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VIETNAM
1961 - 1968

as
Interpreted in INR's Production

A: Review of Judgments in INR Reports

Introductory Note; Note on Sources

I - The Problem Confronted: January 1961-February 1962, 13 pages

II - Looking for Progress: February 1962-May 1963, 19 pages

III - The Trouble with Diem: May-November 1963, 10 pages

IV - Time of Decision: November 1963-March 1965, 47 pages

V - Trial by Force: March 1965-February 1966, 42 pages

VI - A Massive Effort to Turn the Tide: February 1966-April 1968, 46 pages

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B: Annexes Quoting Sources for Each Section Above

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E: Special Annexes available as authorized by the Director, RCI

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Sources for Section I

I-1

IR 8416: "Increased Communist Strength in South Vietnam,"
March 10, 1961, p. 5.

Conclusions

The Communist subversive effort in South Vietnam could reach its most critical level this year. Failure on the part of the government to act quickly to increase the scope and the effectiveness of its counterinsurgency measures could result in Communist successes approaching or even exceeding those achieved in 1960. In this event and taking into account the cumulative effect of such successes, the Communists could be expected to supplant completely government authority over a substantial part of the countryside in the south and southwest; they might even gain control of some medium-size towns. Moreover, such control would enable the Communists to increase further the size and the armed capability of their guerrilla-terrorist force. While the Communists would not be able to seize control of the central government, the impact of these developments might well precipitate a coup attempt by non-Communists led by army and opposition elements in and out of the government.

I-2

MM-RAS-61-53: "Post Mortem on the South Vietnamese Elections,"
April 13, 1961.

Political Situation Remains Serious. Diem's victory by just under 90 percent of the total vote cast should not be regarded as symptomatic of any notable improvement in the restive political situation. The problems of security, popular discontent, corruption in government, and excessive personalized rule still remain to be faced and will provide the crucial test to the Diem government's existence.

Opportunity in Victory. Diem's outstanding victory presents an excellent opportunity for quick and decisive action to meet these problems. However, Diem may see in the election results a justification for the continuation of his strong personal and pervasive rule. In this event, he may become even more determined in his opposition to certain US recommendations for liberalizing his regime.

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NIE 50-61, March 28, 1961

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OUTLOOK IN MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA

THE PROBLEM

- a. To analyze the basic political and social conditions and trends in mainland Southeast Asia;¹
- b. To identify potential political-military crisis situations and to estimate probable developments over the next year or so in domestic stability and international orientation of the countries of the area; and
- c. To estimate the probable effects on the peoples and governments of these countries in the event there were significant Communist gains in Laos or South Vietnam.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Most Southeast Asian countries are either now experiencing or will encounter in the next year or two serious political crises arising out of foreign intervention, domestic strains, or a complex of factors attributable to their basically unstable and unhealthy political, social, and economic structure. By far the most serious problems are the deteriorating situation in Laos and the mounting Communist threat and precarious governmental situation in South Vietnam. (Paras. 22-68)
2. The Pathet Lao probably have a greater military capability than they have yet chosen to exercise. They could sharply step up the action at any time and probably achieve a series of local victories.

¹ Laos, South Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and Malaya.

This would increase the likelihood of the disintegration of the Laotian Army and the subsequent collapse of the non-Communist position. The Laotian crisis has become a matter of contention among the major powers and its resolution rests primarily in non-Laotian hands. (Paras. 28-30)

3. In South Vietnam, the situation of the Diem government seems likely to become increasingly difficult, not only because of rising Communist guerrilla strength and declining internal security but also because of widening dissatisfaction with Diem's government. Since the coup attempt of November 1960, Diem has reasserted his control of the government and made some cautious moves toward government reform; he has taken action

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to improve the antiguerrilla capabilities of the army and stepped up military activities against the Viet Cong. Nonetheless, the factors which gave rise to the November 1960 coup attempt still exist, and we believe that the odds favor another coup attempt by non-Communist elements in the next year or so. The Communists would attempt to exploit any new efforts to unseat the government. We are not confident that the army would be able to keep the situation from getting out of hand. (Paras. 36-38)

4. There is deep awareness among the countries of Southeast Asia that developments in the Laotian crisis, and its outcome, have a profound impact on their future. The governments of the area tend to regard the Laotian crisis as a symbolic test of intentions, wills, and strengths between the major powers of the West and the Communist Bloc. (Para. 69)

5. Those countries which are in close alignment with the US favor stronger measures to assure at least a non-Communist and preferably an anti-Communist, western-oriented regime in Laos; neutralist Burma and Cambodia, as well as Malaya, favor a neutralist but not Communist-dominated government. These latter governments favor some form of international political agreement to end the crisis. They would be alarmed if Laos were lost under conditions which indicated to them that the US position in the area had gravely weakened. (Para. 70)

6. The loss of Laos to the Communists, or perhaps even the division of the country, would almost certainly incline the Thai toward accommodation to Commu-

nist power in Southeast Asia. A predominantly Communist-controlled Laos would vitally threaten South Vietnam's independence: it would greatly extend the Communist frontiers with South Vietnam; it would bring substantially greater Communist military power to bear on the crucial Saigon defense complex; and it would greatly facilitate Communist infiltration and subversion. The close proximity of a Communist state would make more difficult Western efforts to starch up local resistance. In short, the loss of Laos would severely damage the US position and its influence in Thailand and South Vietnam. (Para. 72)

7. The future course of all of the countries of Southeast Asia would be strongly influenced by the actual circumstances in which the loss or division of Laos had occurred as well as the local-appraisal of the attitude and actions of the US in response to the situation. The extent to which these countries would go in resisting Bloc pressures or in withstanding local Communist threats would depend in great degree on whether they still assessed that the US could stem further Communist expansion in the area. They would feel more keenly than before a strong temptation to take a neutral position between the two power blocs, even though they recognized that the US is the only country with sufficient power to oppose the Communist Bloc in the area. Although they probably would be deeply disillusioned regarding US resolution after the loss or division of Laos, they would nonetheless welcome demonstrations of US firmness and might in response modify their appraisal of their own future in due course. (Para. 73)

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8. Although the Communist threat to South Vietnam has reached serious proportions, the chances of a Communist takeover in the next year or so are considerably less than they are in Laos. Nevertheless, Peiping and Hanoi almost certainly attach greater importance to their efforts in South Vietnam than they do to their efforts in Laos. US prestige and policy are particularly deeply engaged in South Vietnam. Diem's policy of close alignment with the US is on trial in the current crisis. All countries of the

area would attach great importance to a failure of the South Vietnam Government to cope successfully with the rising tempo of Communist subversion and armed insurrection. If South Vietnam were to fall to the Communists or be forced to swing toward neutralism, the impact upon the countries of Southeast Asia would be similar in kind but considerably more severe than that resulting from the loss or division of Laos. (Para. 74).

DISCUSSION

I. AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

9. Throughout their histories the countries and peoples of Southeast Asia have been caught in the crossfire of outside influences. In early times they lived in the shadows of the great civilizations of India and China from which they derived many characteristics of their diverse cultures and social orders. Later, during the period of colonial domination, Western civilization left its stamp on cultural, social, and political institutions of the area. More recently, Southeast Asia has been caught up in the competition between the two great modern political and ideological movements—Communist totalitarianism and representative democracy.

10. Since 1940 the peoples of Southeast Asia have been involved in a revolutionary experience which has few parallels in history for diversity, scope, and speed. During this period, Southeast Asia has experienced major war, the military defeat in World War II of the Western colonial powers by an Asian power, a disillusioning occupation by Japan, a great upsurge of nationalism, the defeat of France in Indochina, and the rapid growth of Communist pressures and influence. Since the end of the Second World War, a wave of independence has swept mainland Southeast

Asia, leaving in its wake a number of new sovereign states. Traditional social and cultural patterns and values have been undergoing change. Economic and political problems have multiplied in number and increased in complexity. Every state in Southeast Asia, except Thailand, has experienced Communist insurrection or invasion. Their immediate neighbor—Communist China—has emerged as a new and threatening Asian power, and the US, partly in response, has greatly increased its activities and presence in their area. Thus, regardless of the wishes of the peoples and governments of the area, the issues of the global cold war between two great world power blocs have focused sharply in Southeast Asia. Historically, the peoples and leaders of Southeast Asia, when caught between overwhelming outside forces or influences, have taken the line of least resistance and have accommodated to superior power.

11. There is great political, cultural, ethnic, and historical diversity among the countries and peoples of Southeast Asia. There is among them no sense of regional unity. Most of the peoples of the area identify themselves with their ethnic groups. More recently, and thus far only within limited circles, they have begun to identify themselves with their na-

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"A Critique of US Policy in Laos and South Vietnam,"
April 17, 1961.

5. Defense and Security Considerations

The shortcomings of US policy in South Vietnam are most evident in the serious security situation which has now developed in that country. This has arisen largely from acceptance of the GRV's evaluation of the character of the Communist threat: namely, to over-emphasize the prospects of overt aggression from the Communist North, and to under-play the danger of internal subversion by Communist elements working within South Vietnam. Our policy was thus premised upon the imminence of overt attack. This evaluation was fully accepted by the MAAG leadership in Saigon and by DOD, perhaps in part out of our concern over being caught in another Korea. As a result of this evaluation, the US has been training, equipping and organizing the GRV military establishment along the lines of conventional warfare.

"A Critique of US Policy in Laos and South Vietnam,"
April 17, 1961

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4. Pressing Need for Political Reforms

Our assumptions of Diem's indispensability and administrative effectiveness, have gone far to produce the political crisis now prevailing in South Vietnam. When Diem came to power in 1954 he was faced with an array of political opposition. We did all we could to help him neutralize and ultimately defeat these forces, and at the same time assisted him in building support abroad. One device which Diem created to consolidate his power was the Can Lao, an elite, semi-covert political control organization. It is widely believed that it originally received the approval and support of CIA. Today, however, we are accusing the Can Lao of excessive police-state methods, corruption, and interference in the administration of the government, and have asked Diem either to modify or dissolve it. It has extended its control into all strata of the civil bureaucracy, the security-police service and even the military establishment, becoming steeped in graft and corruption and resorting to the most notorious types of police-state methods.

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"A Critique of US Policy in Laos and South Vietnam,"
April 17, 1961. I-6

7.. Diem's Resistance to Political Reforms

Diem and his advisors, however, have shown considerable sensitivity toward some of the political recommendations incorporated in this plan, and it appears doubtful if the more important recommendations will actually be carried out. Diem thus appears to be torn between his obvious desire to end internal subversion and terrorism and his fear that the full execution of the counterinsurgency plan will ultimately lay the basis for depriving him of power, since under the plan he would be required to place unprecedented authority in the hands of various civilian and military leaders. At this critical juncture today, we thus have to face the consequences of a policy long based upon Diem as the indispensable locus of power and the unqualified support we accordingly gave him.

"A Critique of US Policy in Laos and South Vietnam,"
April 17, 1961. I-7

2. Weaknesses of US Policy

Notwithstanding these advantages, there has been a basic weakness in US policy in South Vietnam, stemming from the following factors:

- (a) Our assumption that we could use Diem as a locus of power without the need to exercise sufficient control or restraints over him. In consequence, we have given Diem a virtual carte blanche in his administration of the country, and have thus committed ourselves to Diem's own shortcomings and rigidity.
- (b) In agreeing with Diem's emphasis on security considerations, we nevertheless failed to develop sufficiently early the type of counter-insurgency force required to meet the security threat, instead depending primarily upon developing a military force geared to the requirements of conventional warfare.
- (c) Due to serious defense and security considerations we have allowed Diem to ignore the pressing need for political reform, economic and social development (especially in the rural districts), and the elimination of police-state methods and corruption.

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NIE 14.3/53-61, August 15, 1961

I-8

PROSPECTS FOR NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM

THE PROBLEM

To assess the situations in North and South Vietnam, to analyze the nature and scope of the Communist threat to South Vietnam, and to estimate the prospects for the next year or so.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) has thoroughly consolidated its political control in North Vietnam and, with extensive Bloc assistance, will probably continue to make rapid economic progress. Regimentation and food shortages have increased public unrest and dissatisfaction and resulted in some slackening of discipline among local officials. However, there is no significant organized opposition. The moderating influence of the aged Ho Chi Minh has prevented policy differences among top DRV leaders from erupting into serious intraparty strife. When Ho is no longer active there will probably be a struggle for power between the Moscow-oriented and the Peiping-oriented elements of the party. (Paras. 13, 15, 21, 23-25)

2. There is some dissatisfaction in South Vietnam with Diem's leadership among members of the cabinet, the bureaucracy, and the military, arising out of the serious internal security situation and irritation with Diem's system of family rule. Diem

has initiated a number of political reform measures, but probably will not relinquish his highly centralized method of government control. The degree of dissatisfaction will probably be directly related to the success or failure of the Government of Vietnam (GVN) efforts against Communist guerrilla and subversive activity. (Paras. 31, 34, 39)

3. The army will continue to be a major factor in future political developments in South Vietnam. We believe that the chances of a military coup have been reduced by recent manifestations of US support of the Diem government and by the substantial increase in US aid to help South Vietnam meet its internal security problems. Although there has been a decrease in indications of coup-plotting within the military in recent months, certain basic dissatisfactions with the national leadership persist. If the fight against the Viet Cong goes poorly during the next year or the South Vietnamese Army suffers heavy casualties, the

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chances of a military coup would substantially increase. (Para. 37)

4. A major Hanoi-directed Communist offensive against the Diem government and directed toward reunification of Vietnam under Communist control is under way. The Communist apparatus in South Vietnam, the Viet Cong, now probably has more than 12,000 hard-core members and several thousand supporters engaged in guerrilla warfare, terrorist operations, political and propaganda activity, sabotage and intelligence activities. This campaign is intended to assert Communist authority over increasingly large parts of the countryside in anticipation of setting up fully "liberated areas" in which GVN authority is effectively denied, or of so weakening the Diem government as to precipitate its overthrow, or both. At present, more than half of the rural area in the productive and highly populated region south and southwest of Saigon, as well as several areas to the northwest of Saigon, are under extensive control of the Communists. (Paras. 50-51)

5. We believe that the Hanoi regime will increase the pace and scope of its paramilitary activity during the next few months. South Vietnam's urban centers will probably be subjected to increasing Viet Cong terrorism. Further Viet Cong attempts to assassinate Diem are likely. However, we believe that with continued high levels of US aid and a strenuous and effective GVN effort, the problem of Viet

Cong control of large areas of the countryside can in time be reduced. (Paras. 58-60)

6. Even if the GVN does reduce Viet Cong strength, it will require continued maximum effort—military, political, and economic—to maintain its authority. South Vietnam will not be able to seal completely its borders with North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to the infiltration of material and personnel from North Vietnam. (Paras. 60-61)

7. Thus, the outlook in South Vietnam is for a prolonged and difficult struggle with the Viet Cong insurgents. At the same time that the government is prosecuting the military campaign in the war against the Communists, it will have to act to prevent internal weaknesses and strains from causing its collapse. Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces already control most of southern Laos except for towns along the Mekong, and if a Communist or leftist government comes to power in Laos the GVN struggle against the Viet Cong will take on new, more perilous dimensions. If there is a serious disruption of GVN leadership as a result of Diem's death or as the result of a military coup any momentum GVN's counterinsurgency efforts had achieved will be halted or reversed, at least for a time. The confusion and suspicion attending a coup effort could provide the Communist an opportunity to seize control of the government. (Paras. 61-62)

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RM, RFE-1, "South Vietnam: Crisis and Short-Term Prospects,"
September 29, 1961, p. 1.

...The immediate Communist objectives are to demoralize the peasantry, weaken and supplant government authority in the countryside, and discredit President Ngo Dinh Diem's leadership to the point of precipitating his overthrow.

...Moreover, in the face of the government's inability to provide adequate protection to the populace in many rural areas, Communist reprisals and propaganda have aggravated peasant dissatisfaction and have made the peasantry reluctant to participate in local government projects and to assist the security forces with vitally needed intelligence on the Communists.

RM, RFE-3, "Communist Threat Mounts in South Vietnam," Nov. 1, 1961, p. 1.

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In achieving its present strength and capabilities, the Communist apparatus has relied more on local resources than on infiltration. Communist guerrillas and terrorists live essentially off the land, arm themselves with weapons captured from the army and the security forces, and increase their numbers principally by forced recruitment. Infiltration of cadres, on the increase since 1959, has been accelerated in the past several months particularly through southern Laos, and there is little doubt that logistical support through this route is being expanded.

The Communists can be expected to maintain a pressing and diversified campaign of guerrilla-terrorist and subversive warfare in South Vietnam and may even attempt a greater armed effort before the end of the year. They have this capability even without further infiltration of personnel and material. The Communist leadership in Hanoi probably feels that it must make further gains before US assistance can make a significant impact on the South Vietnamese Government's counterinsurgency capabilities and that any slackening in Communist operations in South Vietnam would deflate the psychological momentum already generated for an anti-Diem coup.

RM, RFE-3, "Communist Threat Mounts in South Vietnam," Nov. 1, 1961, p. 2.

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...Although the Communists would not be able to seize control of the central government, the impact of these developments could precipitate a non-Communist, anti-Diem coup attempt by the army and opposition elements in and out of government.

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RM, RFE-1, "South Vietnam: Crisis and Short-Term Prospects,"
September 29, 1961, p.2.

Recent developments--including Diem's outstanding success at the presidential polls last April and some modest political reforms to date but, more importantly, strong US public manifestations of support and a substantial increase in US military and economic aid--have given Diem something of a political reprieve. However, the political situation remains fluid and, as yet, there has been no conclusive reversal of deteriorating trends. Although reports of coup-plotting and of criticism of Diem have decreased in recent months, their persistence is indicative of the continuing and potentially explosive political situation in South Vietnam. Moreover, below the surface of open discontent, there is probably a growing and increasingly desperate element of dissenters who are silent either because of fear of being suppressed or because of the realization that there is little they can do legally to improve conditions.

Neither has there been any conclusive improvement in the security situation although the government's comprehensive counterinsurgency program, supported by substantial US aid, is beginning to show favorable results. The Communists can be expected to maintain a pressing and diversified campaign of guerrilla-terrorist and subversive warfare, and there are strong indications they will attempt a greater armed effort after the end of the rainy season later this year; however, they may continue to avoid any large-scale engagement with the increasingly aggressive Vietnamese army, except in places and at times of their own choosing. In the short run, the Communist apparatus does not appear to have the capacity to foment a large-scale insurrection or to seize control of the government without considerable assistance from North Vietnam, which would necessarily be of such magnitude that it would be tantamount to overt military aggression. Barring such a development and given effective implementation of the counterinsurgency plan, the government should be able to reduce somewhat the level of Communist insurgency during the next year or so and conceivably even reverse the trend against the Communists. In the longer run, Communist insurgency can be substantially reduced but the government cannot, within the foreseeable future, eliminate it entirely, principally because of the government's inability to seal completely South Vietnam's frontiers with North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

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Security prospects over the next year, however, may well be influenced more by developments in neighboring Laos than by the extent to which the Diem government can improve the effectiveness of its military and security forces. If Laos comes under predominantly Communist control, Communist capabilities in South Vietnam would almost certainly be strengthened to a degree unprecedented since 1954. Southern Laos could become the most important base for Communist operations against South Vietnam. In this event, the level of Communist insurgency might assume the proportions of widespread guerrilla warfare and some areas would probably come under complete Communist control, within which Hanoi might attempt to establish a Communist but ostensibly independent government with both military and political support from the Bloc. Vietnam's agricultural economy would suffer further and urban centers probably would be increasingly subjected to Communist guerrilla and terrorist attacks designed to heighten anxiety in the centers of government power and spark a non-Communist coup effort.

In the face of a Communist offensive of such proportions, South Vietnam would be required to make a maximum military effort in order to survive. The would be no immediate collapse. In the long run, however, the maintenance of South Vietnam's independence would rest principally on the nature and amount of US support and on a maximum effort by the South Vietnamese Government to develop the political, psychological, and economic programs required to gain and retain popular support.

The stability of the government during the next year or so, will depend principally on Diem's handling of the security situation. If Diem can demonstrate a continuing improvement in security conditions, he should be able to strengthen his position, alleviate concern and boost morale within his bureaucracy and military establishment, and lessen the urgency with which many of its members view the current situation. However, if the fight against the Communists goes poorly or the South Vietnamese Army suffers heavy casualties, the chance of a coup would substantially increase. Moreover, a coup may be attempted at any time. The odds favor a coup if security declines appreciably further, particularly if accompanied by a virtual Communist takeover of Laos.

Any coup attempt during the next year or so is likely to be non-Communist in leadership, involving army elements and civilian officials and perhaps some disgruntled oppositionists outside the government. The participating elements probably would be broader than those involved in the 1960 attempt, would have greater popular support, and would be better prepared to execute their plan quickly and successfully. Moreover, a major split within the military leadership does not appear likely; most of the generals probably would elect to remain uncommitted at the outset of the coup, as they apparently did in November 1960, adding their tacit or active support to whatever side they judged likely to win. Under these circumstances, a military coup attempt would have better than an even chance to succeed.

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RM, RFE-3, "Communist Threat Mounts in South Vietnam," Nov. 1, 1961, p.7.

With the help of US advisers and with increased US aid, the South Vietnamese Government has for some months been implementing a broad and comprehensive counterinsurgency program designed to strengthen its military and security capabilities as well as improve related political, economic, and social conditions. The program is beginning to show favorable results and has, among other things, enabled the army to take more offensive actions against the Communists than at any time since 1959. For a variety of reasons, however, the government has been unable or has felt unprepared to launch a general and sustained military offensive, and the Communist initiative and advantage developed by hit-and-run guerrilla tactics have not been effectively challenged.

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RN, RFE-1, "South Vietnam: Crisis and Short-Term Prospects," Sept. 29, 1961, p.20.

E. Political Reprieve for Diem

Recent developments appear to have given President Diem something of a political reprieve. Diem's outstanding success at the polls last April, however questionable, probably deflated some of his critics, while the modest political reforms implemented to date may have given others some hope of further liberalization of the regime. However, what lessening of the sense of urgency over the crisis in South Vietnam has taken place, and there almost certainly has been some, can be attributed principally to strong US public manifestations of support for the Diem government, including Vice President Johnson's visit, and to the substantial increase in US aid to help South Vietnam defeat the Communist insurgents. Moreover, the reorganizations within the military establishment and the degree of tactical planning permitted the military leadership appear to have alleviated dissatisfaction somewhat within the upper echelon of the armed forces, while the recent large offensive operations against the Communists have presumably improved morale among the middle and lower echelons.

