

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS

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Date: 05 JAN 2012 Authority: EO 13526

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

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Reason: _____ MDR: 12-M-0417

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
SUBJECT: Force Planning

I earlier asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to address at least two options involving troop redeployments from South Vietnam. The two options were:

- a. Reduction to an in-country authorization of 434,000 by mid-March or mid-April 1970, i.e., 50,000 below the current authorization.
- b. Reduction to an in-country authorization of 384,000 by mid-July 1970, i.e., 100,000 below the current authorization.

The Joint Chiefs' of Staff response is attached. The Chiefs make the following recommendations:

- a. Redeployment increment number 3 should be deferred.
- b. If a redeployment must be announced, it should not exceed 35,000.
- c. Any further redeployment should be initiated as late as possible in the period 15 December 1969-15 April 1970.
- d. The GVN should be consulted before any redeployment decision is reached.
- e. A decision be reached as soon as possible, thereby abetting planning continuity.
- f. If the enemy escalates military operations in South Vietnam, any announced troop redeployments be cancelled, and, if necessary, reversed.
- g. Also, if the enemy escalates military operations in South Vietnam, a U.S. air and naval campaign against North Vietnam should be initiated.

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While the Chiefs note appropriate reasons for concern about enemy intentions and capabilities, they make an equally valid case for drawing conclusions somewhat different than those stated above. I should like to treat each of the Chiefs' recommendations in turn.

- a. Redeployment Increment 3. The Chiefs stress the enemy's capability of initiating a major offensive on short notice. This, and the historical winter-spring enemy combat patterns, are the major premises on which the Chiefs recommend against further redeployments now. However, the Chiefs also note:
- . The enemy's inability to sustain an attack over an extended time period. ✓
 - . The recent increase in enemy combat losses and Hoi Chanh (defector) rates. ✓
 - . Enemy strengths in and adjacent to South Vietnam about 15 percent lower than at the beginning of 1969.
 - . Continued progress in pacification and Vietnamization.
 - . RVNAF improvement and modernization are generally on or ahead of schedule.

The Chiefs make a valid case, in effect, for going ahead with the third increment.

- b. Size of Redeployment Increment. The Chiefs believe the next increment, if necessary, should not exceed 35,000. However, no reasons are offered to distinguish between the suggested 35,000 and the 50,000 increment outlined by the JCS for the 18-month or 24-month programs in their last NSSM 36 submission. I believe, in the absence of compelling arguments against such a move, we should stay with a 50,000 increment as the next step.
- c. Postpone Increment 3 As Long As Possible. The intent of Vietnamization is to provide self-determination to the South Vietnamese. Progress in Vietnamization begets further progress. Conversely, to halt or impede the momentum on Vietnamization could readily beget further delays or impediments to progress. Given the positive trends cited by the Chiefs, I believe we should continue redeployments

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without interruption. There are risks involved; but the problems, to include those potentially incurred among the United States people, in not maintaining redeployment momentum are almost certain to be more severe.

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- d. SVN Consultations. In a broad sense GVN consultations are proceeding on a continuing basis. Also, in a broad sense, there is general GVN acquiescence to the 18-month redeployment schedule, as evidenced by remarks by both President Thieu and Vice President Ky. Despite these general patterns, there is the issue of protocol involved. I believe notification of the GVN of the third redeployment increment a few days before the announcement is satisfactory.
- e. Decision Timing. I agree with the Chiefs that a prompt decision and announcement has widespread salutary effects.
- f. Possible Enemy Military Escalation. The Chiefs raise a potent and valid issue in asking what the U.S. reaction should be if the enemy escalates military activity. If we are to proceed positively towards resolution of the conflict in Southeast Asia, we should make careful and sustained assessments before increasing military activity -- at least in the absence of unusual and prolonged enemy escalation. As the CIA has noted, the enemy would have to increase infiltration to about 20,000 men per month just to keep its force levels constant in South Vietnam. It is not clear they have started that infiltration rate yet. Furthermore, the enemy would have to maintain an unusually high infiltration rate of about 30,000 men per month for some 3-4 months just to get back to his main force unit levels of early 1969. In view of this situation, I believe we should, in the absence of unique provocation or threat, proceed with Vietnamization and our redeployment schedule.
- g. Campaign Against North Vietnam. I should like to reserve comment on this suggestion of the Chiefs to a separate paper. I would note, however, there has been, to my knowledge, no clear relationship demonstrated between a U.S. air/naval campaign against North Vietnam and a

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reduction in the latter's military capabilities. The costs to North Vietnam's suppliers could be increased, inconveniences to North Vietnam would be incited, and effects (positive and/or negative) on Hanoi's will could be produced. But there is no analysis that I have seen which would demonstrate any decisive results from an air/naval campaign against North Vietnam. To the contrary, for marginal gains we could sustain high and perhaps politically decisive costs. Furthermore, the use of a U.S. air/naval campaign against North Vietnam "... to preserve the progress being made in the overall Vietnamization program ..." may be a contradiction in terms.



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