 78, 91, 96, 106, 108, 190, 192, 198, 200, 222, 223
U.S. proposal, 201
Nixon peace plan, 68
Nixon's pre-inauguration communications with DRV re, 14
Nixon's September *16* speech and, 122
Nixon's visit with U.S. delegation, 20, 27
November *1* deadline for progress, 106, 108
Plenary sessions, 49, 72
Political settlement issue, 20, 69, 72, 106, 108, 151, 189, 190, 191, 201, 222, 223
Prisoners of war issue, 72, 199
Private talks, 13, 20, 32, 33, 35, 36, 40, 41, 49, 150
Agreement for Kissinger to talk with DRV
representatives, 159, 166, 169
Kissinger's meetings, 105, 106, 108, 185, 189, 190, 191, 200, 201, 218, 222, 223
Lodge's meetings, 30, 31, 75, 78, 80, 83
Problems within U.S. negotiating team, 52, 57, 78
Procedural concerns, 201
RVN–NLF talks, proposed, 28
RVN preparedness problem, 69
Secrecy concerns, 189
Soviet involvement, 3, 107, 346, 348
Soviet involvement/Moscow talks package plan, 52, 53, 60

Paris peace talks—*Continued*
Special contact proposal, 106
Ten-point peace plan of NLF, 67, 106
Thieu's attitude toward, 198
U.S. casualties in Vietnam and, 20
U.S. lack of chief negotiator problem, 190, 222
U.S. negotiating strategy, 46, 104, 192, 200, 346
U.S. protests re attacks in Vietnam, 26, 30, 31
U.S. public information policy re, 16, 49, 348
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 28, 81, 103
U.S.–RVN relations in, 7, 10, 75, 192
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 32, 35, 162
Paul, Roland, 257
Pauls, Rolf Friedmann, 17
Peace talks. *See* Paris peace talks.
Pedersen, Richard F., 96
Perot, Ross, 177
Pham Dang Lam, 27, 28
Pham Van Dong, 31, 69, 75, 78, 116, 120, 202, 333
Philippines, 10
Phoenix program. *See under* Military situation in Vietnam.
Phong. *See* Nguyen Xuang Phong
Pickering, Thomas, 297, 325, 326, 340, 343
Pietsch, Col. William, 313
Pincus, Walter, 257
Pok Sam An, Gen., 286
Political settlement in Vietnam (*see also* Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China; Political settlement issue *under* Paris peace talks), 8, 10
Communist proposal for, 200
Elections issue, 77, 81, 88, 93, 96, 119
Local political power, focus on, 91, 96
Peace cabinet option, 91, 96
Soviet views on, 323
Thieu's attitude toward, 49
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81, 88
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 53, 84
U.S. study re, 59, 91, 96
Vietnamization program and, 93
Porson, Sophia, 132, 133
Porter, Bill, 3
Pratt, Mark S., 131
President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB), 344
Prisoner of War Committee, 199

Prisoners of war. *See under* Military situation in Vietnam; *under* Paris peace talks.
Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) program, 74, 157, 165
Purcell, Victor, 137
Pursley, Brig. Gen. Robert E., 22, 243