At best, however, the political situation remains highly fluid and, as yet, there has been no conclusive reversal of deteriorating trends....

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RM, RFE-1, "South Vietnam: Crisis and Short-Term Prospects,"
Sept. 29, 1961, p.4.

In the meantime, the Diem government will almost certainly continue to press for increased aid, further expansion of the armed forces, and a clear priority of military over political and economic efforts to undercut the Communist insurgency. Diem will be adamant in his views as to how the anti-Communist campaign should be waged and will tend to regard US differences with such views or criticism of his inner circle as indications of weakening US confidence in him. In the event of another coup effort against him, he would probably expect quick and strong US public support. Diem will also continue to press the US for a strong anti-Communist posture in the Far East. If he concludes that this posture is weakening, he will almost certainly make strong protests and become increasingly assertive and stubborn in his relations with the US.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

MM-RFE-61-119

OCT 4 1961

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TO : The Secretary
THROUGH : S/S
FROM : INR - Roger Hilsman

INTELLIGENCE NOTE: SOUTH VIETNAM WANTS A DEFENSE TREATY WITH THE US

On September 30 President Diem, in talks with Ambassador Nolting and other high US officials, requested a bilateral mutual defense treaty with the US. Diem stated that he fears the outcome of developments in Laos and their impact on the already serious Communist threat to Vietnam. He also expressed concern that any US action under SEATO to defend Vietnam would, as in the case of Laos, be inhibited by the UK and France.

Concern Over Laos Deepens. Despite US assurances that Vietnam's interests are being given highest consideration in current international negotiations on Laos, Diem probably feels that in final analysis the US would be unwilling or unable to prevent predominant Communist control of Laos. At the same time, he attributes the growth of Communist strength in Vietnam more to infiltration, particularly from Laos, than to Communist conscription locally, and expects a step-up in Communist armed activities by the end of the year.

Doubts of US Support Linger. Despite recent manifestations of US support and increased US military and economic aid, Diem still has some doubt as to the extent the US would commit itself to defend Vietnam. Contributing to this doubt are, among other things, his interpretation of US policy toward Laos, US concern over crises in areas outside the Far East, and the fact that a number

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of Far Eastern countries not under immediate Communist attack already have bilateral defense arrangements with the US.

Defense Treaty Might Forestall Coup. Diem's request, however, is also strongly related to possible internal political developments. He probably anticipates another military coup attempt in the event fighting against Communist insurgents goes badly or Communist insurgency further increases, and hopes consequently that a defense treaty with the US would forestall coup plotters since their action would be motivated principally by defense-security considerations.

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"Critique of US Policy in South Vietnam," Nov. 6, 1961

1. We... have long felt that much greater controls could have been exercised successfully over Diem...

2. Despite Diem's efforts to hold back the development of any other leader, Vietnam is not devoid of an appreciable number of competent non-Communist and pro-West leaders, in and out of government. In our opinion, the US has an alternative in Vice President Nguyen Ngoc Tho, the constitutional successor. He is widely respected in the government, is an effective and highly able administrator, has support within the top echelons of the military establishment, and at this stage of his career undoubtedly is better known than Diem was in 1954 when he assumed the prime minister-ship under Bao Dai.

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"Critique of US Policy in South Vietnam," Nov. 6, 1961

4. Shortcomings in the Counterinsurgency Plan

The basic weakness of the counterinsurgency plan is the US assumption that the crisis in Vietnam can be solved virtually by flooding the country with US aid. In large measure, this assumption reflects the influence of the Department of Defense, and there has been little effort by the Department of State representatives on the Vietnam Task Force in Washington or Saigon to counter this thinking. The result has been that existing resources, particularly of a military nature, have not been effectively utilized.

In US planning efforts, moreover, there has apparently been little prior thought given to the implications of certain aspects of the counterinsurgency program. For example, attaching US military advisers to battalions in the Vietnamese army (much as we did in Greece, against the Communist insurgents during 1946-49) is a basic feature of the counterinsurgency plan, but the Department of Defense has belatedly realized that it lacks a sufficient number of officers with the appropriate rank and experienced in guerrilla warfare to carry out this mission.

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I-2

"Critique of US Policy in South Vietnam," Nov. 6, 1961

Although the counterinsurgency plan contains the major requirements for countering Communist insurgency, it has been so greatly expanded that it has weakened these essential features and has lengthened the time period in which it could be expected to make a significant impact. Despite its comprehensiveness, moreover, the plan and its implementing officials in the US have not given sufficient emphasis to the need for building up a locally recruited, well trained, and well armed security force of a type which in Malaya played a major role in breaking the Communist insurgency.

However, the most serious shortcoming in our implementation of the counterinsurgency was our failure to induce the Vietnamese to assume the offensive against the Communist guerrillas. The US Mission in Saigon apparently has not sought to challenge the Vietnamese static defense concept and, more importantly, has failed to realize that the rapid increase in Communist strength was negating any benefits inherent in the concept and ultimately would protract the effort to counter the Communists if not give them an irretrievable advantage. The first recommendation that an immediate general and sustained offensive is vital to our success in Vietnam was made by Gen. Maxwell Taylor during his visit to Vietnam in late October.

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Sources for Section II

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MM-RFE-62-32: "Comments on Saigon's Intelligence Assessment of the Viet Cong,"
March 14, 1962

There are several important points, however, which we feel have not been clarified or have been omitted in the assessment. Specifically, it is not clear just what is meant by the conclusion that there is currently a "military stand-off" between the Viet Cong and Vietnamese Armed Forces (RVNAF). In our view, even recognizing the significant progress made by the government, the tide has not been turned against the Viet Cong in terms of their ability to expand their control in the countryside or to recruit and build up their forces; and they almost certainly continue to retain the military initiative.

MM-RFE-62-53: "Implementation of an Effective Strategic Concept for South Vietnam," April 3, 1962

Herewith, the summary I promised you of recent progress in implementing the strategic concept for South Vietnam in recent months. A systematic counterinsurgency operation has been launched very recently in an effort to eliminate Viet Cong guerrilla-subversive forces and rehabilitate the countryside on an area-by-area basis. The most notable progress, however, has been in the civilian rather than in the military sector. The strategic village concept, for example, has taken hold within both the Vietnam Government (GVN) and the US Mission; this concept is now a matter of national, high-priority policy for the GVN. Also, the GVN's Civic Action program has been reoriented and is being revitalized and expanded. Indeed, strategic village and Civic Action concepts now are integrated and vital in the GVN's general effort against the Viet Cong.

RM, RFE-27, "Progress Report on South Vietnam," June 18, 1962, p.5

c. Although the Vietnamese Government is giving the strategic village-hamlet program high priority, there is reliable evidence that the program suffers seriously from inadequate direction, coordination, and material assistance by the central government and from misunderstanding among officials at the provincial and local levels. Province chiefs have tended to draw up unrealistically high quotas (generally in order to please the authorities in Saigon), and the lack of sufficient resources provided by the government at the local level has in certain instances resulted in poorly constructed and poorly defended settlements and in financial levies on the peasant. Moreover, the construction of these settlements has not followed any particular pattern or plan based on priorities. In his reported recent merger of the "Delta" plan and the strategic village-hamlet program, however, President Diem has indicated that priorities would be established.

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RM, RFE-27, "Progress Report on South Vietnam," June 18, 1962, p.11. II-4

A. It is about three months since the current phase of a major systematic counterinsurgency effort began in Vietnam, and too short a time to expect any substantial weakening of the Communist position. Moreover, final victory is likely to take some years and to be brought about more by a steady erosion of Communist strength than by dramatic military successes.

B. In the military-security sector, US materiel, training, and advice, supplemented by tactical support by US units, have produced an improvement in armed operations against the Viet Cong. US military operational reports reflect improved tactics, shortened reaction times, and more effective use of communications and intelligence. It is too early to say that the Viet Cong guerrilla-terrorist onslaught is being checked, but it can be said that it is now meeting more effective resistance and having to cope with increased aggressiveness by the Vietnamese military and security forces. Nonetheless, the Viet Cong continue to increase their armed strength and capability and, on balance, to erode government authority in the countryside.

C. There has not been a corresponding improvement in other sectors of the total counterinsurgency effort. Serious problems remain in the civil and military command structures and in the exercise of command responsibility. Diem continues to prefer personalized rule through a very small group of trusted official and unofficial advisers and traditional methods in matters affecting domestic political opposition. Civil government effectiveness is also impeded by shortages in experienced personnel, particularly at lower levels, and aggravated by confusion and suspicion at most levels of the bureaucracy. More effective direction and coordination and realistic implementation are needed, for example, for such crucially important programs as the "Delta" plan, strategic villages and hamlets, and Civic Action, and greater authority must be delegated to upper echelon civil and military officials in order to make better use of Vietnamese Government resources. Similarly, while there are encouraging signs of popular support for the government, there has been no major break-through in identifying the people with the struggle against the Viet Cong.

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RM, RFE-27, "Progress Report on South Vietnam," June 18, 1962, pp.11,12.

D. We conclude that:

1. there is no evidence to support certain allegations of substantial deterioration in the political and military situations in Vietnam;
2. on the contrary, there is evidence of heartening progress in bolstering the fighting effectiveness of the military and security forces;
3. however, there is still much to be done in strengthening the overall capacity of the Vietnamese Government to pursue its total counter-insurgency effort, not only in the military-security sector but particularly in the political-administrative sector;
4. a judgment on ultimate success in the campaign against the Communist "war of national liberation" in Vietnam is premature; but
5. we do think that the chances are good, provided there is continuing progress by the Vietnamese Government along the lines of its present strategy.

II-6

RM, RFE-59, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam,"
December 3, 1962, p.1.

President Ngo Dinh Diem and other leading Vietnamese as well as many US officials in South Vietnam apparently believe that the tide is now turning in the struggle against Vietnamese Communist (Viet Cong) insurgency and subversion. This degree of optimism is premature. At best, it appears that the rate of deterioration has decelerated with improvement, principally in the security sector, reflecting substantially increased US assistance and GVN implementation of a broad counterinsurgency program.

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RM, RFE-59, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam,"
Dec. 3, 1962, p. ii.

As a result, the Viet Cong has had to modify its tactics and perhaps set back its timetable. But the "national liberation war" has not abated nor has the Viet Cong been weakened. On the contrary, the Viet Cong has expanded the size and enhanced the capability and organization of its guerrilla force--now estimated at about 23,000 in elite fighting personnel, plus some 100,000 irregulars and sympathizers. It still controls about 20 percent of the villages and about 9 percent of the rural population, and has varying degrees of influence among an additional 47 percent of the villages. Viet Cong control and communication lines to the peasant have not been seriously weakened and the guerrillas have thus been able to maintain good intelligence and a high degree of initiative, mobility, and striking power. Viet Cong influence has almost certainly improved in urban areas not only through subversion and terrorism but also because of its propaganda appeal to the increasingly frustrated non-Communist anti-Diem elements....

...Elimination, even significant reduction, of the Communist insurgency will almost certainly require several years.

II-8

RM, RFE-59, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam,"
Dec. 3, 1962, p. 13.

The results of the systematic, integrated military-political pacification approach are encouraging. However, its limited application to relatively few provinces has not yet appreciably altered the balance between the government and the Viet Cong in the countryside. Moreover, there is evidence that the GVN has some doubt as to the feasibility of this approach as the principal basis of its counterinsurgency effort. For example, in addition to the heavy reliance on the strategic hamlet program, there are reports that President Diem feels that his military forces now have sufficient strength and capability to make quick, large-scale military strikes simultaneously in and behind various areas of Viet Cong concentration with the hope of dispersing and ultimately isolating the guerrilla forces into small and easily eliminated pockets.

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RM, RFE-59, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam,"
Dec. 3, 1962, p. 9.

Viet Cong capabilities for leading a successful coup are limited, however. Its own forces, even if combined with any remnant armed bands of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sects, do not appear strong enough to overthrow the government by military means. Nor is there any evidence that the Viet Cong has any support in the middle or top levels of the GVN bureaucracy or its military and security establishments. Although the Viet Cong might well be able to exploit the confusion and instability resulting from Diem's overthrow, it does not yet have the ties with the non-Communist opposition to Diem that would enable it to lead a successful coup.

II-10

RM, RFE-59, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam,"
Dec. 3, 1962, p. 25.

Hanoi can also be expected to continue to infiltrate personnel and material into South Vietnam and has the capability to step up infiltration, as the situation warrants, with relatively little danger of detection and no great difficulty. The DRV's capability is further enhanced by the nature of the border terrain and the limited border-control capabilities of the South Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian governments. However, because of tactical and strategic military and political considerations, Hanoi will probably continue to infiltrate elements primarily from the pool of regrouped South Vietnamese rather than from the Vietnamese Communist forces in Laos most of whom are believed to be North Vietnamese or Tonkinese.

It is entirely possible that the Viet Cong will step up its armed operations during the next month or so with the advent of the dry season, in the belief that further military escalation is necessary in order to counter the growing response and effectiveness of the GVN forces and US support. There are a number of indicators that support this expectation: numerous earlier intelligence reports of Viet Cong regroupment and consolidation of forces; a slight increase in the number of armed incidents during roughly the last week of October; and two Viet Cong battalion-size attacks in the Mekong River delta area in late October and early November 1962, the first since July 1962. Further military escalation during the next several months might involve the formation of regimental-size units, including the transformation of some guerrilla units into conventional units with heavier weapons; selected and simultaneous large attacks against one or more targets, including military installations and towns; establishment of "liberated areas" in South Vietnam; the creation of reserve bases in Communist-held areas in southern Laos; and increased infiltration, particularly if Communist forces in southern Laos can provide adequate protection along infiltration routes. (It does not appear likely that inspection by the International Control Commission in Laos will seriously impede Communist infiltration.) However, Hanoi will probably not resort to overt military invasion.

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In either case, a considerably greater effort by the GVN, as well as continuing US assistance, is crucial. If there is continuing improvement in security conditions, Diem should be able to alleviate concern and boost morale within the bureaucracy and the military establishment. But the GVN will not be able to consolidate its military successes into permanent political gains and to evoke the positive support of the peasantry unless it gives more emphasis to non-military aspects of the counterinsurgency program, integrates the strategic hamlet program with an expanded systematic pacification program, and appreciably modifies military tactics (particularly those relating to large-unit actions and tactical use of airpower and artillery). Failure to do so might increase militant opposition among the peasants and their positive identification with the Viet Cong.

During the next year, the GVN probably will not be able to halt completely the deteriorating security trends, let alone reverse the tide against the Viet Cong, unless Saigon significantly accelerates and improves its response to the insurgency. Among other things, the government leadership must give much greater emphasis to political, social, and economic measures in support of its military operations, make a substantially greater effort to integrate the strategic hamlet program into a continuing systematic pacification effort, and appreciably improve its counter-guerrilla tactics and capabilities, including increased reliance on small-unit actions and restriction of the tactical use of airpower and artillery. Failure to do this will seriously weaken the strategic hamlet program, particularly since the Viet Cong can be expected to step up its efforts against the program during the next year. Such failure will also greatly restrict the ability of the GVN to weaken Viet Cong capabilities, to consolidate its own military successes into permanent political gains, and to evoke, particularly among the peasants, the needed greater sense of stake in the government's fortunes. Indeed, the continuation of such tactical measures as extensive use of airpower and crop destruction, however carefully controlled, may well contribute to the development of militant opposition among the peasants and positive identification with the Viet Cong.

Progress against the insurgents will probably remain difficult to evaluate accurately. There are many indicators on the basis of which progress can be judged; the more meaningful would appear to be the peasants' willingness to inform on the Viet Cong and to defend themselves against Viet Cong attacks, and Viet Cong weapons losses, shortages of food and medicine, and defections. In this respect, a national program by the GVN to encourage Viet Cong defections, with the promise of fair treatment of the defectors is long overdue and could be extremely effective in improving GVN intelligence and weakening Viet Cong morale. GVN statistics on casualties, while helpful as an indicator of the magnitude of the fighting, should continue to be treated with extreme caution partly because they undoubtedly include many casualties among innocent peasants or wavering supporters of the Viet Cong.

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RM, RFE-59, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam,"
Dec. 3, 1962, p. 28.

Diem will almost certainly continue to press for increased aid and remain adamant against any US pressures upon him to delegate appreciably more authority to his cabinet and military advisers or to expand the political base of his government to any significant extent. Moreover, while he has welcomed the increased US presence in South Vietnam and generally approved of the activities of US advisers in the countryside, Diem and his family will continue to maintain a close watch over these activities in the interests of protecting their authority at the local level. Diem and particularly Nhu may also remain extremely reluctant to accept possible US proposals directed toward further integration of the strategic hamlet and systematic pacification programs or directed toward substantially altering the present balance between emphasis on purely military measures to defeat the Viet Cong and emphasis on political, social, and economic measures.

....

There is considerable evidence that the substantial increase in the US presence in South Vietnam has improved morale at all levels of the GVN administration. Relations between individual US advisers and their GVN counterparts especially at the local level have generally been good and, despite Viet Cong propaganda efforts, have not resulted in any noticeable degree of association of the US presence with the former French presence. Among the probable major considerations are the fact that US personnel, unlike the French in the past, are acting as advisers rather than as directors and implementers of GVN policy, and the apparent willingness of US military personnel to live and operate closely with their GVN counterparts, assisting more by example rather than by persuasion. There is, therefore, cause for optimism over the effectiveness of the US presence in South Vietnam, even though it will come under increasing strain as the counterinsurgency effort develops and as Communist propaganda is increasingly focussed on it.

II-14

RM, RFE-66, "Capsule Assessment of the Effort in South Vietnam,"
December 19, 1962, p. 1.

There appears to be no reason as yet to question the soundness of the concept. But there is a very real question as to how well and wholeheartedly it is being put into effect. The purpose of this paper is to assess the implementation of the concept during 1962.

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II-15

RM, RFE-66, "Capsule Assessment of the Effort in South Vietnam,"
Dec. 19, 1962, p. 4.

--The Army has overemphasized large-scale actions and the use of artillery and airpower, as compared with small-unit actions and intelligence collections. Although emphasis on patrols and ambushes appears to be increasing, continued and excessive use of air power and crop destruction--however well controlled--may well develop a militant opposition from the peasants and their positive identification with the Viet Cong.

....

--GVN failure to emphasize political, social, and economic reform at the outset may deprive the entire effort of much of its impact. Much depends on the ability of the government to show convincing evidence of its intent to improve the lot of the peasants. Instead, government efforts appear to be aimed largely at increasing government control over the peasants.

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RM, RFE-30, "Reports on Increased Communist Infiltration into South Vietnam from Laos," July 16, 1962, pp. 1 and 2.

ABSTRACT

Communist infiltration into South Vietnam appears to have increased since May 1962, but it is not necessarily related to current developments in Laos. Although the magnitude of this movement is difficult to assess, it is believed to involve largely well-trained armed cadres and key officials rather than armed units. As in the past, moreover, the movement is confined principally to South Vietnamese (Annamites and Cochinchinese), trained in North Vietnam, rather than North Vietnamese (Tonkinese) who constitute the bulk of the DRV forces now serving in Laos.

Communist infiltration will continue to remain a problem in South Vietnam. The DRV has the capability of stepping up infiltration over the present level, if circumstances warrant, with no great difficulty and relatively little danger of detection.

...

There are other reasons which do not favor the deployment of Vietnamese Communist forces fighting in Laos into South Vietnam. There is a certain amount of mutual distrust among the Annamites, Cochinchinese, and Tonkinese, and some problems in integrating these forces could be expected. Moreover, the capture of Tonkinese personnel would destroy North Vietnam's propaganda claim that the Viet Cong insurgency is entirely a movement of the South Vietnamese people.

Conclusions

...

5. North Vietnam has the capacity to step up infiltration further, if the situation warrants, with relatively little detection and no great difficulty.

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RM, RFE-49, "Evidence of Recent Communist Infiltration into South Vietnam from Laos," October 19, 1962, pp. 1,3,4.

ABSTRACT

Viet Cong infiltration from Laos into South Vietnam almost certainly occurs on a sporadic if not continuing basis. US military officials estimated that 1,600 to 1,800 Viet Cong infiltrated into South Vietnam during May and June 1962, or almost five times the average rate for the previous five months. While we believe infiltration probably did increase during the May-June period, the magnitude of the increase cannot be judged accurately (partly because of the South Vietnamese tendency to overstate infiltration) nor can it be interpreted as necessarily related to developments in Laos. Despite official South Vietnamese claims to the contrary, there is no reliable evidence that infiltration increased during July and August or that it remained at the increased level reported for May and June. However, it is possible that the infiltration rate rose in September.

...

The bulk of Viet Cong needs, therefore, is met locally. Most of the members of the Viet Cong forces are locally recruited either by coercion or by persuasion. The Viet Cong is entirely dependent upon the local populace and the countryside for food through purchase, pilferage, capture of stocks, taxation (in the form of rice), and even actual cultivation of crops by sympathizers and part-time guerrillas. Finally, most of its weapons have been captured or stolen from South Vietnamese Army and security forces, or are manufactured in "arms factories" in Viet Cong concentration areas, or have been reactivated from stocks hidden since the end of the Indochina war.

Conclusions

On the basis of available intelligence information, we conclude that:

1. infiltration of Viet Cong into South Vietnam from Laos almost certainly occurs on a sporadic if not continuing basis;
2. this infiltration probably increased during May and June 1962 but does not appear to have been related to developments in Laos;
3. There is as yet no reliable evidence that this increase persisted during July and August, although it is possible that the infiltration rate rose in September;
4. Hanoi has the capacity to step up infiltration, if the situation warrants, with relatively little danger of detection and no great difficulty; and
5. because of tactical and strategic military and political considerations, Hanoi will probably continue to infiltrate elements primarily from the pool of regrouped South Vietnamese rather than from the Vietnamese Communist forces now fighting in Laos most of whom are believed to be North Vietnamese or Tonkinese.

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II-18

RM, RFE-35, "Viet Cong Use of Cambodian Territory," Aug. 7, 1962, p. 1.

Examination and evaluation of available reports do not substantiate the claim of extensive use of Cambodian territory by the Viet Cong....

However, there is firm evidence--and the Cambodian government admits--that the Viet Cong have made limited use of the Cambodian frontier, principally as a safe haven. This use presumably has declined since about 1959-60, but did contribute to the build-up of Viet Cong strength in border areas in the southern Vietnamese provinces. It is doubtful that this use of the Cambodian frontier has been of more than marginal importance to the Viet Cong effort in Vietnam during the past two years or so.

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MR - Mr. Roger Hilsman

February 27, 1962

MR/RFE - Charles N. Spinks

Assessment of Intelligence Reporting and Coup Prospects in South Vietnam

1. Adequacy of intelligence reporting.

a. November 1960 coup attempt. Prior to this coup attempt on November 11, 1960, some evidence had been received that such a coup would be undertaken. The head of the airborne brigade, Lt. Col. Nguyen Chanh Thi, who ultimately executed the coup attempt,

that he was thinking in terms of a coup, that he was the only officer with sufficient forces in the Saigon area to execute a coup, but that he would hold off pending further developments in the political situation. RFE agreed that Lt. Col. Thi was fully capable of launching a coup if he so decided, since his airborne forces of six battalions were the only armed units actually within Saigon at the time. This was the only specific prior evidence we received in connection with the November 11 attempt. B1 B3

b. February 27, 1962, coup attempt. So far as we are presently aware, no previous information was received indicating that elements of the air force were plotting the February 27 attack on the Presidential palace.

We consistently receive reports on coup plotting in South Vietnam. Most of these reports, however, come from sources in the upper echelons of the Vietnam armed forces, with virtually no information from the middle and lower echelons where the possibility of coup attempts may be even more likely.

2. Future coup prospects. The prevailing situation in South Vietnam encourages coup plotting. There are three underlying elements in this situation.

a. Perhaps the most important element contributing to coup plotting has been the inability of Diem and his political lieutenants to meet the Viet Cong threat. Consequently, coup plotting has been motivated by dissatisfaction in the armed forces and in the civil bureaucracy with the government's poor showing in dealing with the Viet Cong and is not motivated by any desire to overthrow Diem in order to change South Vietnam's anti-Communist posture and its present close ties with the United States.

b. Dissent with the methods of President Diem and his entourage, particularly his immediate family members is also an important factor. This

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discontent is particularly expressed within government circles and among former government officials and intelligentsia, principally in Saigon. There is little evidence, however, of any widespread popular dislike of Diem personally; he appears to be respected by the people of South Vietnam.

c. The entire Viet Cong effort in South Vietnam is not only directed toward expanding their control in the countryside, but also seeks to discredit Diem in every way possible and thus further stimulate coup plotting. The Viet Cong undoubtedly believe that a coup, even if engineered by anti-Communist elements, would create confusion and disorder favorable to Communist exploitation.

In view of the foregoing, we still hold to our earlier estimates that further coup attempts remain a possibility unless Diem can demonstrate a sustained improvement in the fight against the Viet Cong and a greater willingness to delegate authority within his own government.

Attached are materials prepared by RFE which deal with the November 11, 1961 coup attempt and provide assessments of coup prospects in South Vietnam.

Attachments:

1. IHR Morning Briefing, 10/19/60
2. MA-RAS-60-112, 11/11/60
3. RFE-1, 9/29/61
4. RFE-3, 11/1/61

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II-20

RM, RFE-19, "The Confederation Vietnamienne du Travail Chretien (CVTC) - An Assessment," Feb. 23, 1962, p. 5

...The GVN is undoubtedly depriving itself of an important measure of support from the labor movement by using the tactics it does. So long as Tran Quoc Buu retains his position as head of the CVTC it is probable that the organization will continue the moderate course which it has followed in the past. If Buu is forced out of office and the constituent unions of the CVTC decide to go underground a major new and possibly critical element of opposition will be added to those the government already faces.

MM-RFE-62-47 re: Vietnam Policy Guidelines Paper, March 30, 1962

II-21

We concur with the Vietnam policy guidelines paper, with the exception of a major point in respect to leadership potential in Vietnam: "no central figure has yet emerged under whose leadership this opposition would rally," (Background, p. 3, lines 6-7 from the bottom). In our view, this statement does not take into account sufficiently the complexity of the political situation in Vietnam and does not provide the basis for adequate policy guidance. More importantly, we cannot agree with the implicit thought that the United States has no alternative in Vietnam.

We recommend, therefore, that the guidelines incorporate the judgment that, in the event Diem were no longer able to lead effectively or he resigned or were removed by force, the odds are better than even that Vice President Tho would have sufficient support within the military and civilian sectors of the government to succeed to the Presidency. The Vietnamese military, however, would probably play a strong behind-the-scenes role in government. The other likely alternative, in our judgment, would be the temporary succession of a military junta.

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RM, RFE-59, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam,"
Dec. 3, 1962, p. ii.

The internal political situation is considerably more difficult to assess. Diem has strengthened his control of the bureaucracy and the military establishment. He has delegated a little more authority than in the past, and has become increasingly aware of the importance of the peasantry to the counterinsurgency effort. Nevertheless, although there are fewer reports of discontent with Diem's leadership within official circles and the civilian elite, there are still many indications of continuing serious concern, particularly with Diem's direction of the counterinsurgency effort. There are also reports that important military and civil officials continue to participate in coup plots. Oppositionists, critics, and dissenters outside the government appear to be increasingly susceptible to neutralist, pro-Communist, and possibly anti-US sentiments. They are apparently placing increased reliance on clandestine activities.

II-23

RM, RFE-59, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam,"
Dec. 3, 1962, p. iii, 30

A coup could occur at any time, but would be more likely if the fight against the Communists goes badly, if the Viet Cong launches a series of successful and dramatic military operations, or if Vietnamese army casualties increase appreciably over a protracted period. The coup most likely to succeed would be one with non-Communist leadership and support, involving middle and top echelon military and civilian officials. For a time at least, the serious disruption of government leadership resulting from a coup would probably halt and possibly reverse the momentum of the government's counterinsurgency effort. The role of the US can be extremely important in restoring this momentum and in averting widespread fighting and a serious internal power struggle.

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II-7

D. Political Situation

The stability of the government during the next year will continue to depend principally on Diem's handling of the internal security situation. Unless Diem can demonstrate a continuing ability to create security conditions, he should be able to alleviate concern and boost morale within his bureaucracy and military establishment. However, if the fight against the Viet Cong goes badly, if the Viet Cong launches a series of successful and dramatic military operations, or if South Vietnamese army casualties increase appreciably over a protracted period, the chances of a coup attempt against Diem could increase substantially. Moreover, the possibility of a coup attempt at any time cannot be excluded. Many officials and oppositionists feel that, despite the government's military victories and improved military capabilities and initiative, the GVN is not winning the war principally because of Diem's virtual one-man rule and his failure to follow through with the political and economic measures necessary to gain the support of the peasants.

It is more difficult now than at any time since the crisis in South Vietnam began in late 1959 to estimate reliably the elements that would be most likely to precipitate a coup attempt, the prospects for the success of a coup attempt, or the effects of such an attempt on internal stability and on the counterinsurgency effort itself. During the past year or so, the Viet-Cong presumably has improved its ability to initiate a coup and might attempt to do so. However, the Viet Cong probably would not be able to carry out a successful coup, and the odds that it could gain control of a successful coup, although somewhat better than last year, appear to be less than even.

The coup most likely to succeed would be one with non-Communist leadership and support, principally involving South Vietnamese military elements and civilian officials and perhaps some oppositionists outside the government. The abortive coup attempt in November 1960 and the palace bombing in February 1962 have undoubtedly demonstrated to coup plotters the necessity for better preparation and broader participation by the military. Any future non-Communist coup group probably would not be as deficient in this respect and its leaders, unlike the leaders of 1960 coup attempt, can be expected to be better prepared to execute their plan quickly. Although the possibility of a Kong Le-type coup, i.e., a coup led by a junior and relatively unknown officer, cannot be completely discounted, it is more likely that the coup leadership would include some middle and top echelon military officials. While their role is by no means certain, a major polarization of the GVN military leadership into coup and anti-coup groups does not appear likely. Most of them would probably elect to remain uncommitted at the outset of the coup, as they apparently did in November 1960, and would then give their tacit or active support to whatever side appeared to have the best chance of winning. Under these circumstances, a military coup appears to have a better than even chance of succeeding.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

II-25

TO : The Acting Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : IR - Roger Hilsman

Rog Hilsman

Dec. 13, 1962

INTELLIGENCE NOTE: DIEM'S MILITARY REORGANIZATION SEEMS SOUND, BUT....

Reorganization Imminent. President Diem's long-pending but apparently now imminent reorganization of the military establishment appears sound. It is based partly on US proposals, although US officials apparently have not been consulted during its formulation and only recently and covertly learned that it was completed and about to be announced. The changes in structure are probably an improvement as are most of the personnel transfers, including notably the appointment of Gen. Tran Van Don as head of the army to succeed the militarily less capable Gen. Nguyen Khanh. How much the reorganization improves the efficiency of the armed forces, however, will depend primarily on whether Diem actually delegates more authority to the military leadership than he has heretofore.

Possible Adverse Implications. Gen. Duong Van ("Big") Minh's appointment as Special Advisor to the President may be another kick upstairs. A competent and popular officer, Minh never exercised authority commensurate with his position as Tactical Field Commander, now to be abolished, because Diem and Nhu doubted his loyalty. If Diem again fails to utilize his services, Minh and his friends may in time be tempted to lead or support an anti-Diem military coup. Minh maintains good relations not only with new army chief Don but also with Gen. Le Van Kim, probably South Vietnam's most competent general, who has been neutralized since the abortive 1960 coup and now appears to have been entirely shelved by the reorganization.

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RM, RFE-59, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam,"
Dec. 3, 1962, p. 30

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Under most of the foreseeable circumstances involving a coup, the role of the US would be extremely important. Although this is by no means certain, US military and intelligence officials might well have advance notice of an impending coup and might be able to restrain the coup plotters from precipitous action. Even if unable to restrain such action, however, US officials might have greater success in averting widespread fighting and a serious power struggle which would lead to excessive bloodshed and weaken the front against the Viet Cong. The US could also be helpful in achieving agreement among the coup leaders as to who should head the government and in restoring the momentum of the government's counterinsurgency effort.

RM, RFE-59, "The Situation and Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam,"
Dec. 3, 1962, p. 6.

II-2

g. Two of the principal weaknesses in the effective utilization of US aid are insufficient awareness on the part of central authorities in the Vietnamese Government of the need to establish project priorities and the general inability of these authorities to act quickly to dispatch aid in support of projects in the countryside. The distribution of US aid must be approved in most cases by President Diem personally, frequently resulting in delays and in administrative bottle-necks. Moreover, Diem continues to exhibit considerable sensitivity to attempts by US officials to distribute aid directly to the countryside without clearance from the central government. Recently, for example, the Vietnamese Government turned down a USOM proposal aimed at increasing the impact of US aid at the local level by establishing a special fund for direct financing of provincial projects.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

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Research Memorandum
RFE-42, May 27, 1963

TO : The Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : IR - Thomas L. Hughes *Thomas L. Hughes*
SUBJECT: Implications of Our Difficulties with Diem

Criticism by the Diem family of various joint Vietnamese-United States efforts has received wide publicity. This paper assesses motivations behind the criticism and its implications for the counterinsurgency effort.

ABSTRACT

Recent events in South Vietnam -- President Diem's withdrawal from an earlier agreement on joint control of the counterinsurgency fund, his bitterly critical remarks to Ambassador Nolting on the United States advisory presence, and the subsequent public statements of Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu on this question -- once again focus attention on the strains in the United States-Vietnamese relationship. These developments reflect in part nationalistic sensitivities to the possibilities of foreign control. More importantly, they reflect the continuing suspicions entertained by the Diem family of United States support for the regime, and differing assessments of the requirements for a successful counterinsurgency effort.

Diem has agreed to provide the funds, previously supplied by the United States, that are required to cover the local expenses of the strategic hamlet and provincial pacification programs. But he has rejected any joint control of their use, beyond the establishment of programs and priorities at the national level, and has proposed the United States no longer participate in their actual expenditure at the provincial and lower levels.

Such restrictions on the United States role raise a serious danger that these programs will become increasingly focussed on re-establishing the government's physical control of the countryside, and that the economic, political, and social measures required to win over the peasants will be increasingly de-emphasized.

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Even though Diem has agreed to assume the principal responsibility for the local costs of the strategic hamlet and provincial pacification programs, there is increased doubt that he will in fact make sufficient funds available. Given the views of the Diem family on how much should be done for the peasant and the fact that the United States will not have control over Vietnamese contributions, the leadership may feel under even less compulsion than in the past to allocate its own resources to ensure implementation of various social, economic, and political projects embodied in the hamlet and pacification programs on a scale sufficient to improve the lot of the peasant. These projects include, among other things, payment for peasant labor on hamlet construction; provision of temporary housing, food, clothing, tools, and seed for relocated persons; training, equipping, and paying of civic action and hamlet-construction teams; training of elected hamlet chiefs and hamlet council members; and support for a variety of self-help hamlet projects designed to improve the economic welfare of the peasant and his attitude toward the government. Without sufficient support of these projects, the strategic hamlet and rural pacification programs could become little more than a means for re-establishing the government's control over the countryside, with the measures required for winning over the peasantry increasingly de-emphasized.

Despite his apparent compromise on the issue of United States advisors, Diem might again begin pressing for a reduction in the number of United States personnel, partly to demonstrate his independence at home and abroad. A token reduction in the near future might be appropriate and mutually beneficial both as a response to Communist "colonialist" propaganda charges and as an earnest of our publicly stated intention to reduce the United States presence in South Vietnam as the situation improves. (But more than a token reduction, in the situation likely to prevail over the next few years, would have serious dangers. Existing weaknesses in Vietnamese intelligence and military tactical capabilities, for example, would be greatly aggravated. In addition there would probably be a serious degradation in the initiative now being increasingly displayed by Vietnamese civilian and military officials. Without a strong United States advisory presence, moreover, the entire counterinsurgency effort might well be reoriented along primarily military lines.

Whether or not Diem pushes for a reduction in the actual size of the United States advisory effort, he will almost certainly seek some shift in what he regards as the imbalance of power between his own officials and United States advisors. Vietnamese military and civilian officials will probably be under increasing pressure to assert their authority over United States advisors and to report any action regarded as an infringement of their prerogatives. The personal conduct of United States personnel might also come under closer scrutiny and further public attack.

NIE 53-63, April 17, 1963

PROSPECTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

THE PROBLEM

To assess the situation and prospects in South Vietnam, with special emphasis upon the military and political factors most likely to affect the counterinsurgency effort.

CONCLUSIONS

A. We believe that Communist progress has been blunted and that the situation is improving. Strengthened South Vietnamese capabilities and effectiveness, and particularly US involvement, are causing the Viet Cong increased difficulty, although there are as yet no persuasive indications that the Communists have been grievously hurt. (Paras. 27-28)

B. We believe the Communists will continue to wage a war of attrition, hoping for some break in the situation which will lead to victory. They evidently hope that a combination of military pressure and political deterioration will in time create favorable circumstances either for delivering a *coup de grâce* or for a political settlement which will enable them to continue the struggle on more favorable terms. We believe it unlikely, especially in view of the open US commitment, that the North Vietnamese regime will either resort to overt military attack or introduce acknowledged North Vietnamese military units into the south in an effort to win a quick victory. (Paras. 29-31)

C. Assuming no great increase in external support to the Viet Cong, changes and improvements which have occurred during the past year now indicate that the Viet Cong can be contained militarily and that further progress can be made in expanding the area of government control and in creating greater security in the countryside. However, we do not believe that it is pos-

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sible at this time to project the future course of the war with any confidence. Decisive campaigns have yet to be fought and no quick and easy end to the war is in sight. Despite South Vietnamese progress, the situation remains fragile. (Para. 32)

D. Developments during the last year or two also show some promise of resolving the political weaknesses, particularly that of insecurity in the countryside, upon which the insurgency has fed. However, the government's capacity to embark upon the broader measures required to translate military success into lasting political stability is questionable. (Paras. 33-35)

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RM, RFE-55, "Implications of the Buddhist Crisis in Vietnam," June 21, 1963,
p. 1.

ABSTRACT

....
The speed with which the Buddhist issue reached critical proportions was largely the result of the position adopted by President Diem and his family who misread the seriousness of the Buddhist protest movement and attributed it to political and even Communist inspiration. Until June 16 such concessions as were made to the Buddhists were clearly piecemeal and grudging. On June 16, however, against a background of sharply-increased Buddhist tensions and United States pressure, the Diem government signed an agreement with Buddhist leaders that, for the first time, accommodated all their demands.

A degree of calm having been restored by the June 16 agreement, much will now obviously depend on the sincerity and speed with which it is implemented. If the regime is conspicuously dilatory, inept, and insincere in handling Buddhist matters, renewed tension would probably again reach crisis proportions. Disaffection within the bureaucracy and the army, coupled with popular discontent and disorders, would almost certainly give rise to coup efforts. Such an effort if led, as it probably would be, by top and middle-echelon military and civil officials, would probably have good prospects of success. A successful coup, while posing real dangers of major internal upheaval and a serious slackening of the military effort against the Viet Cong, could draw upon a reservoir of trained and experienced personnel for reasonably effective leadership of the government and the war effort.

RM, RFE-55, "Implications of the Buddhist Crisis in Vietnam," June 21, 1963,
p. 2.

...Whether Buddhist charges of religious discrimination and suppression can be proven or disproven is rather academic. More importantly the Catholicism of Diem, his family, and many other high government officials fosters Buddhist suspicions, and many responsible Buddhist leaders and much of the priesthood obviously believe their grievances to be just. It must also be assumed that these grievances have support among rural Buddhists, partly in view of the apparent effectiveness of the Buddhist leadership in communicating its views to the Buddhist populace and in rapidly expanding its campaign of non-violent protest.

That the Hue incident merely focused these long-held Buddhist grievances is evident from the demands the Buddhists have made of the government. These have been directed not only toward obtaining satisfaction on issues immediately arising from the Hue incident--the display of Buddhist flags, compensation of the families of those killed during the demonstration, and release of Buddhists arrested in connection with the protest movement--but also toward obtaining government recognition of Buddhist legal equality through forcing the abrogation of what the Buddhists regard as discriminatory regulations.

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RM, RFE-55, "Implications of the Buddhist Crisis in Vietnam,"
June 21, 1963, p. 3

The Diem family, therefore, has tended to view the Buddhist issue essentially in security terms. Concessions were made to the Buddhists but most reluctantly, and, until June 16, on a piecemeal basis. These came only at moments when internal developments produced a new crisis or when United States pressures had been brought to bear. Thus, the concessions may appear to the Buddhists as mere palliatives intended to ease the tension of the moment rather than to provide a basis for a genuine, long-term settlement of differences.

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RM, RFE-55, "Implications of the Buddhist Crisis in Vietnam,"
June 21, 1963, p. 4

Prospects for Long-Range Settlement

A satisfactory long-range settlement would appear to depend, as it has from the beginning, largely on the willingness of the Diem government to meet the Buddhist problem constructively and realistically. We believe that the moderate Buddhist leadership would be satisfied by genuine implementation of the agreement of June 16. However, given its past record of performance, we cannot be confident that the government will actually implement the agreement promptly and consistently. Buddhist suspicions obviously have not been dispelled, and Buddhist leaders will remain keenly alert to any acts of bad faith by the government. Moreover, the decision to protest openly and the degree of success already achieved by this protest without severe government retaliation may have given Buddhist leaders considerable confidence in the vitality of their effort. If the Buddhists sense that the government is not following through with its commitments, their protest can be expected to be more militant and widespread than before.

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RM, RFE-55, "Implications of the Buddhist Crisis in Vietnam,"
June 21, 1963, p. 5.

Implications for the Stability of the Diem Regime

...In some sense, indeed, an opportunity is now open to the regime not only to resote (?) such popular support as it has lost in the course of the Buddhist protest movement, but also to make a bid for wider support than it has enjoyed in recent years. Should the Diem government move effectively in fulfilling its June 16 commitments, much of the resentment it has aroused might be allayed. Should it go further, moving generously toward giving the Buddhist leaders a real sense that their role in the community is a valued one, it may make more positive gains. It might then be able to dispel what could otherwise be the belief that the government deserves no real credit for a compromise that might be seen as resulting only from fear of Buddhist pressures.

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Although the positive gains derived from a generous approach to meeting Buddhist demands would probably be substantial, a more deliberate and restricted approach would not necessarily precipitate a new crisis immediately. The Buddhist leadership now seems inclined toward watchful waiting and might well be prepared, while exercising quiet pressures within the regime, to give the government time to adjust its policies in the desired direction.

However, if the regime is conspicuously dilatory, inept, and insincere in handling Buddhist matters, renewed tension could quickly reach a breaking point. It is arguable that a continued or renewed Buddhist crisis would be potentially a more serious threat to the Diem regime than is the present communist insurgency. Vietnamese Buddhism, however diluted with Confucianism, animism, and Taoism, and institutionally fragmented, is deeply set in the social and cultural consciousness of the Vietnamese people. Therefore, an obvious and serious threat to Buddhism, particularly by a non-Buddhist minority, can command a more personal and spontaneous response from the ordinary Vietnamese peasant than Viet Cong political propaganda.

RM, RFE-55, "Implications of the Buddhist Crisis in Vietnam,"
June 21, 1963, p. 6.

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...However, unless Diem acts in good faith in implementing the June 16 agreement, disaffection within the bureaucracy and the army will almost certainly reach critical and unprecedented proportions. Nor can Diem be absolutely certain of Catholics within the government. Many of these Catholics apparently do not necessarily equate their religious views with personal loyalty to Diem....

Coup Prospects

A new Buddhist crisis, in the wake of any failure on the part of the regime to fulfill its commitments, would almost certainly give rise to coup efforts. A resurgence of open Buddhist hostility would again be reflected in demonstrations and, almost inevitably, bloodshed. Most Buddhist leaders, although not themselves likely to assume command of a movement to overthrow the government, would probably be inclined to favor a drastic political change as the only means by which their grievances could be remedied....

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RM, RFE-55, "Implications of the Buddhist Crisis in Vietnam,"
June 21, 1963, p. 7

Nor do we believe that the diversified array of non-Communist oppositionists outside the government could initiate or lead a successful coup. These oppositionists have consistently demonstrated their inability to unite under a common cause or leader. Many of them are opportunists whose political views range from neutralism to possible pro-Communist sympathies and who have little support outside their immediate personal following. However, some appear more responsible, have contacts within the government, and might be acceptable as participants although not necessarily as leaders in a revolt, particularly if they had gained support within Buddhist circles.