Reagan, Ronald, 287
Reed, Ben, 135
Republic of Vietnam (RVN) (*see also* Military situation in Vietnam; Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces; Political settlement in Vietnam):
  Cambodian cross-border campaign, policy re, 310
  Chau treason case, 198
  Corruption problem, 10, 175, 295
  Economic situation, 10, 92, 142, 221, 295
  Government reorganization, 120
  Haig's fact-finding mission, 309
  Internal security situation, 10, 94, 96, 119, 221
  Lien Minh political organization, 19, 47
  National Social Democratic Front, 182
  Partition option, 8
  Political situation, 4, 7, 10, 44, 77, 79, 117, 119, 142, 221, 295
  U.S. covert media operations, 165
  U.S.–RVN relations, 9
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) (*see also* Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces; ARVN *subheadings under* Cambodian cross-border campaign), 119
  Abrams's assessment of, 313
  Capabilities against Communist forces, 44
  Corps performances, 176
  Evaluation of conditions for purpose of U.S. policy development, 4, 44
  Improvement and Modernization Program, 10, 28, 38, 44, 49, 87, 100, 114
  Leadership and motivation problems, 10, 44, 187, 221
  Manpower shortage, 89
  Regional Forces and Popular Forces, 81
  Wheeler's assessment of, 100
Richardson, Elliot L., 10, 24, 26, 44, 54, 68, 82, 87, 103, 124, 132, 152, 168, 169, 180, 184, 225
Rives, Lloyd M., 225, 230, 240, 247, 274, 278, 281, 282, 286, 287, 293, 294, 322, 328, 342, 344
Robinson, R. C., 129
Rogers, William P., 4, 9, 28, 44, 51, 54, 82, 93, 99, 103, 121, 123, 124, 132, 133, 138, 146, 148, 168, 174, 285, 302, 307, 313, 326, 339
  Abrams, assessment of, 77
  Anti-war movement in United States, 120, 277
  Bunker, assessment of, 77
  Cambodia:
    Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 22, 41
    Border declaration re, 18, 66
    Communist takeover, U.S. contingency planning re, 241
    Coup by Lon Nol against Sihanouk, 205, 220
    Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 303
    U.S. policymaking following cross-border campaign, 319
    U.S. relations with, 18, 48, 179
    U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 220
    U.S. support for Lon Nol government, 237, 241
  Cambodian cross-border campaign:
    Air operations, 302
    Anti-war movement in United States and, 277
    ARVN operations, guidance for, 217, 301, 302
    Divisions within Nixon administration re, 254
    Fish Hook operation (base area *352/353*), 259, 261, 267
    Nixon's authorization for, 248, 249, 260, 270
    U.S. military license issue, 283
  Cease-fire issue:
    Paris discussions re, 10
    Positions of U.S. officials, 118
    U.S. internal debate on, 120, 152, 154, 348
    U.S.–RVN discussions re, 151
  Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China, 305, 345
  Dobrynin's meetings with, 24, 32, 35, 220

Rogers, William—*Continued*
Ky's meeting with, 77
Laos:
Bombing of Communist forces, 173, 183
Chinese roadbuilding, U.S. actions targeting, 210
CIA activities in, 194
Long Tieng campaign, 214
Thai military involvement, 214
U.S. public information policy re, 193, 194
Midway meeting, 77, 79
Military situation in Vietnam:
Communist infiltration from DRV, 120
Communist takeover in Cambodia, possible consequences of, 241
De-escalation issue, 10
DRV as target of U.S. operations, 120
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 10
Psychological warfare, 315
Reconnaissance flights over China, 10
Retaliation for Communist attacks, 24, 26, 30
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 24, 32
Nixon's "silent majority"speech, 144
Paris peace talks, 46
Alternative approaches, U.S. study of, 160
Breaking off option, 95
Bunker's assessment of, 7
Cease-fire issue, 10
De-escalation issue, 49
Duration of, 49
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 5, 10
Habib's assessment of, 120
Harriman's advice for Nixon team, 3, 13
Linkage of political and military matters, 32
Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 49, 68
Nixon peace plan, 68
Nixon's pre-inauguration communications with DRV re, 14

Rogers, William—*Continued*
Paris peace talks—*Continued*
Nixon's visit with U.S. delegation, 27
Political settlement issue, 151
Prisoners of war issue, 199
Private talks, 13, 30, 32, 36, 49
Problems within U.S. negotiating team, 57
Public comments on, 49, 348
Soviet involvement, 3
U.S. protests re attacks in Vietnam, 30
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 32, 35
Political settlement in Vietnam:
Elections issue, 77, 88, 93
Thieu's attitude toward, 49
Republic of Vietnam:
Corruption problem, 10
Government reorganization, 120
Thieu's meeting with, 77
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces, 49, 59
Announcements of withdrawals, 71, 76
Fourth withdrawal increment, 228
JCS plan, 87, 114
1969 withdrawal package, 93
Timetable for, 58
Vietnam visit, 77
Rosson, Gen., 100, 211
Rusk, Dean, 3, 120
Russell, Richard B., 136, 194, 256, 340
Ryan, Gen. John D., 136, 348

Sainteny, Jean, 14, 97, 105, 106
Salans, Carl, 78
Sambath, Huot, 196
Sanson, Robert L., 171, 233
Sato, Eisaku, 10
Saunders, Harold H., 102
Shultz, George, 302
Senior Review Group, 335, 336
Serong, Brig. F. P., 226
Sevareid, Eric, 338
Sharp, Willard, 318
Shepard, Rear Adm. Tazewell, Jr., 94
Sihanouk, Prince Norodom, 10, 308
Cambodia:
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 110
Border declaration re, 66
Border shelling, 164