We believe that the most likely revolt, however staged, would be non-Communist and fully committed to the counterinsurgency effort, have appreciable support within the government, and include middle and top echelon military and civil officials. ...

III-8

RM, RFE-55, "Implications of the Buddhist Crisis in Vietnam,"
June 21, 1963, pp. 7,8.

We do not believe that Diem and his family are prepared to capitulate without a fight, but we see it as equally unlikely that they would be permitted any alternative other than to resign or face death. The removal of the Diem family would probably precipitate a power struggle within the government, but ultimately would tend to strengthen the role of the military. It is not impossible that Diem's successor could come from outside the ranks of the present government. A government led by a military junta or by Vice President Nguyen Ngoc Tho is more likely, however, with the army, in the latter case, playing a major if not predominant role behind the scenes. ...

The sudden removal of South Vietnam's authoritarian and long-established regime, whatever the character of the successor government, would pose real dangers of major internal upheaval and a serious slackening of the military effort against the Viet Cong. Certainly it is open to question whether any successor to Diem could, on the one hand, provide the same firm anti-Communist leadership, or on the other, assure a more efficient and less authoritarian administration. Nevertheless, there is a reasonably large pool of untapped or ineffectively used but experienced and trained manpower not only within the military and civilian sectors of the present government but also, to some extent outside, that, given the opportunity and continued support from the United States, could provide reasonably effective leadership for the government and the war effort and make possible broader participation in the administration.

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RM, RFE-55, "Implications of the Buddhist Crisis in Vietnam,"
June 21, 1963, pp. 9,10.

Implications for the United States

The public reaction of the United States might well determine the failure or success of any armed revolt against Diem. Diem will almost certainly expect quick, publicly expressed, and strong support and would feel that he no longer had United States confidence if such support were not forthcoming. Indeed, he might immediately leap to the conclusion that the United States had inspired the action or was actively assisting the rebels. Under these circumstances, if Diem were able to defeat the rebels, the United States would meet with increased difficulty in efforts to guide and influence Diem's policies. Even should the United States publicly come to Diem's support in return for commitments on his part with respect to his future activities, these commitments might not be fulfilled were Diem to succeed in putting down the revolt. A victory in these circumstances would greatly reinforce Diem's view that he is indispensable, that he knows best what the situation requires, and that he cannot trust anyone outside his immediate family.

The rebels and the fence sitters too would be looking for some indication of the United States position. Our silence over any period or indications that we regarded the revolt as an internal problem which we hoped to see quickly resolved would probably be taken as support for the rebels. This, or any other evidence that the United States was not supporting Diem, would probably inspire broader participation in the rebel effort, and if it were successful, enable the United States to influence the formation and policies of the successor government. On the other hand, obvious United States support for the Diem government would tend to deter participation in the rebel effort. If nevertheless the rebel effort were successful we could anticipate considerable hostility toward the United States in the new administration.

III-1

RM, RFE-75, "Diem Versus the Buddhists: The Issue Joined," Aug. 21, 1963,
p. 1.

ABSTRACT

...The prospects for the restoration of stability and mutual confidence appear extremely remote. Most importantly, the degree to which Diem can count on the army to suppress future Buddhist moves is most uncertain.

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RM, RFE-75, "Diem Versus the Buddhists: The Issue Joined," Aug. 21, 1963, p.5.

Prospects

The sudden injection of the army into the Buddhist crisis has introduced an entirely new factor. Military elements have been consistently critical of Diem's measures and there has been a flurry of reported coup plots against the Diem family by military and civil officials. The Buddhist leaders themselves have undoubtedly felt that their grievances have had wide support within the bureaucracy and the military establishment, and may be stunned by the participation of the army units in brutal assaults on their pagoda and the establishment of martial law.

However, the predominantly Buddhist composition of the armed forces makes uncertain its continued reliability should further Buddhist suicides or demonstrations be attempted. Nor is it likely that the resort to force will win Diem any support outside his own family circle. While the crisis may be temporarily dampened down, it is far from resolved.

III-12

RM, RFE-76, "South Vietnam Contingencies," Aug. 26, 1963, p.3.
(A study of the implications for the US of possible indigenous South Vietnamese moves against Diem.)

1. Armed Action against Nhu without Threatening Diem: Certain military figures, with or without civilian participation, may attempt to assassinate Nhu or eliminate him through a coup. The objectives would be to retain Diem and salvage the regime while jettisoning negative family influences, as already suggested by significant elements within the GVN.

The major advantages to the military taking such action, would be the preservation of administrative continuity and constitutional processes, facilitating the settlement of grievances with Buddhists and students, minimizing violence which would be exploited by the Viet Cong, improving governmental and military morale, reintroducing competent personnel into the government, and broadening popular participation in the government.

Against these gains there would surely arise the risk of subsequently increased intransigence and suspicion of the United States by Diem, himself, with the consequence that Nhu's elimination would produce insufficient changes in the structure, dynamics, and policies of the government to satisfy anti-regime elements. Moreover, the possibility of Diem's accidental elimination or sudden voluntary withdrawal cannot be discounted at any point.

....

2. Armed Action Against Nhu with Alternatives for Diem: Nhu might be assassinated or removed by a coup with Diem being given an explicit choice of resigning or of remaining as president with diminished authority.

If Diem were to accept diminution of this authority as well as the removal of Nhu, most of the advantages of contingency 1 would apply, plus the transfer of responsibility for conducting the war against the Viet Cong more directly into military hands. The main problem then, however, would be the willingness of the newly empowered military to move toward wider civilian participation in the regime. The analogy of South Korea may be relevant in this regard. Should Diem resign, contingencies 3 or 4 would obtain.

.....

3. Action against Entire NGO Family with Constitutional Succession.

The NGO family....could be eliminated....with Vice President Tho or another civilian acceptable to the military chosen as successor....

In addition to those advantages of contingency 1 which remain relevant, there would probably be less likelihood of a power struggle within the military leadership during a transition period, invigorated prosecution of the war against the Viet Cong, widespread support within the civilian bureaucracy, and improved administration at the local level, all under at least the nominal leadership of an experienced figure who is also a Buddhist.

.....

4. Replacement of NGO Family with Military Junta....

This would probably provide for the most vigorous conduct of war against Viet Cong....It would...increase the number of contact points between Vietnamese and Americans.

The drawbacks or risks include the possible deterioration of junta rule into a power struggle between military chiefs; the lack of experience by the military in administering central government agencies; the restriction of popular political participation through representative institutions; the reduced likelihood of participation in government by increasingly disaffected civilian elites; and further delay in developing organized political groups and other forms of legitimate dissent.

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RM, RFE-31, "Disaffection and the War Effort in South Vietnam,"
September 11, 1963, p.1. III-13

...In particular, the four-month Buddhist crisis, climaxed by martial-law and subsequent tensions, has underscored the degree to which the military, the civil bureaucracy, student, as well as Buddhist groups show acute disaffection from the regime. This disaffection is unlikely to produce any immediately visible impact on the war effort. However, should no significant change occur in the regime's relations with these groups, a slow but steady erosion in resistance to communist attacks and subversion is probable. III-13

RM, RFE-90, "Statistics on the War Effort in South Vietnam Show Unfavorable Trends," October 22, 1963, p. 1. III-13

ABSTRACT

Statistics on the insurgency in South Vietnam, although neither thoroughly trustworthy nor entirely satisfactory as criteria, indicate an unfavorable shift in the military balance. Since July 1963, the trend in Viet Cong casualties, weapons losses, and defections has been downward while the number of Viet Cong armed attacks and other incidents has been upward. Comparison with earlier periods suggests that the military position of the government of Vietnam may have been set back to the point it occupied six months to a year ago. These trends coincide in time with the sharp deterioration of the political situation. At the same time, even without the Buddhist issue and the attending government crisis, it is possible that the Diem regime would have been unable to maintain the favorable trends of previous periods in the face of the accelerated Viet Cong effort. III-13

RM, RFE-90, "Statistics on the War Effort in South Vietnam Show Unfavorable Trends," October 22, 1963, p. 1. III-13

Statistics as Indicators

*The statistics used in this paper were compiled by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and by the Office of the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA) in the Department of Defense and are based on field reports submitted by the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV).

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RM, RFE-90, "Statistics on the War Effort in South Vietnam Show Unfavorable Trends," October 22, 1963, p. 2.

Viet Cong Incidents

Statistics show that the Viet Cong have accelerated their military and subversive effort since July 1963. From January 1962 until July 1963, the total number of Viet Cong armed attacks, as well as all other incidents (sabotage, terrorism, and propaganda), dropped consistently. However, since July of this year, total incidents and armed attacks have increased appreciably. If the present trend continues through the end of this year, total incidents will exceed by more than 10% the level for the period July-December 1962. Large Viet Cong attacks (company-size or larger) have also increased appreciably since July of this year, and, if the trend continues, could exceed by almost 30% the level for July-December 1962.

III-1

RM, RFE-90, "Statistics on the War Effort in South Vietnam Show Unfavorable Trends," October 22, 1963, p. 3.

Weapons Losses

During 1962, weapons losses among both the Viet Cong and government forces increased progressively, although government losses were somewhat greater than those of the Viet Cong. The increase continued during January-April 1963, but losses on both sides were about even. However, during May-August, Viet Cong weapons losses dropped by more than 10%, while losses among government forces increased by about 15%. If the trend noted during the last three weeks of September should continue throughout the year, the Viet Cong will lose almost 70% fewer weapons than the government. Moreover, a large number of the Viet Cong weapons lost are of the home-made variety while the great bulk of government weapons losses are of standard or modern-type pieces.

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RM, RFE-90, "Statistics on the War Effort in South Vietnam Show Unfavorable Trends," October 22, 1963, p. 4.

Conclusions

On the basis of available statistical trends, there appear to have been a number of significant and unfavorable changes in the military situation in South Vietnam since July of this year. Indeed, virtually all of the indicators noted in this report suggest that the military position of the Vietnam Government may have reverted to the point it had reached six months to a year ago. While it is difficult to relate precisely cause and effect for adverse changes in the military situation in South Vietnam, their occurrence at a time when the political situation has deteriorated must be considered as more than coincidental. At the same time, even without the Buddhist crisis and the more serious political difficulties following in its wake, it is possible that the Diem government would have been unable to maintain the favorable trends of preceding periods in the face of the accelerated Viet Cong effort since July 1963.

Memorandum to the Secretary, "JCS Comments on Department of State Research Memorandum RFE-90," November 8, 1963, p. 1.

You may be assured that our working level officers maintain close contact with the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and with General Krulak's office. As noted in the first page of the Research Memorandum, all statistics used in this report were compiled by DIA and by General Krulak's office. Recognizing limitations in these statistics, we have explained at some length, in the first two pages of our report, how the statistics are incomplete, sometimes unreliable, and omit other factors that are important but cannot be quantified. However, the statistics selected are among those regularly highlighted by the Military Assistance Command (MAC) and DIA in its weekly briefings of State's Vietnam Working Group. We recall that Generals Krulak and Wheeler, during last spring's discussions at CIA on the South Vietnam National Intelligence Estimate, declared that these statistics, then running in favor of the Vietnam Government, were not given sufficient emphasis in the estimate.

Memorandum to the Secretary, "JCS Comments on Department of State Research Memorandum RFE-90," November 8, 1963, p. 2.

We would like to comment briefly on two assertions in the Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum. It claims as a favorable indicator "the rise of confidence and fighting efficiency of the Vietnamese military forces." (Page 2.) We agree that these qualities have improved generally over the past few years but we believe that morale nonetheless has been adversely affected in recent months. The US Military Attache in Saigon reported last month that the Vietnamese Deputy Commander of Corps III feared mass desertions among his troops, possibly as high as 80%.

....Thus there is no basis for comparing the most recent estimate with those of six months and one year ago.

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RM, RFE-78, "Hanoi, Paris, Saigon, and South Vietnam's Future," Sept. 11, 1963, p. 1

ABSTRACT

President de Gaulle's statement of August 29 reflects his long-standing belief that neutralization of Southeast Asia is inevitable and desirable. However, neither his words nor reports of French diplomatic activity in Saigon indicate any clear and imminent intention of moving to bring this about in South Vietnam. Nonetheless, his statement and these reports provide a basis for Ngo Dinh Nhu to threaten, directly or indirectly, that clandestine contacts between Saigon and Hanoi might arrange a settlement contrary to United States interests. This threat may be merely a bluff to reduce United States pressures upon Nhu; should it go further Diem would probably stop such activity well short of any deal with Ho Chi Minh. Hanoi, however, would attempt to encourage such contacts if only to exploit contradictions within the non-Communist camp. Conceivably the mixture of truth and rumor, contrived and accidental, could bring about diplomatic pressures for an international conference on Vietnam. Soviet Russia might back such a move; Communist China would reluctantly go along if it thought this could force a withdrawal of the United States from South Vietnam....

...It seems unlikely that Hanoi would undertake any public commitment (re neutralization) at this time, and this judgment seems to be borne out by Hanoi's failure to put forth any proposals which might bind it to specific courses of political action or to dealing with a specific group. Although Hanoi has on occasion portrayed the Ngos sympathetically as objects of US plots, thereby suggesting a willingness to deal with them, this treatment has not been consistent. At the same time, North Vietnamese probably have some clandestine contacts within the GVN, and we see no reason to doubt that they would communicate with Nhu if he were willing. North Vietnam probably will encourage further contacts, whether through the French or the Poles, if only for the disruptive effect this will have on the GVN's relations with the United States and upon relationships within the GVN itself.

At some point Hanoi may well seek to arrange discussions between the GVN and representatives of the National Liberation Front (NFLSV), as a means of legitimizing the Front, possibly on the pretext of arranging a cease-fire. Already in late July, Ho Chi Minh suggested that a cease-fire might be worked out between the forces of the two sides. Even if the Ngos refused to deal with the Front, it seems likely that the North Vietnamese themselves would continue the contacts and hold out the hope of a cessation of hostilities in exchange for the reduction of US forces.

So long as the situation remains fluid, the North Vietnamese probably prefer bilateral contacts to reactivating the Geneva conference machinery

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which they would find cumbersome and less responsive to their desires. Moreover, Hanoi has appeared increasingly fearful that Moscow might reach an agreement with the United States to the detriment of Hanoi's interests. It seems likely that the North Vietnamese would favor reconvening the 1954 Geneva conference only if it were clear that the United States was seeking a way out and the GVN was pressing for US withdrawal. Under such circumstances, it is possible that Hanoi would agree to some neutralized status for the South, but it is doubtful that the North Vietnamese and the NFLSV, who would probably have to be represented, would agree to any meaningful controls. At the same time, Hanoi would probably hold out for some preliminary steps toward reunification under the old agreement.

RM, RFE-66, "North Vietnam's Economic Difficulties and Vulnerabilities," August 19, 1963, p. 2.

III-2

It is questionable, however, that the U.S. can hasten or intensify North Vietnam's economic strains. In view of the extremely limited amount of foreign trade with non-Communist countries, North Vietnam would not be significantly affected by Free World economic sanctions. A sea blockade would have a greater impact. But with North Vietnam's rail connections with Communist China, it would probably not affect current output and would reduce--but not suspend--industrial construction. The growing economic strains provide an opportunity for some success with political measures, including propaganda, organizing dissident minority groups, and establishing underground networks among disgruntled elements such as the Catholic minority. While such measures might exacerbate North Vietnam's problems, they probably would not be sufficient either to reduce the regime's control over its territory or to mount any credible threat against the regime itself.

North Vietnam is likely to be deterred from its present subversive tactics against South Vietnam only to the extent that it may view them as inviting U.S. military retaliation against North Vietnam's territory. The chief influence of economic and political measures would come not so much from their direct impact, as from their denoting an increased U.S. willingness to undertake whatever active, militant measures might be necessary to win its objectives in Laos and South Vietnam.

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IV-1

RM, RFE-102, "Trends in the War Effort in South Vietnam," Dec. 20, 1963,
p. 1

ABSTRACT

As early as July 1963 certain key statistical indicators began to shift in favor of the Viet Cong. By the end of October, statistics on the number of Viet Cong initiated incidents and armed attacks, and on fatalities and casualties, weapons losses, and defections pointed to a distinct deterioration in the military position of the Government of Vietnam. Almost immediately after the November coup, the Viet Cong sharply intensified their effort, particularly in the Mekong River delta and key provinces just north and south of Saigon which had already become the focus of their most pronounced step-up. In consequence, through December 3, the trend in the key statistical indicators continued to favor the Viet Cong with some leveling-off thereafter....

----p. ii

Although the past half-year has been a period of overall Viet Cong gain, it is difficult as yet to evaluate the full impact of the Communist effort. On balance, we do not believe that the situation has become irreversible. Viet Cong capabilities have not diminished but neither have those of the government, which has already demonstrated its ability to increase its response to the Viet Cong effort....

----p. 6

Conclusions

The present Viet Cong offensive, although it has substantially decreased in intensity during the past two or three weeks, demonstrates the continuing and undiminished capability of the insurgents to raise the level of their guerrilla and subversive operations. While the insurgents have obviously capitalized on the disquiet and confusion of post-coup developments to intensify their effort, it is equally obvious that this effort has been in the making for several months and represents a continuation of downward military trends already evident for some time before Diem's overthrow.

----pp. 6, 7

On balance, however, we do not believe that the situation is irreversible. While Viet Cong military capabilities have not diminished, neither have the government's. Moreover, the demonstrated ability of the government to increase its response to the Viet Cong offensive effort, the recent redeployment of government forces and redefinition of military regions, and plans to revitalize the pacification and strategic hamlet programs hold considerable promise that the military progress registered against the insurgents prior to

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TV-1
(CONT'D)

mid-1963 will be restored and surpassed. In seeking to fulfill this promise, the military leadership, unlike the Diem regime in its last days, has the advantage of a generally favorable climate of opinion. But just as the Diem government's preoccupation with its political problems hampered its ability to raise the level of its operations to meet the Viet Cong thrust, so the new leadership, equally preoccupied with political problems, has not yet moved swiftly to mobilize and apply its resources. Accordingly, much will depend on the ability of the military leadership to subordinate political and personal differences, act with despatch in completing the new framework of government, and to return full-time to managing the war effort.

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IV-2

IN - "Nature of the Current Student-Buddhist Demonstrations in South Vietnam," Aug. 24, 1964, p. 1

Student and Buddhist demonstrations in South Vietnam have very quickly transformed an internal political crisis, stemming from General Khanh's effort to reorganize the government, into a highly volatile situation that could explode at any moment.

---pp. 3,4

Anti-American Theme Emerging. Unlike the demonstrations last year, anti-American sentiment is evident. In Danang, what may have been a harmless statement by American personnel apparently prompted demonstrating students to stone an American military billet and mess there. Some Buddhist monks and student leaders in Saigon reportedly have stated that the US should try to understand "the aspirations of the Vietnamese people" and have criticized US intervention in the "internal affairs" of South Vietnam. However, these sentiments may actually reflect dissatisfaction with US support of Khanh and not necessarily advocate the withdrawal of the American presence.

Whither Khanh? Khanh is faced with probably his most serious challenge to power, with student and faculty elements now openly calling for his resignation. He is also confronted with a potential religious war between Buddhists and Catholics. Conceivably, consultation, even at this eleventh hour, with Buddhist, student, and Catholic leadership elements and with civilian politicians could introduce moderation and result in an acceptable formula for implementing his constitutional and governmental changes. However, student, Buddhist, and associated groups, having won another public confrontation with a Saigon regime, may see little incentive to compromise.

IN - "Situation and Immediate Outlook in South Vietnam," Aug. 28, 1964, p. 4.

IV-

Prospects Pessimistic but.... The triumvirate solution reflects the fragmented character of effective power and leadership within the Vietnamese government. Differences have been apparent for some time within the MRC, and there is no doubt now that these have crystalized into several but still unidentified factions. The triumvirate, therefore, is at best a compromise solution and is not likely to last for long. In the meantime, stresses and strains, possibly with explosive consequences, will continue among the generals, each suspecting the other of intrigue and ambitions for power. The least intriguing and ambitious of these is General Minh, who continues to retain prestige and support within the armed forces and, as demonstrated by recent events, among the Buddhists, students, and virtually every sector of the Vietnamese society. Therefore, Minh would appear to occupy more of a popular base for national leadership than any other personality in South Vietnam today.

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IV-4

IN - "General Minh Returns as Chief of State in South Vietnam,"
Sept. 9, 1964, pp. 2,3

Khanh Campaign Against Minh Aborted. One of the causes of the present crisis has been Khanh's campaign to discredit, neutralize, and eventually oust Minh. Khanh's assumption of extraordinary powers and the ouster of Minh in mid-August, coupled with other growing grievances against the Khanh leadership, climaxed fears among many that Khanh was moving quickly toward a military dictatorship. Khanh clearly underestimated Minh's public appeal and overestimated his own.

Minh Essential to National Unity. However reluctantly, Khanh, Khiem, and other elements in the Vietnamese military establishment have now apparently recognized that Minh's continuing leadership role is at least essential to their own survival. They may nevertheless still doubt his importance in maintaining national unity. Whatever their views, Minh remains one of the most dedicated leaders in South Vietnam today, and he will almost certainly continue to play a leading role in the government in South Vietnam during the foreseeable future.

Minh-Khanh Rapprochement Possible?... Furthermore, Khanh will almost certainly have to recognize Minh's intention to be something more than a mere figure-head in the government.

IV-5

IN - "Political Crisis in Saigon," Nov. 27, 1964, pp. 3,4.

Prospects. Without clear support from the High National Council and the military, there appears little chance that Huong can withstand the pressure against him. Even if such support materializes, it is not certain that opposition can be reduced to proportions which would permit the restoration of political stability and the effective functioning of government. It is difficult to see how opposition can be reduced to this level unless the competing forces feel some confidence that the composition of the cabinet reflects their own interests and aspirations. Given such confidence, it is possible that Huong could survive as the leader of a reconstituted cabinet. Without it, there is little hope that any successor government, civilian or military, could maintain effective power for long.

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IV-6

IN - "Criticism of General Khanh Could Portend Power Struggle Within Armed Forces," Dec. 3, 1964, p. 1.

During the current government crisis in South Vietnam, General Nguyen Khanh's military colleagues have become increasingly distrustful of his intentions and his support among them may have declined.

Khanh's Attitude toward Government Dubious. Although according to some reports Khanh supports the Huong government, the main thrust of available information clearly indicates that his support is not firm and strongly implies that Khanh believes the Huong regime cannot last. A number of top military officers, including General Ky, head of the airforce, have stated that Khanh's alleged support of the government is insincere and that Khanh actually hopes the government will fall and he will thereupon be recalled to political leadership. ...

IV-1

IN - "Military Coup in South Vietnam Dissolves Provisional Legislature," Dec. 20, 1964, pp. 3,4

Military Dangerously Aggravate Existing Crisis. The injection of the military once again into the already serious situation in South Vietnam can have very dangerous repercussions. It gives to the Buddhists, (one of whose leading layman, an internationally known Buddhist personality, has been detained by the military as a member of the High Council), a real and highly exploitable issue, which they have so far lacked in their effort against Premier Huong. They may now undertake an intense effort to topple the government. Indeed, Huong and Suu may even voluntarily step down, feeling that their public posture of legality has been undercut by the military's action. Finally, further pressures to shift the balance of power can build up within the already factionalized military leadership, leading to another disruptive military reorganization or even a further coup attempt.

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IV-8

IN - "Where Are the Vietnamese Buddhists Heading?" Jan. 22, 1965, p. 1

Buddhists Unyielding. The current demonstrations reflect the unyielding opposition of the Buddhist leadership to Huong. There were some earlier indications that the Buddhists were willing to compromise, partly because they may have felt they lacked a popular cause sufficient to generate a widespread effort....

---p. 2

Buddhists May Even Hope for Army Support. The Buddhist leadership may also believe that the military, whose support of Huong is probably tenuous and who have already openly contested his legal prerogatives, would actually intervene in behalf of the Buddhists and force Huong to resign ostensibly to avoid chaos. Although the Buddhists have frequently expressed opposition to military government, there are reports of Buddhist-military intrigues against Huong. Tri Quang himself has told Embassy officers that the best solution might be "temporary authoritarian rule" in which the young generals would not govern but would place civilian "true revolutionaries" in power, themselves wielding ultimate power behind the scenes.

MM-RFE-65-22, "The Situation in South Vietnam: the Quiet Coup," Jan. 27, 1965, p. 3

IV-9

7. Khanh's overriding ambition, coupled with his repeated maneuvers against known US positions, have in the span of one year precipitated five major crises in Saigon. In the process, he has seriously reduced if not almost eliminated any public respect for US political advice or for those who accept it. Moreover, his actions, coupled with those of the Buddhists, have fostered a rising crescendo of anti-American feelings.

These developments pose the serious question whether Khanh has considered an alternative course, i.e., a negotiated "neutralist" solution for South Vietnam. Should his short-sighted actions prompt him to explore this possibility, Khanh may ultimately overreach his power and be overthrown by his more dedicated colleagues.

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IV 10

Memorandum to the Acting Secretary : Immediate Prospects in Saigon,
Feb. 3, 1965, p. 1

As you requested, we have examined reports from Saigon during the past twenty-four hours indicating that military attitudes toward Khanh are now crystalizing into a possible attempt to oust him within the next few days. What reportedly has sharpened the military against Khanh is the belief that he is prepared to assume outright political control by the end of the week. The immediate questions posed are the motives of the anti-Khanh forces, the extent of their support and of support for Khanh, and the chances that the coup will succeed. A more far-reaching though complex question, of course, is the impact of an anti-Khanh coup on the prospects for political stability.

Khanh's Position Always Tenuous. General Khanh's position within the armed forces has long been tenuous. He has never had firm and unqualified support from any substantial element within the armed forces leadership, even though a number of young generals, labelled Young Turks, saved him during the abortive coup of September 1963, and supported him during the dissolution of the High National Council in December and in the removal of Prime Minister Huong last week. With each disruptive act for which Khanh has been directly or indirectly responsible, wariness and suspicion of Khanh within the armed forces leadership has increased.

---p. 2

In general, we feel that the forces against Khanh are strong enough to depose him, so long as they can remain united and keep control of their subordinate commanders. However, we know already that some of these subordinate commanders are in Khanh's camp. In addition Khanh, in the past, has been able to shift opponents and potential opponents back into his own camp by managing to create the impression that his support from elsewhere is stronger than is actually the case.

Impact on Political Stability. The Buddhists themselves are highly suspicious of Khanh and would probably not welcome his assumption of supreme power. Nevertheless at this time, while the Khanh-Buddhist alliance is apparently still in being, an anti-Khanh coup would probably be widely regarded as an anti-Buddhist coup. In the absence of convincing assurances to the contrary, the Buddhists (and their allied student and political forces) would be likely to conclude that the anti-Khanh forces were seeking to upset the recently achieved military-Buddhist power balance. Thus, while a coup against Khanh might satisfy grievances within the armed forces and conceivably lead to greater cohesiveness within its leadership, there is no assurance that such military unity could stabilize the political situation for very long if the Buddhists were in opposition.

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IN - "South Vietnam's New Cabinet: Possible Portent of Greater Stability,"
February 17, 1965, p. 1

With the establishment of Phan Huy Quat's cabinet, South Vietnam's two most powerful political forces, the military and Buddhist leaderships, appear to have arrived at a working relationship that may be the opening of a new phase in South Vietnamese politics.

---p. 2

Buddhist and Military Attitudes Crucial. The personal ambitions of such personalities as Thich Tri Quang and Generals Khanh, Ky (head of airforce), and Thi (commander of Corps I) are well known, and none of them would hesitate at a propitious moment to sacrifice political stability to his desire for personal power....

TV-12

MM-RFE-63-171, "Viet Cong Infiltration," Dec. 10, 1963, p. 3.

The principal use of Cambodian territory seems to be as a sanctuary during operations or engagements along the frontier. However, the introduction of munitions-making material from Cambodia probably has increased during 1963. During one four-month period, for example, some six tons of potassium chlorate were found on Viet Cong junks captured on the Mekong River entering South Vietnam from Cambodia.

There has also been an increase in the incidence of confirmed captures of weapons and equipment manufactured in Communist countries. However, the total amount of such equipment is still small, and an even smaller amount is confirmed as having been introduced or manufactured since the end of the Indochina war in 1954. Recently captured material of Chinese Communist origin includes two 75-mm recoilless rifles, two dual purpose heavy machine guns, one 81-mm mortar, and eight carbines.

On the basis of statistics provided by MACV, we conclude that the current step-up in Viet Cong armed activities is not directly related to any increased capability derived from recent infiltration. We believe rather that currently intensified efforts, timed to discredit the new government and take advantage of administrative and political problems attending the coup, reflect the general capability of the insurgents to raise the level of their operations, as demonstrated by trends developing since at least July 1963. Unless the infiltration rate for 1963 has been massively higher than any intelligence available to the United States would indicate, it seems clear that in 1963, as in the past, the effect of infiltration has been cumulative and qualitative. Quantitatively, Viet Cong capabilities continue to depend largely on indigenous resources.

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p. 4

IV 12
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Certain deficiencies remain, however:

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2. A long-standing plan, recommended by the United States in late 1961, to deploy a substantial number of Vietnamese ranger units along the Lao frontier has not been implemented.

3. Although junk patrolling of the coastline has proven increasingly effective, more aggressive and extensive patrolling of the inland waterways is needed.

4. The intelligence interrogation of captured or defected Viet Cong, although considerably improved, is cumbersome and essentially ineffective. The former Diem regime seriously restricted direct United States participation in interrogation.

pp. 4, 5

Conclusions

Currently intensified Viet Cong operations reflect the general and undiminished capability of the insurgents. Infiltration remains a problem of serious concern but its magnitude, as reflected in statistics accepted by MACV so far in 1963, has not been such as to increase significantly the capabilities of the Viet Cong.

The deployment of Vietnamese ranger units and a larger scouting force along the frontiers, as well as improved intelligence derived from interrogating Viet Cong prisoners, could reduce Hanoi's capability to infiltrate personnel.

However, the Vietnam Government, our help notwithstanding, will probably never be able to seal off completely the entire frontier. Hanoi is able to raise the level of infiltration without a serious risk of detection.

The final defeat of the Viet Cong will continue to depend essentially on cutting off the insurgents from their indigenous sources of support, through such measures as coordinated pacification and strategic hamlet programs.

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IV-13

IN - "Khanh's Claim on Increased North Vietnamese Infiltration," 7/17/64,
p. 3

Hanoi and Peiping Concern about "Provoking" US. Both overt and covert-evidence indicates that Hanoi and Peiping wish to avoid "provoking" US escalation by any change in their conduct of the war in Laos and South Vietnam at this time. Thus in addition to the absence of proof to support GVN charges, the logic of the present situation suggests that North Vietnam is unlikely to introduce regular units into the South except in response to United States escalation lest such a move would provide an excuse for our widening the war.

---pp. 3,4

Khanh's Motives Possibly Questionable. It is also possible that Khanh has taken advantage of this evidence and of increased Viet Cong activity in the northern provinces to strengthen pressures for an early escalation of the war. Khanh has become increasingly aware of the difficulties he faces in implementing his counterinsurgency program, to say nothing of restoring lost momentum.

Khanh's frustrations are also political. The threats to his position have been more clearly demonstrated during the past month or so by an open confrontation with key civil officials in his cabinet and by increasing criticism of his leadership by a number of important military officers. The direct military commitment by the United States that would be required for a move north would obviously strengthen Khanh's prestige and political position.

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MM, "Infiltration South Vietnam,"

Oct. 12, 1964, pp. 1,2.

GVN Continues Claim DRV Unit Infiltration

The GVN has claimed on various occasions since early this summer that regular DRV army units have entered South Vietnam and as organized PAVN units joined with Viet Cong forces, particularly in the northern provinces. Earlier General Khanh used this claim as justification for his "March North" propagandea campaign. Most recently, the GVN charged in a letter to the ICC that two regular companies of PAVN regiment 246 (stationed as of 1959 at Tuyen Quang north of Hanoi) now formed the principal Viet Cong forces in Trieu Phong district, Quang Tri province. MACV has stated that the Intelligence officer of the ARVN 1st Division has reported that steady infiltration from North Vietnam had increased Viet Cong forces near Quang Tri city to a point where they caused a serious threat to the full control of the area by GVN authorities.

Although MACV has not yet commented on the report of increased infiltration into Quang Tri and in general has not yet submitted evidence to confirm GVN claim of infiltration in 1964, a spokesman (Zorthian) of the US Mission in Saigon stated publicly October 8 that there has been an increase in infiltration this year. There is however, no evaluated evidence in the intelligence community in Washington to the effect that infiltration from North Vietnam into South Vietnam has been stepped up recently.

Unit Infiltration Unlikely

Likewise, there is no reliable evidence confirming infiltration of regular army units from North Vietnam. To some extent perhaps, this may be a matter of interpretation and semantics as it seems clear from interrogation reports that most Viet Cong infiltrators are trained at the Xuan Mai training base and depart for South Vietnam in groups of from 100 to 500 men. However, it is highly unlikely that they enter South Vietnam en masse, but rather as individuals or in small groups. Until the present at least, they have been subsequently encadred into new or existing Viet Cong units. It is possible that men who trained together at Xuan Mai are serving together in the South, but they cannot be said to be part of a regular North Vietnamese army unit operating in South Vietnam. It also seems unlikely that units from a regiment located as far north as Tuyen Quang would be infiltrated into the South.

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IV-15

MM-RFE-64-125, "Encadrement of United States Advisors in Vietnam,"
May 30, 1964, p. 1

... This obstacle has been removed and the greater responsiveness of the present government has created the opportunity--essentially the one we have sought since 1961--to participate in direction as well as to advise. Other crucial problems remain, however, and have even been accentuated in the confusion and lack of direction of the Vietnamese government apparatus which hamper decision-making at the central level and the implementation of decisions at both the central and local levels. To overcome these problems in a situation that permits no time for gradual evolution may well require more than encadrement at the province level, vital as this encadrement may be.

... A regularized and systematic joint effort at the top not only to exchange ideas and recommend policies, but more importantly to follow through on their implementation could help considerably to expedite and coordinate the decision-making process and thus assure quick and meaningful guidance down through the chain of command. This might be accomplished by the creation of a permanent high-level Vietnamese-United States committee, meeting frequently and regularly to consider, implement, coordinate, and follow up policy decisions and programs, particularly as they relate to the counter-insurgency and pacification effort. However, to help assure that this body does not in time deteriorate to little more than a sounding board for the exchange of views, the mutual recognition that specific high-level United States officials will be available for advice to Vietnamese cabinet and top military officials on a regular or at least frequent basis--functioning, say as "special advisors" or "consultants"--would go far in maintaining momentum in the execution of vital Vietnamese government programs.

----p. 2

Just as encadrement at the top may be required to give full force and effect to encadred provincial operations, so encadrement at the district level may be necessary to ensure full implementation of vital programs at the very level from which the new pacification effort must start and spread. In view of the obvious problem of recruiting qualified United States personnel sufficiently rapidly and in adequate numbers, it might even be advisable to limit the number of provinces to be encadred to a point that would permit encadrement in the selected provinces at the district as well as provincial level.

To be sure, so great a degree of direct United States participation from the very center of sovereignty to almost the lowest local level would carry with it dangers similar in kind but even greater in degree than merely encadrement at the provincial level. Vietnamese initiative might wither, failures could be the more readily attributable to the United States, efforts could be made to play off United States officials against each other, and

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Communist propaganda identification of the United States effort with French "colonialism," which thus far has not been particularly effective, might become more persuasive. ...

---p. 3

...the American advisory corps has shown considerable awareness of the complexity of this problem--the need to avoid aggravating Vietnamese sensitivities and frustration while, at the same time, inspiring Vietnamese initiative and decisiveness.

On the balance, we think the situation has shown little progress under the status quo whereas the gains of this course outweigh its liabilities under existing circumstances.

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IV-10

MM-RFE-64-76, "Viet Cong Use of Cambodian Territory," April 15, 1964, p. 1

As requested by FE/SEA and S/VN we have examined the airgrams, mentioned in B1, B3
Saigon's telegram No. 1898 of April 3, 1964, as well as other materials relating to Viet Cong use of Cambodian territory for the past 18 months. On balance we believe that the conclusions of RFE Research Memorandum No. 35 of August 7, 1962 (attached) are still substantially valid, i.e., there is still no firm evidence to substantiate numerous official GVN charges and reports the Viet Cong make extensive use of Cambodian territory as a base for operations in Vietnam; there is, nevertheless, no doubt that the Viet Cong make limited use of Cambodian territory as a safe haven and for infiltrating cadres, supplies, and funds. The Viet Cong probably cross the frontier with somewhat greater frequency and ease at present since they control areas along the Vietnamese side of the frontier more effectively than they did in 1962. They also probably bivouac in Cambodian territory for varying periods of time. However, evidence that the Viet Cong have established and maintain permanent bases in Cambodia has not been effectively substantiated.

IV-17

MM-RFE-64-108, "UN Presence on the Vietnam-Cambodian Border," 5/15/64, p. 3.

Conclusions

The advantages of a UN presence would appear to be negligible in a military sense and insufficiently compelling politically to suggest that the United States should take the initiative for a genuine UN presence in the area.

The military disadvantages, however, do not appear to be sufficiently overwhelming to suggest that we should strongly resist pressures for the initiation of such operations. It has yet to be demonstrated that Viet Cong utilization of Cambodian territory, although causing serious problems in certain areas, has significantly affected the overall course of the war or is likely to do so. Nor is it likely that we would be prepared to assume the political consequences of uninhibited retaliation against the Viet Cong on Cambodian soil. Indeed it might be argued that the restraints imposed upon us by a UN presence are not very much greater than those we have imposed and are likely to continue to impose upon ourselves. In addition the border situation has been unfavorable to us as much politically as militarily in contributing to constant tensions between South Vietnam and Cambodia and in providing Sihanouk with a rationale for excessive demands. In this context we could at least expect to benefit from a UN role to the extent that it might mitigate these tensions and perhaps moderate Sihanouk's demands.

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IV-10

RM, RFE-3, "Communist Attitudes Toward Neutralization for South Vietnam,"
Jan. 20, 1964, p. 1

ABSTRACT

North Vietnam has shown little interest in promoting an international conference to neutralize South Vietnam, and its mouth-piece, the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV), has not reiterated 1962 proposals to this end. The North Vietnamese are unlikely to seek international neutralization in the near future, but they will quietly promote neutralist sentiment in the South to create confusion and lower morale. Pressure by Hanoi for international neutralization would become more likely if Hanoi felt that the Viet Cong was stalemated and that there was significant support for the idea from non-communist governments or, alternatively, if it appeared that the Viet Cong was in a sufficiently strong bargaining position and that Washington wished to drop its commitment to Saigon gracefully.

—p. 7

...in a situation where Hanoi feels the Viet Cong has been stalemated, the North Vietnamese might see such a settlement as a relatively cheap method of removing the United States from the scene.

In any such conference, the North Vietnamese would insist on NFLSV participation and on parallel talks to form a coalition government. While deactivating but not disbanding the Viet Cong organization, Hanoi and the NFLSV would frustrate any effective international means of control. This formula would be viewed as an interim step toward reunification under Hanoi's auspices. We see no indications that the North Vietnamese would be willing to agree to any closer control over their own military establishment than that envisaged in the 1954 agreements.

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IV-17

IN - "Communists Hint Interest in South Vietnam Settlement," 11/20/64, p. 1

.... The terms vaguely outlined do not differ markedly from those suggested in past public statements except in one respect: they clearly allow for US withdrawal after rather than before establishment of a coalition government.

---p. 2

So far Hanoi has appeared reluctant to float these hints at a more authoritative level or publicly through the Front itself. However, they may be made more directly if Hanoi sees a growing threat of US escalation and an increasing deterioration of the government position in the South.

IV-20

IN - "Mao Tse-Tung Discusses Possible Conference on Vietnam," 2/12/65, p. 2

Implications. Mao's remarks are significant in two respects. First, they suggest that he had a more positive attitude toward negotiations on Vietnam than had been indicated either in public statements or in private interviews with Western correspondents. Second and more important, the interview indicates that there might be some give in the hitherto absolute insistence of the Asian communists that the United States must completely withdraw all personnel and weapons from South Vietnam. We have never before seen any suggestion that the communists would allow a settlement permitting some US personnel to remain indefinitely in South Vietnam. We rather doubt that they would actually agree to this, and Mao may simply have been hinting a high degree of flexibility in the communist position to encourage interest in a conference. Mao said nothing else about what the communists wanted to get out of negotiations.

Current Position. Mao's statements were made in early January in an interview in which he downplayed the threat of US expansion of the war. In mid-January, both the Chinese and the North Vietnamese reportedly made the point privately that they could not call for a conference under US threats to expand the war; Pham Van Dong explained that such a move might be interpreted as a sign of weakness. We have no report that either Hanoi or Peiping has put out any feeler regarding negotiations since the US strikes on North Vietnam.

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IV-21

MM-RFE-65-51 - "Possible North Vietnamese Interest in an Indochina Conference," Feb. 15, 1965, p. 1

... Although this thrust is obviously designed to encourage the British to join other US allies who oppose US policy, the article also suggests that the North Vietnamese may perhaps be reconsidering their previous reluctance to join any conference on Vietnam.

---p. 2

... While the North Vietnamese request for withdrawal of the International Control Commission teams could be used to promote a conference, we believe that the request was motivated by other considerations, perhaps preparation for the contingency of Chinese Communist involvement or North Vietnamese military moves.

Trial Balloon? It is extremely unlikely that Hanoi would rely exclusively on this means for communicating any serious interest in negotiations. Nevertheless non-Communist press speculation has already fastened on the Nhan Dan article and Hanoi's handling of such speculation may provide further clues on North Vietnamese attitudes.

MM-RFE-65-63, "Peiping-Hanoi Attitudes Toward Negotiations,"
Feb. 23, 1965

IV-22

North Vietnamese Attitude

While itself refraining from any public approval of negotiations, Hanoi has maintained some flexibility in its position. It exhibited some signs (largely before the US air strikes) of keeping open the possibility of future talks or at least not discouraging initial efforts by others to arrange negotiations. Hanoi seems very sensitive, however, to the fact that any interest in negotiations might be interpreted as a sign of weakness and as indicating an intention to call off the Viet Cong. (A North Vietnamese liaison man recently told the Canadian ICC representative that North Vietnam would never negotiate under pressure.)

There has been no direct north Vietnamese response to recent discussion of the possibility of negotiations,....

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INR/CIA Contribution to S/P Paper, Feb. 27, 1964

IV. 2. APPRAISAL OF THE QUESTION WHETHER THE DRV CAN PUT A STOP TO THE WAR IN SVN AND, IF SO, HOW RAPIDLY

1. Yes, it probably could. This of course does not mean that compliance would be immediate or total, even in the best of circumstances.

2. We feel, however, that a more realistic and important question to be posed is not the DRV's capability to call off the war in the South, but its willingness. As discussed in IV-3, below, we are not confident that the DRV would call off the war.

....

Definition of Links Between Actions and Political Effects Desired Economic Vulnerabilities.... In spite of Hanoi's doctrinaire desire to pursue ideologically satisfying industrial goals, the leadership is clearly even more anxious to obtain domination of South Vietnam than it is to maintain capital development.

....

A sea blockade would not seriously affect North Vietnam's ability to maintain its current military strength. Viet Cong supplies from the North would not be seriously affected by a maritime blockade of North Vietnam. The Viet Cong would continue to rely primarily on their resources within South Vietnam and supply of basic items from North Vietnam would not be affected.

(p. 2) Pinpointed bombing of the few industrial targets and interdiction of rail lines and roads in North Vietnam would seriously--if not critically--affect the urban economy of the North. However, by reliance on the self-sufficient agricultural life of the villages it is likely that basic economic life would go on and necessary support for the regime's military and governmental structure would be maintained..

Fear of Vassalage to the Chinese. Vietnamese fear of domination of their nation by the Chinese is deep and pervasive. But Hanoi's desire for reunification with the South seems even greater and the opportunity to unify the nation is clear and present. Also, traditional fear of Chinese domination is balanced by Vietnamese Communist memories of Chinese Communist support in the dark early days of the "revolution."

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In any event, it seems unlikely that fear of Chinese domination alone would reduce Hanoi's efforts to control all of Vietnam or to call in Chinese Communist support in the event of a serious threat of US action against its territory.

(p. 3) Hanoi is likely to assure itself of Chinese and Soviet support before encouraging a maintenance or increase of Viet Cong activity in the South despite threats from the US. Peiping would probably assist Hanoi militarily (especially in the air and on the ground) if North Vietnam were attacked, but it also probably would prefer to avoid the likelihood of such a confrontation if it could be accomplished with little loss of face.