Sihanouk, Prince Norodom—*Continued*
Cambodia—*Continued*
Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 289
Communist use of Cambodian territory for operations in Vietnam, 202, 238
Coup by Lon Nol against Sihanouk, 202, 205, 238
Economic situation, 202
Sihanouk, popular attitude toward, 326
Sihanouk's criticism of Lon Nol government, 246
Sihanouk's five aims for, 222
U.S. relations with, 17, 18, 48, 179, 196
Mansfield, letter to, 246
Thieu's assessment of, 103
Singapore, 10, 102
Sirik Matak, Sisowath, 202, 205, 230, 238, 240, 306, 308
Smith, Howard K., 338
Smith, Margaret Chase, 155
Smith, R. Jack, 96
Smyser, W. Richard, 181, 189, 190, 201, 222, 276, 320, 324, 325, 330, 336
Sneider, Richard L., 30, 34, 49, 56, 61, 63, 64, 72, 83, 86, 87, 89
Song Ngoc Trang, 255
Sonn Voeunsai, 326
Souphanouvong, 203, 211
Southeast Asia:
U.S. image in, 10
Vietnam conflict's impact on, 44
Souvanna Phouma, Prince, 10, 56, 86, 99, 102, 112, 127, 131, 172, 174, 207
Laos:
Bombing of Communist forces, 183, 184, 194
Thai military involvement, 203, 209, 212, 213, 214, 231, 234
Nixon's meetings with, 132, 133
Soviet Union, 299, 316, 348
Cambodia:
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 22
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 220
Cambodian cross-border campaign:
International reaction, 272
Soviet assessment of, 323
Soviet Union warned about, 247
DRV, relations with, 44
Soviet Union—*Continued*
Laos:
Communist campaign against Laotian Government, 99
Geneva Agreements initiatives re, 204
Soviet role in, 132
Military situation in Vietnam:
DRV as target of U.S. operations, 129
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 24, 32, 60, 84, 162
Paris peace talks:
Soviet involvement, 3, 107, 346, 348
Soviet involvement/Moscow talks package plan, 52, 53, 60
U.S.-Soviet discussions re, 32, 35, 162
Political settlement in Vietnam, 53, 84, 323
U.S.-Soviet relations, Vietnam's impact on, 84, 125, 139
Special National Intelligence Estimates:
SNIE *14–69,* 1
SNIE *14.3–70,* 188
SNIE *58–70,* 172
Srey Saman, Gen., 240
Stalin, Joseph, 169
Stanton, William, 277
Stennis, John, 136, 155, 255, 256, 340
Stilwell, Gen. Richard G., 38
Suharto, 10, 232, 278, 326, 331
Sullivan, William H., 3, 21, 43, 78, 82, 88, 91, 95, 96, 130, 154, 160, 211, 315, 324, 335, 336, 345
Swank, Emory C., 344
Symington, Stuart, 193, 194
Szulc, Tad, 331

Templar, Sir Gerald, 137
Thailand (*see also* Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for *under* Cambodia; Thai military involvement *under* Cambodia *and under* Laos), 10
Border police program, 74
U.S. military presence, 336
Thanat Khoman, 18, 207, 209, 213, 214, 234, 257
Thanh. *See* Tran Chanh Thanh.
Thanom Kittikachorn, 131, 214
Thieu. *See* Nguyen Van Thieu.
Tho. *See* Le Duc Tho.

Thompson, Sir Robert, 137, 143, 153, 158
303 Committee, 10, 19, 42, 47, 98, 157, 165
Thrush, Lt. Col., 10
Thuy. *See* Xuan Thuy.
Toon, Malcolm, 32
Tran Buu Kiem, 67, 72
Tran Chanh Thanh, 77, 119
Tran Ngoc Chau, 182, 198
Tran Ngoc Hien, 198
Tran Thien Khiem, 103, 120, 142, 157, 175, 187
Tran Van Don, 119, 120, 151
Tran Van Huong, 10, 37, 38, 77
Tran Viet Dung, 276, 320
Trueheart, William, 43
Truman, Harry S, 169
Truong Chinh, 116, 120, 128, 333

Unger, Lt. Gen. F. T., 96
Unger, Leonard, 102, 203, 207, 211, 214, 234, 257, 274, 325
United Kingdom, 331
United Nations, 190