(p. 4) ..., we see at least a 50-50 chance that the North Vietnamese may temporarily tone down their effort in the South if it becomes clear that the US really intends to move toward the North.

If the North Vietnamese and the Chinese are confronted with such a possibility too publicly, they may feel that their prestige is so involved that they cannot back down in the face of a direct threat. This suggests, in turn, that damaging covert strikes against North Vietnam might serve as a more effective inhibitor to continued support to the Viet Cong than would overt action against the DRV which would engage communist prestige and bring international pressures more directly into play.

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INR/CIA Contribution to S/P Paper, Feb. 27, 1964

(p. 1) ... At the present time, the leaders of both states appear convinced that the Viet Cong's limited, largely self-sufficient war of attrition will eventually be successful, particularly in view of continuing instability in Saigon, and probably see no reason to invite US retaliation by direct and more voluminous involvement. ...

(p. 2) 3. We are not sanguine that the US-sponsored courses under examination would cause the DRV to call off the war in the South.

a. The lesser unattributable actions of Category I [overt activities up to unattributed air strikes] and the overt actions of Category II (below) [overt activity by US and its allies short of action against DRV territory] would not be likely to convince the DRV that it was necessary to close out the war or to reduce drastically its support of the VC.

...

1) The DRV would be hurt seriously by such US-sponsored sanctions, but we feel that it could absorb this punishment without collapsing.

2) The DRV leaders would be confident that existing Communist positions in South Vietnam and/or Laos could be strengthened rapidly, perhaps to the point of making the non-Communist positions there virtually untenable.

...

4) Even should the US persist and through heavy damage to the DRV exact a commitment to call off the war in the South, it is very doubtful that measures for carrying out the agreement could be sufficiently precise and reliable to insure continuing compliance, particularly on the important issue of command and control. ...

(pp.3,4)... The DRV would probably establish new covert command headquarters in the South for continuing the effort, so that the VC could lie low or continue its subversion at a lower level. Of course, the GVN would gain time to reduce the threat provided it improved its capability in this regard.

5) Communist reaction to Category III actions [overt US combat action against DRV territory and territorial waters]--for the DRV as well as Communist China and the USSR--would probably stop short of extreme responses carrying unlimited...US military sanctions against the DRV, China, or the USSR. ... More likely, however, the DRV might greatly heighten its support of VC and Pathet Lao efforts to take over their countries. ...

...

c. to this end, seek international action against the US in a new Geneva conference or in the General Assembly. They would also enlist French support in proposition neutralization of South Vietnam, perhaps promising to "call off" the VC in return.

(p. 5) 10. In general, there would probably be greater danger of sharper Communist reactions to a US strategy which gradually increased pressures over a period of time, than to higher-scale sanctions which the US applied more quickly. Similarly, reactions would almost certainly be sharper to repeated or sustained sanctions than to one shot isolated actions.

11. The modalities of warning and of communicating our intentions to the enemy would probably have some, but not great, effect on his reactions.

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INR Contribution to S/P Paper, Feb. 27, 1964

Negotiations: An Outline of Questions

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I. Options Available to the Communists*

Negotiations, preferably at a new Geneva conference, provide the most promising option open to the communists if they are faced with potentially costly US military action in South Vietnam or, most clearly, against North Vietnam. Under Course I, covert actions against the North, the communist powers involved are unlikely to seek negotiations unless such actions threatened serious damage. For its own interests, Moscow might be the first to urge political action and perhaps attempt to commit the North Vietnamese to talks before they were actually willing. Covert air strikes, or even their anticipation, would cause Hanoi to mount intense political pressure, together with Peiping and Moscow and, in the case of strikes, urge reconvening the 1954 Geneva Conference to forestall further action. To facilitate this effort, the North Vietnamese would indicate to the French -- and probably the British -- interest in "neutralization" for South Vietnam, hinting that the Viet Cong would cease fire in return.

It is less easy to calculate communist reactions under the more complex Course II -- direct action by the US and its allies, short of DRV territory. Hanoi and Peiping would most likely press for conference action if threatening US gestures against North Vietnam appeared credible

* This section expands on the discussion of the negotiation options open to the communists contained in IV, 3 "Estimated Consequences of US Actions Against North Vietnam." We assume that the communists would at the same time take military and political actions described in IV, 3.

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and/or if US intervention in the South was seriously hurting the Viet Cong. Otherwise there might be agitation for international action as part of an effort to mount non-communist pressure on the United States, but probably no serious interest in negotiations. Again Moscow might assume the initiative in its role as Geneva Conference co-chairman.

In the face of direct US action against North Vietnam, the communist powers are almost certain quickly to seek reconvening of the Geneva Conference and maximize political pressure on the United States. ~~The Soviets might~~ ~~additionally~~ ~~be~~ ~~suspicious~~ ~~of~~ ~~this~~ ~~move~~ ~~unless~~ ~~Moscow~~ ~~was~~ ~~simply~~ ~~seeking~~ ~~a~~ ~~broader~~ ~~mandate~~ ~~for~~ ~~a~~ ~~new~~ ~~Geneva~~ ~~Conference~~. The move for a conference might be combined with a Viet Cong offensive in hopes of overthrowing the Government in Saigon or at least in order to strengthen the communist bargaining position. Moscow's primary motivation for a conference would be to avoid the dilemma of either failing to help a communist state under attack or risking war with the United States over Vietnam, an area of peripheral Soviet interest. Faced with US attacks on North Vietnam and the realization of their own military weaknesses, the Chinese also would see a conference as a means of restricting US freedom of action in Vietnam while avoiding a direct confrontation with US power.

In any case, since the major communist objective of forestalling US action would be met simply by convening a conference, we doubt that either Peiping or Hanoi would make any significant concessions for an overall settlement or that Moscow would be able to gain their acceptance

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of an accord satisfactory to Washington. Hanoi would stick to its contention that the North Vietnamese are not involved in the South and insist that the political wing of the Viet Cong, the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front, participate in the conference. Simultaneously, the Front would attempt to reach a cease-fire agreement on the ground in South Vietnam and, depending on the Viet Cong strength, hope to enmesh the Government in talks aimed at an internal settlement. At the Geneva conference table, the communist representatives would block any attempts to broaden the powers of the International Control Commission and, as in Laos, insist on communist concurrence before any investigation. Hanoi and Peiping would oppose any proposal which would seriously weaken the Viet Cong organization. Hanoi and the Viet Cong would calculate that a cease-fire and a conference reaffirming the 1954 Geneva Accords could only temporarily halt their drive while these moves might seriously cripple Saigon's effort against the Viet Cong. The communist powers, probably with significant non-communist support, would insist on US withdrawal as a prerequisite to any general settlement.

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IV-20

IN - "Peiping Expresses "Unqualified Support" for North Vietnam but Avoids Specifics," March 3, 1964, p. 1

... As in Peiping's failure to publicize Hanoi's earlier assertion that a US attack on North Vietnam would have to cope with Communist China as well, so these latest statements do not commit Peiping to any particular action. Their timing and content, nonetheless, suggest Chinese Communist readiness to match vague US threats with parallel political escalation of an equally suggestive but threatening nature. ...

(p. 3)

... Peiping probably does not feel the present nature of US allusions to escalation warrant a more specific deterrent at this time although Hanoi has chosen to send more specific counterwarnings through covert as well as overt channels. This does not lessen the likelihood, however, that Chinese Communist commitments to North Vietnam will become more specific and serious should the threat to Hanoi appear coorespondingly grave.

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Memo to Acting Secretary re "Key Questions with Respect to Action Against North Vietnam," May 30, 1964.

A. The Present Phase

1. What chance do we have of successful counterinsurgency in SVN without changing the rules of the game? 50-50? Less than even?
2. Do we have a sufficiently accurate measurement of Viet Cong's political and material support from the North to provide a satisfactory basis for judging the effects of Hanoi's compliance with our requirements?
3. What indications of Hanoi's probable response to our changing the rules have emerged over the past four months as it has come to learn of our contemplated actions? How will we test Hanoi's response further in the pre-attack phase?
4. Do we face another Geneva-type settlement as a result of changing the rules? If so, have we examined the effect of approaching Geneva through this course of action as compared with alternative means of approaching a settlement?

B. The Air Attack Phase

1. How justifiable will our use of air-strikes as punishment for the crime of Viet Cong infiltration-insurgency appear to our allies? UN? US public?
2. Can we reassure key audiences at home and abroad against fears of escalation while confronting Hanoi with the threat of further escalation?
3. How confident are these audiences that the GVN is sufficiently viable to survive Viet Cong pressure even if aid and direction from Hanoi is suspended?
4. What chance is there of Chinese Communist air-ground defense of North Vietnam against GVN/Farmgate attacks? What political effect would Chicom involvement at this stage have upon reactions in Hanoi, Moscow, London, and the US? How would this affect our next moves?
5. If Hanoi has clearly anticipated our attacks and has nevertheless maintained support of continued Viet Cong pressure, will it, under US air strikes, admit defeat at home and responsibility for insurrection outside its borders?
6. What are the minimal Communist responses which will determine our willingness to enter into political negotiations? Do we continue the attacks during these negotiations? Do we resume the attacks or increase the level of escalation if negotiations break down?

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Memo to Acting Secretary re "Key Questions with Respect to Action Against North Vietnam," May 30, 1964

7. What are the limits to which we are prepared to go in pursuing this course of action? How long will we continue it against pressure for a cease-fire and negotiations in the absence of any meaningful indicators of satisfactory Communist responses? What would be the problem of breaking off our attacks under such pressure and without achieving our goal?

C. The Geneva Phase

1. Have we (a) defined our minimum as well as maximum terms of settlement, (b) anticipated initiatives by other participants, and (c) assessed the outcome of such a conference?
2. What constitutes a "realistic settlement" for South Vietnam? How likely, feasible, and acceptable are (a) Viet Cong withdrawal or surrender through amnesty, (b) a coalition regime, (c) partition, and (d) a "neutral" SVN?
3. What are negotiable and enforceable safeguards against continued infiltration through Laos or over water?
4. Is it to our advantage to keep Laos and South Vietnam as separate problems? Can they be kept separate at a conference?
5. Which has the greater priority for Hanoi--economic modernization or national reunification cum revolution? How does this priority affect Hanoi's willingness to bargain?
6. What is Hanoi's assessment of the prospects in South Vietnam over the next year in terms of winning, losing, or prolonged stalemate?
7. What happens in South Vietnam should negotiations become prolonged? Is a cease-fire likely? What would its effect be on GVN morale and political stability? What will our presence be during this period?
8. How do we react should the Viet Cong gradually resume infiltration-insurgency against the precedent of this particular Geneva scenario?

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SNIE 50-2-64, "Probable Consequences of Certain US Actions
with Respect to Vietnam and Laos," May 25, 1964

CONCLUSIONS

A. In response to US preparatory and low-scale actions—force deployments, serious threats, or GVN/Farmgate attacks on outlying targets in Communist-held Laos or North Vietnam—Hanoi would probably agitate world opinion against the US, hoping that a new Geneva conference or UN action would result, and bring a cessation of attacks. We think that North Vietnam, while taking various precautionary measures, would order the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao to refrain from dramatic new attacks, and might reduce the level of the insurrections for the moment. Communist China and the USSR would both support these courses. The Communists' line would probably be that the outcome of a conference should be to stabilize the situation in South Vietnam and Laos. Their intention, however, would be to preserve Communist gains and assets in these two countries and to resume the insurrectionary campaigns at a later date.

B. If these initial responses did not succeed, and attacks on North Vietnam continued, it is likely that the Communists would intensify their political action efforts against the US course. Hanoi might intermittently step up the tempo of the insurrections in South Vietnam and Laos, while still seeking a negotiated settlement. If these tactics, too, failed, the scale of attacks broadened, and North Vietnam began to suffer considerable destruction, Hanoi's leaders would have to ask themselves whether the tactics they were pursuing were worth the destruction of their country. We are unable to set any meaningful odds for the course North Vietnam's leaders would adopt at this juncture, though we incline to the view that they would lower their terms for a negotiated outcome; they would do so in the interests of preserving their regime and in the expectation of being able to renew the insurrections in South Vietnam and Laos at a later date. There would nevertheless be a significant danger that they would fight, believing that the US would still not be willing to undertake a major ground war, or that if it was, it could ultimately be defeated by the methods which were successful against the French.

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C. Communist China almost certainly would not wish to become involved in hostilities with US forces. It would accordingly proceed with caution, though it would make various threatening gestures. There would probably not be high risk of Chinese Communist ground intervention unless major US/GVN ground units had moved well into the DRV or Communist-held areas of northern Laos, or possibly, the Chinese had committed their air and had subsequently suffered attack on CCAF bases in China. The USSR would make strenuous propaganda and political efforts in Hanoi's behalf, and would probably offer various weapons and air defense equipment. We believe, however, that the USSR would refrain from military actions in the area, and would not provoke a crisis with the US elsewhere which would bring a direct US-USSR confrontation. Its primary concern would be to exert its influence in a manner to insure a negotiated settlement, though without prejudicing its future relations with Hanoi.

D. Clear-cut achievement of the US objectives as stated in the Problem would signify not that the Communist threat in Southeast Asia was removed, but simply that time had been gained for further constructive action to deal with the threat. The US commitment would in itself improve anti-Communist morale and improve the chances for such action. On the other hand, to the degree that the consequences of the US action were ambiguous or unsuccessful, there would almost certainly be a strong tendency for morale and discipline in South Vietnam and Laos to deteriorate rapidly—perhaps more rapidly than if the US had not begun its intensified effort. Such deterioration would be felt generally through non-Communist Asia.

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IV-01

Memo to the Acting Secretary re: "Peiping Strengthens Implicit
Commitment to Defend North Vietnam," July 9, 1964.

Warning. In a July 9 editorial, People's Daily elaborates upon and strengthens Foreign Minister Chen I's warning of July 6. It repeats that the Chinese people cannot be expected to look on "with folded arms" in the face of aggression against North Vietnam. It justifies this stand by proclaiming Peiping's duty to protect all other socialist countries from "imperialist invasion" and by drawing in Chinese national interest with a declaration that a US attack on North Vietnam poses a threat to China's peace and security....

Implications. The statement obviously aims to deter the United States by raising the likelihood of Chinese involvement in response to US action against the North, while at the same time not publicly committing Peiping to a specific course. We believe, however, that the statement probably also reflects an actual commitment made by the Chinese Communists to Hanoi under which they undertake in at least general terms to assist the DRV. It is true that the editorial once again pledges the Chinese "people" and not the government, and specifies no particular action; nor, for example, does it categorically declare that an attack on North Vietnam will be treated as an attack on China, in terms like those previously used by Peiping in its pledge to the Soviet Union. However, the editorial does represent another step in hardening of the Chinese position since Chan I's initial response on June 24 which used only the phrase about the Chinese people not sitting idly by while "the flames of war" spread to "their side."

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IV-30

RM, RFE-56, "Peiping and Hanoi: Motivations in Gulf of Tonkin Crisis,"
August 6, 1964, pp 2,3

Hanoi's problem, and ultimately that of Peiping, was to avoid passivity of a type that would invite further punishment without, at the same time, providing a provocation that would trigger further escalation. The unescorted mission of the Maddox, close to North Vietnamese territory and coinciding with clandestine South Vietnamese activities along the coast provided an opportunity both to demonstrate Hanoi's determination to respond as well as to implicate the US publicly and directly in the "South Vietnamese" raids....

Basic Strategy Reaffirmed: The Compulsions of Confrontation

At a minimum, Hanoi knew its attack would meet a counterattack on the torpedo boats involved. At a maximum, it should have contemplated hot pursuit which could result in air strikes against torpedo boat bases. Acceptance of this greater risk may not have been carefully weighed in prolonged consultation with Peiping, but its acceptance would be consistent with the basic posture struck by Hanoi--and supported by Peiping--during the previous six months, i.e., the willingness to suffer United States air strikes in order to pursue the war in South Vietnam. If Hanoi could be deterred from its course of action in the Gulf of Tonkin by relatively low-cost aerial retaliation, how could it persuade its enemy it would stick to the present course in South Vietnam when greater costs were involved?

In short, having assured its people and the world that it would not compromise in the face of threatened escalation, Hanoi may have felt compelled to prove this point with the Maddox. Once the initial attack aborted, the consequences of passivity became more serious, as did the consequences of further action. Public silence was prudent, even though the element of surprise was gone, since the attack might fail. Denial that it ever occurred followed from that failure, whereas admitting the initial assault supported the allegation that Maddox missions were not peaceful but screened covert South Vietnamese attacks against North Vietnamese territory.

Peiping's prompt and public official support for Hanoi following our air strikes, asserting that aggression against North Vietnam was aggression against Communist China, suggests that Peiping certainly accepted the consequences of Hanoi's second attack even if it did not expressly acquiesce beforehand. Peiping had not uttered this precise formulation previously nor was it compelled to do so at this time, in the absence of any continued attacks on North Vietnam. Indeed, what evidence is at hand makes it difficult to believe Peiping attempted any restraint between the two attacks and more likely that it supported Hanoi's willingness to persist.

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Memorandum for the Secretary, "Probable Foreign Reaction to the US Strike," August 4, 1964

We have considered likely reactions to the US strike. In brief, the North Vietnamese and Chicom̄s will want to avoid escalation, but will take vigorous measures of unpredictable intensity in order to deter further US action. Hanoi, Peiping, and Moscow will take every advantage of the tense situation to stimulate world alarm and press for a conference. France will join in this pressure. The UK, while sympathetic with the idea of a conference, will stay in line with the US.

North Vietnam

The North Vietnamese have stated that they would respond to any attack against their territory or territorial waters....We believe that the North Vietnamese will view the US strike as a prelude to further action by the US against their territory and will react to it militarily within the limit of their capability. They will probably request both the Soviets and the Chinese Communists for assistance in the defense of a "fellow Socialist state." At the same time, they will probably call upon the Geneva Conference participants to prevent further US action against them.

It seems likely, as Hanoi implicitly warned again on August 2, that the main counter-reprisals will be in the South in the form of stepped up activity by the Viet Cong. Hanoi will be under strong pressure to demonstrate that attacks on the North will not halt Viet Cong action and to achieve a success that will offset the impact of the US strike. We do not envisage that this would involve, at least initially, an open assault by regular North Vietnamese units across the DMZ, although it seems likely that forces will be readied for such a contingency. There may also be Pathet Lao action in Laos to raise the threat of expanding hostilities there.

We doubt at this stage that the North Vietnamese would initiate air strikes against targets in South Vietnam. However, we still find a rational explanation difficult for the renewed attack upon the Maddox and thus cannot rule out the possibility of further venturesome and aggressive actions on the part of Hanoi.

Communist China

There has as yet been no Chinese Communist reaction to either Maddox incident. In recent weeks, however, the Chinese Communists have stepped up their warnings with respect to actions against North Vietnam. For example, on July 20, the Chinese suggested that they might respond with their own forces and, as late as August 1, at army day receptions in Hanoi and Peiping, military spokesmen warned that "the Chinese people cannot stand with folded arms in the face of any encroachment upon North Vietnam."

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Peiping's reaction would be directed toward demonstrating its determination to support and defend Hanoi and toward raising international pressures against further escalation while leaving room for negotiations or further graduated responses as they deem necessary.

To meet the first two objectives Peiping's actions would have to be overt and carry the threat of further escalation; the third will require that Peiping's actions not be such as to make escalation inevitable or unnecessarily place the Communists at international disadvantage.

The most likely Chicom move would be the transfer to North Vietnam of aircraft, including jet fighters, and ground anti-aircraft equipment. Advisors will be sent and, possibly, volunteer pilots, but we do not envisage ground movements into North Vietnam at this point. This action could be played as a purely defensive measure while at the same time it would signal Chinese Communist involvement and suggest further moves to come. Additional motor torpedo and gun boats to rebuild North Vietnam's patrol and coastal defense capabilities would be possible. At the same time, to demonstrate the dangers of the situation without becoming overcommitted, Peiping could communicate evidence of mobilizing moves within China, especially in the border area, with a view to building concern over the threat of Chinese Communist ground intervention. It is also possible that the Chinese and North Vietnamese would announce a formal defense treaty.

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IN, "Hanoi Uses Journalist to Ward Off Further Attacks," Aug. 18, 1964,
pp. 2,3.

North Vietnamese Intentions. Hanoi's primary official response to the US strike has been to intensify defense preparedness in the North. While it has warned about the dangerous consequences of new US "aggression," the warnings have been no more precise than they were before the Maddox affair. The Burchett story as well as the Pathet Lao and NFLSV statements (threatening to step up the war) are probably efforts to deter further US or GVN action against the North. We doubt that Hanoi plans under present circumstances to intervene openly in the South, which would invite a full-scale US military commitment, although Hanoi probably would be prepared to make such a move in the event it felt its position seriously endangered by stepped up US-GVN attacks. In any case, Hanoi will probably increase covert infiltration, possibly including some regular units for later use if needed. As yet, however, there has been no evidence of movements which portend large-scale North Vietnamese intervention.

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SNIE 10-3-64, "Probable Communist Reaction to Certain US/GVN Courses of Action," Oct. 9, 1964

15. With the initial phase of US attacks on targets within the DRV which were not directly connected with retaliation, Hanoi and Peiping would probably conclude that the US had embarked on a systematic pattern of attacks on DRV military-related targets. At this point we believe they would probably attempt to dissuade the US by a mixture of moves, including some apparent concessions to US wishes, efforts to mobilize international opinion against the US, and actions designed to underline Communist determination. Hanoi would probably direct the Viet Cong to launch no dramatic new attacks and might direct them to reduce temporarily the tempo and size of their attacks. To mobilize international pressure against the US, Communist and leftist propoganda facilities would attack US "war madness" and stress the danger that US actions might bring on World War III. Hanoi would probably make an all out propoganda and diplomatic drive for negotiations and, to this end, there might be private hints of some willingness to accommodate US/GVN views. Hanoi and Peiping would increase their threats of counteractions and both would probably undertake force deployments designed to add to the credibility of these threats, though we doubt that the DRV would attempt any overt invasion of Laos or South Vietnam. Hanoi would certainly appeal for Chinese Communist defensive assistance, (radars, anti-aircraft artillery, additional combat aircraft, patrol craft, and technical

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sonnel) which Peiping would probably supply. We doubt that Hanoi would request Chinese Communist ground troops at this juncture. However, Hanoi would exploit offers of Chinese "volunteers," and, to this end, might publicize arrivals of Chinese advisors. Hanoi would also appeal to the Soviets. The USSR would make propaganda and political efforts on behalf of the DRV, and perhaps consent to furnish some military equipment, but would almost certainly take steps to insure that Hanoi and Peiping were kept aware of the limits of Soviet support.

16. If, despite Communist efforts, the US attacks continued, Hanoi's leaders would have to ask themselves whether it was not better to suspend their support of Viet Cong military action rather than suffer the destruction of their major military facilities and the industrial sector of their economy. In the belief that the tide has set almost irreversibly in their favor in South Vietnam, they might calculate that the Viet Cong could stop its military attacks for the time being and renew the insurrection successfully at a later date. Their judgment in this matter might be reinforced by the Chinese Communist concern over becoming involved in a conflict with US air and naval power. The DRV might consider this a reasonable price to pay in order to reduce the likelihood of damaging US attacks on the DRV. They would then press for a negotiated cease-fire in the South and try to promote an international conference to pursue their ends. However, they would not be prepared to make any meaningful concessions such as agreeing to effective international inspection of infiltration routes.

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17. On the other hand, in a test of wills with the US, the Communists might embark on a bold course, feeling that the prize to be won by all-out attacks on South Vietnam outweighed any damage to be suffered from continued US attacks on the DRV. They might feel that any benefits to be gained by buying time would be more than offset by a loss of momentum at a time when victory appeared near, by a loss of face with the VC, and by the consequent bolstering of US/GVN morale. Hanoi would have in mind that concessions under such circumstances might only invite the US to resume strikes upon any renewal of Viet Cong military activity. In this case the DRV would carry on the fight and proceed to send its own armed forces on a large scale to Laos and South Vietnam. Hanoi might assume that the US would be unwilling to undertake a major ground war, or that if it was, it could ultimately be defeated by the methods which were successful against the French.

18. In a situation involving so many levels of possible escalation we cannot make a confident judgment as to which course the DRV leaders would choose. On balance, we incline to the view that they would choose the conservative course outlined in para. 16, largely on the grounds that they would consider that they were not giving up much more than a little time in return for avoiding great physical damage to their country and escaping the risk of uncontrollable further

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relation. There is substantial danger, however, that the DRV might choose the more aggressive course discussed in para. 17.*

19. If the DRV should choose the more aggressive course, the question of Communist Chinese intervention would arise. At this stage, Peiping would probably make its threats of intervention stronger and more specific. If it had not already done so, it would almost certainly deploy large forces to areas near Vietnam and Laos. Peiping might commit units of its air force to defensive action over North Vietnam at this point, but in view of the magnitude of US air and naval superiority we doubt that Peiping would do so. However, Hanoi and Peiping would probably introduce limited numbers of Chinese Communist ground forces as "volunteers," both to prepare for further escalation and to make clear Peiping's commitment to assist the North Vietnamese. It is also possible, though unlikely, that unacknowledged Chinese Communist units would make deep incursions into Laos and perhaps even into Thailand and Burma.

20. We believe that Communist China would be very reluctant to become directly involved in the fighting in Indochina lest this be taken by the US as a cause for major retaliation against the Chinese mainland. In our view, the Chinese Communists would not be disposed to engage openly with US forces unless they felt it was necessary in order to prevent destruction of the Communist regime

* The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the DRV would find the arguments in paragraph 17 more persuasive and would choose that course, considering that at this juncture it had optimum provocation as well as international acceptance for overt retaliation in South Vietnam.

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in North Vietnam. We therefore believe there would not be high risk of the introduction of large-scale Chinese ground force combat units unless major US/GVN ground units had moved to occupy areas of the DRV or Communist-held territory in northern Laos, or possibly, the Chinese had committed their air and had subsequently suffered attacks on CCAF bases in China. Nevertheless, there is always a chance that Peiping might so intervene either for reasons that seem irrational to us or because it miscalculated the objectives of US moves in the area. Communist China's capability for conducting a ground war in adjacent areas of southeast Asia is formidable.

21. As the escalation progressed, the USSR would be increasingly concerned to bring an end to the crisis. It would probably make plain to Hanoi and Peiping that they could look for no substantial Soviet support. The Soviets would seek to augment international pressures on the US to bring it to the conference table. To this end they might offer hints of intervention, but we believe that they would refrain from military actions in the area and would not take the occasion to provoke a crisis with the US elsewhere.

C. GENERAL CONSEQUENCES

22. Even if US actions along the lines described above in Category IV clearly succeeded in halting outside support for the Viet Cong effort, the principal accomplishment would not be a solution to the larger problem of South Vietnam, but rather the buying of time in which to continue US efforts to establish a viable regime in the South and to deal with indigenous Viet Cong insurgency.

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IV-34

MM-REA-64-236, "Comment on Draft Analysis of 'Option C'," Nov. 10, 1964,
p. 2.

I would suggest as a possible separate course an Option D which might increase our bargaining position in a negotiation by appearing to strengthen our commitment to South Vietnam and carrying the threat of further action, but without committing us to a course of escalation against North Vietnam which we would not be prepared to carry through.

5. Suggested Option D. This would involve the positioning of US forces to accomplish three objectives: (1) threaten Hanoi with escalation so as to increase its incentive to negotiate on our terms, (2) have bargaining counters for negotiation, e.g., the "withdrawal of all foreign forces" ploy, and (3) retain territory where desired in any final settlement which involves partition. Under this concept, we would concentrate an invulnerable strike-force in the South China sea, land Marines at Da Nang where sea access is secure, and occupy strong-points in Laos safeguarding the Mekong. The decision as to whether action against Communist targets would follow such positioning would be made at some time, depending upon Communist responses to our negotiating feelers, the extant situation in South Vietnam, and our assessment of Chinese Communist reactions in the event of actual escalation.

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INR/CIA/DIA, Nov. 26. 1964

B. To Higher Scale US Option C or C-Prime Moves

(as described in items (7) to (11), p. 9,
of JCSM 982-64, of 23 November 1964)

We cannot make a confident judgment of enemy reactions in these situations, although we incline to these views:

6. To the first categories of such US moves (i.e., items (7) to (9): air strikes against selected targets in the DRV, aerial mining of certain DRV ports, and imposition of a naval quarantine blockade): *Hanoi*

a. DRV reactions would probably be essentially defensive in character: that is, employing all available air defense, including aircraft, in defense of DRV territory. DRV forces would probably also attempt to harass naval blockade vessels. The DRV would probably not attempt any overt invasion of Laos or South Vietnam, although they might re-deploy some units to southern North Vietnam.

b. The DRV would probably make some moves toward apparent compliance, but would probably not be prepared to make any early significant concessions.

c. The DRV would nevertheless probably modulate VC pressures, feigning innocence, by turning VC pressures up or down,

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depending on the prospects for negotiations, US punishment, and the course of the war in the South. Unless the collapse of GVN authority seemed imminent, we doubt that the DRV would direct the VC to attempt to administer a military coup de grace.

d. The DRV, with Communist bloc support, would attempt to raise a hue and cry in the world against the US, including propaganda, diplomatic actions, and incitement of mob demonstrations. Hanoi and Peiping would probably consider that US mining and/or blockading of DRV ports would be especially susceptible to propaganda exploitation.

e. Extreme Chinese Communist reaction -- such as introduction of large-scale ground force combat units into North Vietnam -- would be possible at this juncture, though unlikely. Peiping would probably make its threats of intervention stronger and more specific. If it had not already done so, it would almost certainly deploy large forces to areas near Vietnam and Laos.

It is possible that Chinese Communist air units, under the guise of "volunteers," would at this point be introduced into North Vietnam, for use from North Vietnamese airfields. It is also possible that Peiping would commit units of its air force based in China to defensive action over North Vietnam at this point, but

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in view of the magnitude of US air and naval superiority we doubt that Peiping would do so.* There is a fair chance, however, that Peiping would introduce limited numbers of Chinese Communist ground forces as "volunteers," both to prepare for further escalation and to make clear Peiping's commitment to assist the North Vietnamese.

II

f. As the scale of operations increased, the USSR also would be strongly and publicly on the side of the DRV, would probably give it additional military and economic assistance, and might issue dire threats against the US. We believe nevertheless that the USSR would be careful to avoid an appreciable risk of becoming directly involved in military conflict, and would greatly prefer that the Indochina problem be settled by compromise. To this end the Soviets would seek to augment international pressures on the US to bring it to the conference table.

g. We do not believe that either Communist China or the USSR would stir up another major crisis threatening military confrontation elsewhere in the world while the proposed US actions in North Vietnam were underway.

* The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the increasingly severe US air strikes contemplated against DRV targets north of the 19th parallel would probably evoke the employment over North Vietnam of Chinese air from Chinese bases. The Chinese decision to construct the new Ming airstrip, carefully located just over the DRV border and operationally ready in early 1965, already strongly suggests Chinese preparation to test US adherence to the privileged sanctuary concept.

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III

7. To the Upper Categories of Option C or C-Prime Moves
(i.e., items (1) and (11), p. 19, of JCSM 982-64, of 23 November
(16?)
1964: attacks on the balance of the 94-List Targets, and
amphibious or airborne operations to seize coastal lodgments

in the DRV):

a. In response to the moves in Item 10 Communist reactions would probably hinge in important measure on Peiping's decisions. We believe that Communist China would be very reluctant to become directly involved in the fighting in Indochina lest this be taken by the US as a cause for major retaliation against the Chinese mainland. Nevertheless, at this point Chinese Communist aircraft operating from Chinese bases would probably assist in
defending North Vietnam against the US attacks. We still believe that there would not be high risk of the introduction of large-scale Chinese ground combat units into Vietnam. Nevertheless, there is always a chance that Peiping might so intervene either for reasons that seem irrational to us or because it miscalculated the objectives of US moves in the area. Communist China's capability for conducting a ground war in adjacent areas of Southeast Asia is formidable.

b. If the US actions proceeded to the moves in Item 11 and involved major US/GVN ground units occupying territory in
northern Laos, the risk of introduction of large-scale Chinese Communist ground combat units into Vietnam would materially increase.

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These risks would be similarly increased if the Chinese had committed their air forces from Chinese bases, and had subsequently suffered US attacks on these bases.

c. In the circumstances of Items 10 and 11, and if Peiping had refrained from extreme rescue measures, the DRV's leaders would probably intensify their efforts to negotiate. Here again their particular negotiating game would depend heavily on how the course of events had gone meanwhile in the South; if the GVN were getting along fairly successfully, Hanoi would probably seek to negotiate as good a settlement as it could, hoping to subvert it at a later date; if, however, non-Communist authority had about been caved in, Hanoi would probably stall, seeking to salvage a position of strength in the anomalous situation of US success in the North, DRV in the South.

d. In the event Hanoi felt assured of Chinese Communist rescue, it would probably fight on. In such a situation, there would be considerable risk of DRV invasion of South Vietnam or Laos, of Chinese Communist extreme action at various places in Southeast Asia, and of an entirely new war situation developing.*

* INR believes that the Chinese Communists, despite their reluctance to become involved in fighting the US, would feel it necessary to assure Hanoi of its support and to come to Hanoi's assistance as the situation required. INR believes, therefore, that there is a greater chance that the DRV would at this point respond as described in paragraph (d) than as described in paragraph (c).

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III

7. To the Upper Categories of Option C or C-Prime Moves
(i.e., items (1) and (11)), p. 10, of JCSM 982-54, of 23 November
1964: ^(10??) attacks on the balance of the 94-List Targets, and
amphibious or airborne operations to seize coastal lodgments

in the DRV):

a. In response to the moves in Item 10 Communist reactions would probably hinge in important measure on Peiping's decisions. We believe that Communist China would be very reluctant to become directly involved in the fighting in Indochina lest this be taken by the US as a cause for major retaliation against the Chinese mainland. Nevertheless, at this point Chinese Communist aircraft operating from Chinese bases would probably assist in defending North Vietnam against the US attacks. We still believe that there would not be high risk of the introduction of large-scale Chinese ground combat units into Vietnam. Nevertheless, there is always a chance that Peiping might so intervene either for reasons that seem irrational to us or because it miscalculated the objectives of US moves in the area. Communist China's capability for conducting a ground war in adjacent areas of Southeast Asia is formidable.

b. If the US actions proceeded to the moves in Item 11 and involved major US/GVN ground units occupying territory in northern Laos, the risk of introduction of large-scale Chinese Communist ground combat units into Vietnam would materially increase.

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(INR/CIA/DIA, Nov. 26, 1964, continued)

NON-COMMUNIST REACTIONS

A. Reactions in South Vietnam

1. The initial reaction would probably be one of elation, in the belief that the US was at last bringing its great power to bear against the enemy. Such attitudes would persist in the event that VC activity noticeably diminished or if the DRV soon indicated a serious interest in a cease-fire and negotiations. The South Vietnamese would be given a great psychological boost, and we would probably see at least a spurt of much more effective GVN military and administrative performance.

2. Initial South Vietnamese elation and support would almost certainly quickly wane, however, if the war seemed to drag on despite the new US moves, and especially if the VC were able to increase their military and terrorist pressures. In such event, the belief would almost certainly rapidly spread that eventual DRV/VC victory was inevitable, that the US was unable or unwilling to save the situation, and that prudence dictated early accommodation. In such an atmosphere, VC exploitive efforts would bear considerable fruit.

3. VC Tactics and Capabilities. The general level of VC activity -- whether more, less, or about as at present -- would of course be the result of Hanoi's basic decision of the moment as to

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how to respond to the US attacks. Involved in such decision would be Hanoi's estimate of the fragility of the political situation in the South and whether "victory" might be quickly attained by a short, sudden burst. Available intelligence data do not warrant a confident estimate of VC "burst" capabilities, but we incline to the view that the VC does have military capabilities it has not yet committed. This may also be the case with VC terrorism, subversion, and political action, though we feel that any "unused" capabilities in these fields are less than in the case of the military. In any event, the VC would be hesitant to commit large-scale VC forces for fear that the GVN, with US assistance, could chew up such military units much more effectively than it has small VC groups. The VC, accordingly, would probably not attempt to administer such a coup de grace unless the demise of Saigon's authority appeared to be imminent.

B. Reactions Elsewhere in the World

4. The reactions of the non-aligned states, and even of some US Allies, to increased US military initiatives would tend to be adverse. The more severe the attacks were, and the longer they lasted, the greater and more articulate the adverse reaction would be. Such reactions would be mitigated considerably if the moves appeared to achieve US objectives, and in any case some governments would be privately more sympathetic to the US than would appear in their public stance or in public opinion media.

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which was the stronger side. Sukarno can be confidently expected to lend at least verbal support to the Communist cause.

c. In the event US actions against the DRV were accompanied by an apparent US willingness to negotiate, the UK would probably give us strong private support and would probably avoid taking any public stance which would tend to undermine the US position. The French would be likely to criticize US military action and would reassert their long-standing proposal for reconvening the Geneva conference.

6. Longer-term world reactions would be influenced by the success of the US sanctions: if they halted Communist expansion in Indochina and led to an easing of tensions, US firmness would be retrospectively admired, as in the Chinese offshore islands and Cuba missile showdowns.

7. The US would probably find itself progressively isolated in the event the US sanctions did not soon achieve either a Communist reduction of pressures in South Vietnam or some progress toward meaningful negotiations, and would almost certainly find itself substantially alone in the event that the crisis developed to the point where a US-Communist Chinese war seemed imminent. The GRC would probably back the US wholeheartedly and wish to participate.

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TV3

MM-RFE-65-27, "Hanoi Propaganda on US Operations," Jan. 29, 1965, p. 1.

In response to your request, we have examined Hanoi's propaganda reactions to recent US and US-allied actions in Laos and South Vietnam with a view to ascertaining Hanoi's analysis of our intentions.

General Reaction

We believe that Hanoi is well aware of the general purpose of these operations and is determined not to be faced down by calling off either the Viet Cong or Pathet Lao, although the concern with escalation that has made them move cautiously in Laos may have been reinforced in that area. While there now may be somewhat less worry in Hanoi over the imminence of direct US attacks on the North itself, the North Vietnamese leaders view this as a distinct future possibility against which they have been preparing their defenses since early last spring, while making it clear that the prospect of such attacks is not leading them to alter their plans for South Vietnam.

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SNIE 10-3-65, "Comm Reactions to Possible US Actions," Feb. 11, 1965,
pp. 9, 10, 11, 12.

DRV Reactions

14. Initiation of the new US policy almost certainly would not lead Hanoi to restrain the Viet Cong. Hanoi would probably elect to maintain the very intense levels of activity evident in the past few days. Pressures might be stepped up in Laos at the same time. The anger and emotion with which the US program would be received in Hanoi might affect its calculations. In any case, the DRV would wish to avoid an impression of weakness at the outset. Moreover, it would have some doubt about US staying power on its new course and would hope that Sino-Soviet competition would maximize the support provided by both allies. If the US persevered in the face of threats and international pressures, and as the degree of damage inflicted on North Vietnam increased, the chances of a reduction in Viet Cong activity would rise (see paragraph 18).

15. The insurgency in South Vietnam is heavily dependent on support, leadership, and direction from the DRV, but the VC nonetheless has substantial capabilities independent of Hanoi. Thus Hanoi could probably achieve a substantial slowdown for tactical purposes and could effect a more lasting reduction. Nonetheless, the insurgency in South Vietnam has a momentum of its own, and some hostile VC action would probably continue, though at reduced levels.

Chinese Reactions

16. China would be equally violent in castigating the new US course. At the outset of the new US program, there is a fair chance that Peiping would also introduce limited numbers of Chinese ground forces as "volunteers" into North Vietnam, intending to raise the specter of further escalation, to underline its commitment to assist the North Vietnamese, and to challenge the Soviets to extend corresponding support. More extreme Chinese reactions--such as introduction of large-scale ground force combat units into North Vietnam or northern Laos--would be possible, though we think this unlikely in the early stages. If the US program continued and inflicted severe damage on North Vietnam, the chances of such a movement would rise. But we still think that China, conscious of the danger of provoking major US attacks against its own territory, probably would not take this step.* (The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the chance of introduction of Chinese ground forces into North Vietnam or northern Laos is considerably higher than is estimated in this paragraph.)

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Use of Communist Aircraft

17. A special problem for the Communists lies in the fact that only three North Vietnamese airfields, all located in the northern part of the country, are fully capable of sustaining jet fighter operations. ... Despite these limited capabilities, the Communists probably would employ the fighters based in North Vietnam against the US air attacks. If US air attacks reached the northern part of the DRV, China might react over North Vietnam with fighters from its own bases.² (The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that "might" in this sentence should be changed to "would probably.")

18. The Communists could react by launching air attacks against South Vietnam from North Vietnamese or Chinese bases. We think this unlikely because of the vulnerability of North Vietnamese bases and China's reluctance to risk retaliation against its own territory.

A Possible Communist Tactic

19. If at some point the Communists had become persuaded of the durability of the new US policy, they might adopt tactics designed to provide a respite. This might come about if US attacks were inflicting severe damage and if, at the same time, the US had made clear an intention to reduce or cease its attacks in return for a sharp reduction of Viet Cong activity in South Vietnam. In these circumstances, the DRV might order such a reduction and use an ensuing period of calm to press for a negotiated cease-fire and an international conference. At the same time, it might use the respite for a major buildup, assisted by its allies. ...

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SNIE 10.3/1 - 65, "Communist Reactions to Possible US Course of Action
Against NV," Feb. 18, 1965

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Reactions to a Declared and Sustained US Program of Bombing in the North

7. Over the past decade the DRV has invested much time, effort, and capital in the development of industry, transportation, and relatively modern military facilities. They will not lightly sacrifice these hard-won gains. Yet a threat by the US to mount sustained attacks on these assets would probably be greeted in Hanoi with mixed feelings of trepidation and skepticism. At the start, the Communists would not be convinced that the US intended really to follow through with this program. They would almost certainly apply a range of pressures in an endeavor to make the US desist. They would maintain strenuous diplomatic and propaganda efforts to organize international influence against the US policy. They would probably threaten dire consequences to US interests in the area. Chinese Communist threats would be more insistent, and Chinese Communist forces would probably be deployed in more threatening postures. Viet Cong attacks would probably continue, though not necessarily at a steady pace.

8. If despite these pressures, the US vigorously continued in its attacks and damaged some important economic or military assets, the DRV

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leaders would have to reach a decision. They almost certainly believe that, while the US could destroy much in their country by air attacks, these alone would not cause their regime to collapse or prevent them from continuing to support the insurgency in the South. And they may believe that their international political position would improve if they became the object of sustained air attack from the US. Accordingly, they might decide to intensify the struggle, accepting the destructive consequences in the North in the expectation of early victory in the South.

9. It seems to us somewhat more likely however that they would decide to make some effort to secure a respite from US air attack, especially if the US had indicated that such a respite would follow a sharp reduction of Viet Cong activity.* We do not know how far they would go in concessions,

* The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes this course of action less likely than that described in paragraph 8. He considers that Hanoi would feel that any benefits to be gained by such a respite would be more than offset by a loss of momentum at a time when victory appeared near, by a loss of face with the VC, and by the consequent bolstering of US/GVN morale. Hanoi would have in mind that concessions under such circumstances might only invite the US to resume strikes upon any renewal of Viet Cong military activity.

Moreover, the assumed vigorous US attacks on major targets could easily coincide with the probable use over the DRV of Chinese air defense from Chinese bases. If so, US responses would either have been to acknowledge the privileged sanctuary of Chinese bases or to strike the bases in hot pursuit, thus inviting further Chinese military responses. Hanoi's persistence would be reinforced either way.

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whether the US would accept what might be offered, or what the international situation might be at such a time. We think it extremely unlikely, however, that Hanoi would concede so far to US demands that it would entail abandoning its support of the insurgency in the South or giving up its intention of unifying Vietnam under Communist control.

10. The Chinese Communists would almost certainly be willing to support the DRV in even the more militant course of action outlined in paragraph 8. We have set forth in SMLE 10-3-65 (paragraphs 16-18, with State Department footnotes of dissent) the use the Chinese would be likely to make of their own forces.