Vance, Cyrus R., 3, 5, 13, 27, 52
Vang Pao, Gen., 56, 99, 130, 131, 194, 203, 207, 274, 313
Vien, Gen. *See* Cau Van Vien, Gen.
Vietnam. *See* Cease-fire issue; Democratic Republic of Vietnam; Military situation in Vietnam; Paris peace talks; Political settlement in Vietnam; Republic of Vietnam; Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces.
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces (*see also* Improvement and Modernization Program *under* Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces; Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue *under* Paris peace talks), 38, 102, 295
  Air and naval forces, 114
  Announcements of withdrawals, 70, 71, 76, 80, 122, 187
  Assumptions underlying, 143
  Bunker's assessment of, 142, 198
  CIA assessment of, 176
  Clifford's advocacy of withdrawal, 119
  Combat capability and, 44
  Communist de facto withdrawals and, 161
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces—*Continued*
  De-escalation issue and, 34
  Economic consequences, 94, 114, 187
  Force structure of RVNAF for, 195
  Fourth withdrawal increment, 217, 228
  Funding for, 221
  Interlocking options for U.S. re negotiations, Vietnamization, and military actions, 119, 347
  JCS plan, 87, 114
  Kissinger's assessment of, 117
  Laird's assessment of, 187, 221
  Laos situation and, 207
  Long-term planning, 38, 87, 148, 187
  Modalities of withdrawal, 59, 91
  Morale of U.S. troops and, 120
  1969 withdrawal package, 87, 93, 100
  1970 withdrawal package, 147, 148
  1971 withdrawal package, 313
  Nixon Doctrine and, 101
  Nixon's UN speech on withdrawals, 190
  Nomenclature for, 49
  Optimistic reporting re, 170
  Pacification program and, 114
  Phases of, 49
  Political settlement in Vietnam and, 93
  Problems related to, 236
  Public information policy re (*see also* Announcements of withdrawals *above*), 10, 103, 120, 123, 187
  Reactions to, 87, 114, 188
  Replacement of U.S. forces with RVN troops, 8, 10, 100, 141
  Residual force levels, 114
  Security concerns of U.S. forces, 187
  Speed-up of withdrawals issue, 312
  Thieu's attitude toward, 38, 187
  Thompson's assessment of, 153
  Timetable for, 10, 58, 114, 119, 120
  U.S.–RVN coordination, 114
  U.S.–RVN discussions re, 81, 100, 103, 151
  Wheeler's assessment of, 100
Vietnam Special Studies Group, 171, 330, 335, 336
  Establishment of, 115
Vogt, Lt. Gen. John A., Jr., 255, 272, 274, 275, 278, 281, 282, 284, 288, 290, 292, 326, 331, 340, 343
Voice of America, 229

Vo Nguyen Giap, Gen., 116, 120, 132, 333
Communist military strategy, 167
Vy. *See* Nguyen Minh Vy.

Wallis, W. Allen, 277
Walsh, Lawrence E., 3, 18, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 48, 78, 82, 151
Walters, Brig. Gen. Vernon, 105, 106, 159, 166, 169, 185, 189, 190, 201, 222, 276, 320, 337
Ware, Richard, 172
Washington Post, 66
Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG), 327
Cambodia:
Asian support for Lon Nol government, U.S. program for, 326
Communications equipment for, 271, 272, 325, 340, 343
Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 203, 331
Intelligence collection in, 321, 325, 326
International initiatives re, 262, 271, 275, 278
Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 257, 274, 275, 278, 282, 286, 288, 292, 297, 300, 303, 304, 311, 314, 317, 331, 340, 343
Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 230, 233, 255, 257, 262, 269, 271, 272, 278, 281, 282, 284, 285, 286, 288, 290, 297, 300, 304, 314, 325, 326, 331, 339, 340, 343
Strategic importance to United States, 326
Thai military involvement, 304, 311, 314, 317, 325, 326, 331, 340
U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, appointment of, 326
U.S. funding problems for Cambodian programs, 334, 340, 343
U.S. military liaison for, 281
Cambodian cross-border campaign, 252
Air operations, 297, 326
ARVN operations, guidance for, 288, 292, 297, 326
Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG)—*Continued*
Cambodian cross-border campaign—*Continued*
ARVN troops to remain in Cambodia after U.S. withdrawal, 331
Casualties, 255, 275
Congressional interest in, 255, 288, 290
Course of operations, assessments of, 255, 257, 275, 278, 281, 282, 284, 286, 288
Fish Hook operation (base area *352/353*), 269
International reaction, 272, 274, 275
Market Time operations, 274, 281, 282, 284, 290, 292
Nixon's speech on, 271, 272
Northeast Cambodia operations, 297, 314
Prisoners and refugees, 292
Psychological warfare, 331
Public information policy re, 255, 257, 269, 272, 274, 275, 282, 292, 331
Road-opening operations, 331
Seam Reap operation, 321
Steel Tiger operation, 297
Washington Special Actions Group as implementing authority, 249, 260, 261, 263, 270
Cease-fire issue, 336
Diplomatic initiatives on Indo-China, 336
Laos:
Bombing of Communist forces, 172, 203, 207
Cease-fire issue, 203, 204
Chinese roadbuilding, U.S. actions targeting, 172, 174
Communist takeover, U.S. contingency planning re, 127, 207
Geneva Agreements initiatives re, 204
Interdiction operations in, 343
Long Tieng campaign, 203, 204, 207, 209, 211, 212, 213
Psychological operations in, 131
Reconnaissance operations over, 131

Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG)—*Continued*
Laos—*Continued*
Thai military involvement, 131, 138, 203, 204, 207, 209, 211, 212, 213, 234, 274, 275, 278, 282, 343
U.S. ground forces in, 204
U.S. gunships for, 204, 207
U.S. military assistance, 131
Thailand, U.S. military presence in, 336
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces, 207
Watts, William, 166, 194, 240, 250
Wells, William, 325, 326, 343
Westmoreland, Gen. William C., 27, 241, 244
Weyand, Lt. Gen. Frederick C., 78, 104
Wheeler, Gen. Earle G., 44, 51, 58, 59, 93, 123, 124, 147, 170, 187, 202, 213, 239, 243, 274, 302, 305, 319
Cambodia:
Bombing of Communist sanctuaries, 22, 25, 41, 62
Communications equipment for, 271, 272
Communist conflict with Lon Nol government, 289
Communist use of Cambodian territory for operations in Vietnam, 37
Khmer regiments from Vietnam and Thailand for, 244, 282
Military assistance for Lon Nol government, 257, 262, 269, 271, 278, 281
U.S. military liaison for, 281
Cambodian cross-border campaign:
Air operations, 302
ARVN operations, guidance for, 302
Course of operations, assessments of, 257, 278, 281, 282
Divisions within Nixon administration re, 254
Fish Hook operation (base area *352/353*), 259
International reaction, 313
Nixon's authorization for, 248, 270
Options for operations, assessments of, 279
Public information policy re, 257, 282
Wheeler, Gen. Earle G.—*Continued*
Cease-fire issue, U.S. internal debate on, 120
Laos:
Bombing of Communist forces, 194, 203, 204, 207
Cease-fire issue, 204
CIA activities in, 194
Communist campaign against Laotian Government, 313
Communist use of Laotian territory for operations in Vietnam, 37
Long Tieng campaign, 207, 211, 212
Thai military involvement, 207, 211, 212
U.S. ground forces in, 204
U.S. gunships for, 204, 207
Military situation in Vietnam:
Casualties, 10
Communist defectors, 10
Communist infiltration from DRV, 120
De-escalation issue, 10
DMZ activities, 10, 12, 37
DRV as target of U.S. operations, 120, 136
Evaluation of situation for purpose of U.S. policy development, 10
Interdiction operations, 10
Laird's assessment of, 38
Pacification program, 10, 37
Phoenix program, 37
Pressure tactics, development of, 12
Psychological warfare, 315
Reconnaissance flights over China, 10, 12
Restrictions on U.S. operations, 10
Retaliation for Communist attacks, 30, 37
Strategy and tactics governing U.S. operations, 100
Wheeler's assessment of, 37, 100
Paris peace talks, 5, 107
Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, 10, 100
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces:
Announcements of withdrawals, 80
Fourth withdrawal increment, 228
1969 withdrawal package, 93, 100
1971 withdrawal package, 313
Replacement of U.S. forces with RVN troops, 10, 100

Wheeler, Gen. Earle G.—*Continued*
Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces—*Continued*
U.S.–RVN discussions re, 100
Wheeler's assessment of, 100
Vietnam visit, 100
Williams, Albert, 318
Wilson, Harold, 136, 197
Withdrawal of U.S. forces. *See* Vietnamization program/withdrawal of U.S. forces.

Xuan Thuy, 30, 150
Paris peace talks:
Cambodia issue, 222
Deadline for negotiations issue, 222
Interruption in negotiations, 222, 320
Laos issue, 190, 201, 222
Linkage of political and military matters, 189, 201
Xuan Thuy—*Continued*
Paris peace talks—*Continued*
Mutual withdrawal of non-RVN forces issue, 72, 106, 201, 222
Political settlement issue, 106, 190, 201, 222
Private talks: Kissinger's meetings, 105, 106, 108, 185, 189, 190, 191, 201, 218, 222, 223; Lodge's meetings, 30, 31
Procedural concerns, 201
Secrecy concerns, 189
Ten-point peace plan of NLF, 106
U.S. lack of chief negotiator problem, 190, 222

Young, Stephen M., 194, 196

Zablocki, Clement, 196
Ziegler, Ronald, 102, 197, 269, 273, 277, 348
Zorin, Valerian, 3, 24, 27, 34, 60