Possible, but Unlikely Reactions

11. Instead of temporarily easing off or intensifying present levels of pressure, the Communist leaders might actually engage in actions which would change the scale and nature of the war. These would be much more dangerous and aggressive courses and, although they seem to us unlikely in the light of logic and prudence, they are possibilities which cannot be ignored:

a. They might launch a large-scale DRV invasion of South Vietnam and/or Laos. We think it unlikely that they would do this in response to bombings of North Vietnam. They would feel that at best this drastic policy

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would only accelerate victories in Laos and Vietnam which they are confident they will win before very long through less costly tactics. Such an invasion would virtually require a greater involvement of the Chinese in Vietnam, which is in itself distasteful to the North Vietnamese. The Communists would recognize that to launch such an invasion would be to invite further major destruction upon the DRV and perhaps upon China.*

b. We think it unlikely that the Chinese or DRV would respond to US air raids by air attacks on US aircraft carriers or South Vietnamese airfields. To do so would invite counterattacks on the vulnerable Communist bases and start the escalation of an air war, a form of hostilities most disadvantageous to the North Vietnamese and the Chinese. ~~A sneak-attack on a~~

* The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that paragraph 11a is applicable only in the initial stages of bombings in North Vietnam, well below the Hanoi-Haiphong target complex. Once US attacks destroy major industrial and military targets in this complex, however, Hanoi will have substantially lost its hostage and suffered the maximum damage it could anticipate from the air. In this case the DRV, having suffered the destruction of its major military facilities and the industrial sector of its economy, would probably carry on the fight and proceed to send its own armed forces on a large scale to Laos and South Vietnam. Hanoi might assume that the US would be unwilling to undertake a major ground war, or that if it was, it could ultimately be defeated by the methods which were successful against the French.

Furthermore, if the DRV should persist in this fashion, Peiping would probably introduce limited numbers of Chinese Communist ground forces into the DRV as "volunteers," both to prepare for further escalation and to make clear Peiping's commitment to assist the North Vietnamese.

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IV-39

IN, "Tough Chinese Communist Posture on Vietnam," Feb. 19, 1965, p. 1.

In the past few days, Peiping has adopted an even more truculent public posture on Vietnam than it assumed after the strikes of February 7 and 8 or last August. The Chinese Communists have avoided commitment to any specific course of action under specific circumstances, but their repeated promises of assistance, with the strong implication of direct involvement of their own forces, have committed their prestige to a more vigorous response to any future escalation. We see no clear signs that Peiping is interested in negotiations at this juncture--in fact two recent outbursts suggest the contrary. Like Hanoi, Peiping has continued its public encouragement of further Viet Cong action against US/GVN installations.

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V-1

MM-RFE-65-86, "Evaluation of Report on Viet Cong 'Regroupment North'"
March 25, 1965

...Every indication we can glean from Front and Hanoi broadcasts suggests that their determination to continue the war toward an ultimate Communist victory is increasing, not decreasing.

V-2

IN, "South Vietnam--A Lull in Armed Attacks?" April 24, 1965

...evidence indicates that intensified air attacks have hurt the Viet Cong; it does not establish such attacks as the reason for the lull. Finally, it is also possible that what we see as a lull in this very brief period is instead merely a continuation, subject to further ups and downs, of the overall downward trend in Viet Cong armed attacks that became evident as early as December 1963.

Downward Attack Trend Longstanding. The trend in Viet Cong armed attacks has been downward for about two years. Attacks totaled 5,509 during 1962, the peak and first statistically reliable year, but declined to 4,494 during 1963 and significantly further to 1,833 during 1964. This decline in armed attacks, despite fluctuations, has been fairly progressive. Attacks declined to 261 in December 1963, remained in the 200-level until May 1964 when they dropped to 175, and fell to 83 in October 1964. Since then, the monthly rate of attacks has never exceeded 100. However, since the latter part of 1963 the deceleration of armed attacks has been accompanied by a sharp acceleration in Viet Cong terrorist and sabotage activities which raised the total number of Viet Cong incidents in 1964 by more than 10,000 over the 1963 total. This emphasis on terrorist actions of all kinds including small-unit, harrassing actions played an important role in the Viet Cong's success during 1964 in significantly strengthening their position in the countryside.

V-3

Memo to Secretary re: "MACV's Proposals for Deployment of US Forces in South Vietnam," June 25, 1965, p. 1.

As you are aware, INR has had a number of reservations with respect to MACV's proposals for the deployment of US forces to South Vietnam. We were concerned, for example, that, in justifying the request for a sizeable increase in US forces, MACV painted a much darker picture of the state of ARVN than we had been led to expect on the basis of the regular periodic reporting from the field. Although in response to our queries MACV has provided additional details on this score, we continue to see room for the possibility that the South Vietnamese forces still possess a greater degree of resistance and staying power than is suggested by the MACV messages. We recognize, however, that prudent planning requires the consideration of the most pessimistic prospects as well as more optimistic ones. Nevertheless, we remain concerned that MACV's proposals for deployment rest on certain assumptions with respect to Viet Cong strategy and tactics to the exclusion of other assumptions that we believe may have equal or greater validity.

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(p. 2) We believe that it is premature to assume that the Communists have abandoned the pattern of a relatively low but periodically peaking level of attacks accompanied by a high and generally rising level of terrorism, harassment, and sabotage. The assumption that they will do so is supported primarily by the fact that their capabilities for doing so appear to be steadily improving. Equally, however, it can be argued that other recent developments--the introduction of US combat forces, heavy casualties and at least dispersal of enemy concentrations imposed by the increasing use of air in actual engagements, and continued political instability in Saigon--reduce the possibility that they do so. The Communists might reasonably see their best prospects for success as lying in continued attrition of government authority in the countryside, periodically punctuated by major attacks primarily intended as further demonstrations of the GVN's inability to defend administrative centers against an enemy who occupies them only long enough to make his political point and then withdraws. It is worth noting in this connection that, in their advance toward controlling South Vietnam in the period 1962 through April 1965, the VC staged only 123 battalion-sized attacks and 364 company-sized attacks.

(p.3) Communist capabilities would of course increase substantially with the introduction of division-size PAVN forces. However, we have no reliable evidence that this has occurred, even though the presence of one battalion of the 325th PAVN Division has been confirmed and two others are probable. MACV states that he has only tenuous indications--the nature of which he has not described--that elements of the 304th PAVN division are in South Vietnam, although there are some indications that units of this division may be in Laos. Even if there should be a massive infusion of PAVN forces, the Communists would still require some time to develop within South Vietnam the logistic capability that would enable them to sustain large-scale military operations. Moreover, it does not necessarily follow that additional PAVN forces would be introduced for this purpose. It is equally if not more likely that they would considerably reinforce Communist capability to wage a more intensive effort essentially along present patterns.

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(p. 4)...Although there is clearly a serious threat that the Communists will mount a major assault in this area [Kontum], it does not necessarily follow that they will do so with the intention of establishing a fixed and announced territorial base for a Front government. The advantages they would derive by so doing are minimal. ...

...The terrain in the highlands, despite MACV's contention that it offers fewer difficulties than other areas, does provide the Communists a substantial opportunity to maneuver, disperse, or simply hide for extended periods of time. Moreover, it would not be out of character for them to avoid engagement or to divert military operations to areas under primary ARVN responsibility.

(p.5)...Therefore, we cannot assume that the Communists, faced with forces superior to ARVN, will respond with large-scale or multiple company or battalion operations which are more easily "fixed" by intelligence and more vulnerable to air strikes and attack by air assault forces, as MACV suggests in reference to the defense of Route 19 and the Pleiku-Kontum area. ...

Conclusions

We agree that the war in South Vietnam is entering a phase in which we can anticipate a sharp increase in the degree and intensity of Communist action with the VC probably increasingly reinforced by PAVN elements. We believe, however, that there is unlikely to be a major change in the nature of the warfare conducted by the Communists. We anticipate rather that they will continue to employ their present tactics, although on a heightened scale, seeking to bring about a disintegration of anti-Communist political authority rather than a decisive military victory. Accordingly we believe that the strategy laid down by CINCPAC in his 112210Z is more responsive than are the MACV proposals to the requirements of successful counter-insurgency as they have been defined over the years.

We also believe that the MACV proposals fail to address themselves to the possibilities that still remain for improving the deployment, strength, and tactical capabilities of ARVN and the paramilitary forces, whose central role must remain more than a facade if we are to avoid over-reliance on the US role with all the political consequences that this would entail.

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V-4

RFE-28, "Viet Cong Expectations--Victory in 1965?" July 15, 1965.

(p. 1) ABSTRACT

Contrary to widespread assumptions concerning Viet Cong expectations of victory in the monsoon season this year, we find little in their pattern of activities, compared with previous years, to suggest that their current campaign, although an active one, is intended to be decisive. Furthermore, propaganda from Hanoi and the Viet Cong does not suggest that a time for decision has arrived or is imminent in the war in South Vietnam.

(p. 4) Thus, although the VC are investing more than they ever have before in multibattalion attacks (and have more to invest than ever before in the way of heavy weapons and organizational resources), the total figures and the total tactical picture do not suggest that this important investment is a crucial one from which they necessarily anticipate a decisive pay-off in the remaining three months of the monsoon period. They may hope that the full political impact of their total effort will come soon, given the evident weaknesses of the GVN.

It does not necessarily follow, however, that they believe that if political victory does not come soon it will never come at all. Their doctrinal view of the nature of "US imperialism" may lead them to fear that, as the US input increases, the existence of a South Vietnamese government prepared to carry on the fight will become increasingly irrelevant. They may fear also that the impact of US air power and superior weaponry will have increasingly negative effects on the morale and capability of their own forces. Against these fears, however, they would almost certainly weigh the strength of their present position--their significant still unutilized forces, their ability to deny much of the countryside throughout South Vietnam to the government, their capacity for surprise and evasion, and their ability to disrupt government lines of communication essential for civilian as well as military purposes. In weighing these factors, they could well conclude that they have a substantial cushion for some time to come.

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MM-RFE-65-192, "Giap's Third Phase in Prospect in South Vietnam?" July 23, 1965

(p. 1) At Mr. Bundy's request, we have examined the question of whether the Communists in South Vietnam are moving into the "third stage" phase of warfare as defined by General Giap. We conclude that their pattern of behavior in Vietnam to date and their probable expectations as to the future argue against the hypothesis that the Communists are preparing to enter the third stage.

....
We do not believe that the criteria established by Giap for the third stage--size of unit, scale of operation, and nature of attack--have been or are about to be met in South Vietnam. Our examination of Viet Cong capabilities, the campaign against GVN lines of communication, the Communist attack pattern, and the content of Communist propaganda, persuades us rather that the VC will continue to employ guerrilla tactics with only intermittent recourse to spectacular, multibattalion attacks against major ARVN targets.

(p. 2) ...Even though the introduction of material from North Vietnam has increased, it is not open or massive, and the Communists will rely heavily on locally captured weapons. In short, we do not believe that the Viet Cong, even with recent PAVN reinforcement, are now capable of initiating a drastically different phase of warfare.

...Both Communist statements and actual experience to date suggest that their LOC campaign is motivated to a considerable extent by the desire to interdict the movement of civilian supplies, particularly in order to bring the impact of the war to bear on hitherto relatively unaffected but politically volatile urban areas. The desire to isolate ARVN forces and reduce their ability to respond to VC attacks is undoubtedly also present. It does not follow, however, that the nature of VC attacks will change substantially or that, having reduced the possibility of effective ARVN ground reinforcement, the Communists will then resort to tactics that will substantially increase their vulnerability to air.

(p. 3) With respect to their past experience--in their advance toward controlling South Vietnam in the period 1962 through June 1965, the VC staged only 141 battalion-sized attacks. With respect to the future--they have already experienced the effects on their casualty rates of the increasing use of air. And, even at this time when the impact of substantial US ground reinforcements is only beginning to be felt, it must be clear to the Communists that any prospects they may have had for a total military victory in South Vietnam have diminished, possibly to the point of disappearance. Under these circumstances, we cannot see them resorting to a strategy that would substantially increase their vulnerability to US power, except as an act of desperation in which they might take major risks in the hope of bettering their position for immediate negotiating purposes. We believe that they are still far from such a point of desperation, that they still see themselves as in a position of strength--derived from the weakness and instability of the GVN as well as their own significant still unutilized forces, their ability to deny much of the countryside to the government, their capacity for surprise and evasion, and their ability to disrupt government lines of communication--from which to wage a guerrilla war with the aim of eliminating all vestiges of GVN independence and authority and sapping US determination and morale.

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IN, "Viet Cong Strategy May Aim at Disrupting Urban Centers," July 30, 1965

(p. 1) In recent weeks the Viet Cong have increased the frequency and intensity of their propaganda directed toward the urban population while, at the same time, their military efforts appear to be aimed more than before toward sharpening the impact of the war on the hitherto relatively unaffected cities. ...

(p. 2) VC Planning Related to Increased US Presence. The Viet Cong may well regard the increasing US military presence in Vietnam, as well as the unpopularity with many urban elements of recent GVN austerity measures, as providing a propitious occasion for mounting a major disruptive effort in the cities. They may anticipate that a growing US presence and the policies of the military government will increase tensions and antagonisms among volatile urban groups and, at the same time, reduce the opportunities that in the past have enabled such groups as the Buddhists to force political change. ...

(p. 3) We do not believe that the Viet Cong have the capability as yet to provoke major widespread disorders comparable to the Buddhist protests in 1963-64. Nonetheless, the Viet Cong will almost certainly place higher priority on urban sectors in the months ahead.

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RM, RFE-45, "The 'Month of Hatred' in Vietnam and the Berkeley Teach-In," October 14, 1965.

(p. 1) ...; the Front may in fact have chosen its date in the hopes of suggesting that US policy is discredited both at home and in the field. But there is no proof of any coordination beyond this measure, and the serious nature of the Front's action suggests that weightier considerations governed its decision.

(p. 3) However, the extent of political support for the VC in the cities and towns has always been questionable, and the relatively few VC-inspired public demonstrations have generally occurred in villages and small towns. Moreover, there is good reason to believe from the reports of USOM advisers, Embassy provincial reporters, and others that the injection of US forces and the improved military situation, over the past few months have had a favorable impact on public attitudes at the same time that increased VC pressures on the local population have aroused some greater degree of popular antagonism. It is entirely possible, therefore, that the Communists have made a major miscalculation and one that could lend itself particularly well to propaganda exploitation both in Vietnam and abroad.

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V-8

Memo to the Secretary re: Research Memorandum, RFE-53, 'The Balance Sheet in South Vietnam', " December 21, 1965.

In the attached paper we have assessed in depth our total political, economic, and military situation in South Vietnam. Out of our separate evaluations of particular problems two overall estimates emerge:

First, we see as yet no prospect for a qualitative change in the situation necessary to provide us with victory. Instead, what the six months of massive US troop deployment and heavy US air strikes seem to have obtained is a stalemate, albeit at higher levels of violence on both sides than had earlier characterized the war.

Second, we are impressed by the degree to which the situation in South Vietnam remains highly localized and resists accurate country-wide generalization. In particular, we find that widely scattered assets still offer promise of offsetting the stagnation and ineffectiveness that beset Saigon. We remain concerned about the intelligence gaps, both qualitative and quantitative, that make definitive statements about any particular facet virtually impossible.

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RM, RFE-53, "The Balance Sheet in South Vietnam," Dec. 21, 1965

(p. 1) ABSTRACT

1. The introduction of massive US air and ground forces has reassured the key elements in South Vietnam's power structure and given the struggle against the Viet Cong a new momentum and effectiveness; but equally, the Communist response has so far risen to the challenge.

2. The present government in Saigon has been more stable than any of its predecessors since Diem's overthrow, with its tenure thus far unmarked by coup efforts or significant demonstrations; but it has failed to inject any new dynamism into the war effort or to cope aggressively and effectively with its problems, and dissatisfaction with it is growing among significant power groups.

(p. ii) 5. The US ground combat role, the improved morale and increased aggressiveness of GVN military units, and the intensified use of air-power for reinforcement and close tactical support have denied the Communists the widespread and easy victories they were winning in the early summer months; but they have shown an impressive capability to respond, to retain the initiative, to maintain a high level of terror and harassment, and to increase the size and number of their attacks, while their new emphasis on close combat tactics has hampered the use of air and artillery against them.

(p. iii) 8. North Vietnam's logistic complex has been subjected to increasingly heavy air assault since February 1965, the infiltration routes in Laos have been under air attack since the fall of 1964, and the entire South Vietnamese coast has been under sea surveillance since the spring of 1965; but more than 10,000 infiltrators, including PAVN regiments, have entered South Vietnam during 1965 and the Intelligence Community estimates that North Vietnam has the capability to infiltrate 4,500 men a month in 1966.

10. It can be assumed with reasonable certainty that whatever hopes the Viet Cong leadership may have entertained of achieving power in the short run by a series of increasingly massive military victories have now been shattered; but the Communists appear determined to pursue the war in the South even at the cost of further escalation both there and in the North....

(p. 2) The principal danger at this time appears to lie not so much in the possibility of another political upheaval in Saigon as in continued stagnation, lethargy, and increasing reliance on the United States to right the imbalance not only on the military side but also in all other aspects of the war effort. To be sure, many of the serious deficiencies that now hamper the conduct of the war might well be ameliorated, if not completely eliminated, were the US to assume overtly a directing as well as a supporting role. Nevertheless, however incapable the Vietnamese leadership may be, and however its failures to make the necessary effort may reflect undue dependence on the United States, the more apparent such dependence becomes the greater are the dangers that leaders, and people as well, will come to resent their client status.

(p. 3) The Economy

Severe economic dislocations have occurred as a result of intensified Viet Cong efforts to control resources, pressures on prices and wages stemming from the massive US build-up and the large GVN budget deficit, and the combined influence of these factors on already inadequate transportation facilities. The deteriorating economic situation presents a serious challenge to the GVN, and the ability of Ky and his advisers to respond in a timely and effective manner may have a decisive bearing on political developments.

Perhaps the foremost problem is that of inflation, with food prices having increased over 40% in Saigon over the last year, clothing prices up 20-30%, construction materials up 50-100%, and the general cost of living index 30% above the level twelve months ago. Although statistics are not available for areas outside of Saigon, provincial reports indicate the trend has been the same in all four corps. The greatest factor in the accelerating pace of inflation has been the rapid increase in the number of US troops throughout the country. US military construction expenditures in 1965 have been about \$160 million and are expected to rise to \$425 million in 1966. Off-duty expenditures by US troops are estimated at an annual rate of \$112.5 million. US contractors regularly outbid Vietnamese for construction workers, thereby putting pressure on wage levels. Rents have risen sharply because of the willingness and ability of US personnel to pay high rents and some Vietnamese landlords have even cancelled existing leases in hopes of renting to Americans. Pressure on prices of commodities such as meat and dairy products has been greatly increased by American demand.

(p. 20) On the basis of evidence to date, however, it is impossible to go beyond the conclusion that there are an increasing number in the Communists' ranks--which are also growing--who find the hardships of guerrilla life intolerable and that certain types of warfare--especially air--contribute more than others to their fear and discomfort. We have no basis for estimating how serious the problem has become. It is possible to say only that morale problems have not yet been significantly reflected in battlefield behavior or in battlefield surrenders, where the ratio so far in 1965 has been a little less than 5.5 killed to 1 captured as compared with a ratio of 4 killed to 1 captured in 1964. Nor have such morale problems as may exist appear to affect the ability of the enemy to mount both terrorism and attacks on a rising and coordinated scale.

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V-1

RM, RFE-50, "Recent Intelligence on Viet Cong Use of Cambodian Territory,"
December 2, 1965

ABSTRACT

Recent intelligence, though still scanty, indicates some Communist use of Cambodian territory in preparation for the fighting at Plei Me. As prisoner of war interrogations are completed and other data become available, further light may be cast on the extent and significance of this use. The limited new evidence available at this time, however, still leads to the conclusion that, although the Communists continue to infiltrate personnel and supplies from Cambodia, as well as to use the Cambodian border for sanctuary, they do so on a limited basis and without the support of central government authorities in Phnom Penh.

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"Asian Communist Reactions to U.S. Escalation in Vietnam," March 20, 1965, by Allen S. Whiting, Director, Office of Research and Analysis for Far East.

(p. 2) Enemy Intentions. Another limitation concerns our lack of knowledge about enemy intentions. The intelligence at hand provides few clues, much less reliable indications, of what Hanoi and Peiping intend to do or when. However, our record to date is encouraging so far as anticipating some of the enemy's actions or inactions. Thus we explicitly forecast the attack on Bien Hoa and warned of the Pleiku assault, albeit without defining the latter target explicitly, well in advance without any hard intelligence to guide us. In both cases the logic of the situation as perceived by the Communists made their moves predictable. And a negative prediction, namely the unlikelihood of Hanoi's meeting our stated terms in response to our bombing of North Vietnam, as inscribed in successive Special National Intelligence Estimates from last May to this February, has so far at least been borne out by events.

(p. 4) First, it was evident in the fall of 1964 that the Viet Cong could not achieve a total victory in the immediate future, certainly not before the U.S. could embark on its long-discussed program of escalation. Viet Cong military power, as evidenced by the weekly record, could only sustain short bursts of large-scale attacks. It could win isolated victories of psychological importance and it could continue to erode GVN control of the countryside. But barring a sudden change, as of December no combination of coups, Buddhist-student demonstrations, ARVN defeats, or anti-US spectacles like Bien Hoa promised to collapse the GVN and expel US forces from South Vietnam, at least not for some time to come. Second, the long-signalled U.S. threat of escalation remained an active one that could materialize in the very near future. We cannot say with confidence how the Asian Communists read the Taylor mission of early December, followed by the Rusk-Rapacki and Rusk-Gromyko conversations as relayed to them. But judging from their continued defensive preparations in South China and North Vietnam, they saw escalation as at least a serious enough contingency to prepare against it.

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(p. 4) Korean War Lessons

An interesting parallel period in the Korean War suggests that the Communist proclivity to negotiate--quite understandably--comes at a time when they anticipate a probable worsening of the situation for the Communist side, but before the situation actually worsens. The Communists calculate that they may thereby preserve an aura of invincibility while avoiding damage or greater risks. ...

(p. 5) How "Serious" Were The Asian Communists?

Obviously, if the Asian Communists made what to them were serious efforts to probe a U.S. interest in negotiations, our failure to respond would probably be seen by them as deliberate, and not as a failure to "believe" the signal. On the question of Communist intentions, the evidence is subject to several interpretations, some of which are mutually compatible while inconsistent in purpose. The French channel and the Mao interview with Edgar Snow are excellent--if frustrating--examples of the inevitable ambiguities which attend Communist moves.

(p. 6) Seen in this light, one seeming anomaly of Peiping's public posture becomes intelligible. Throughout this "soft" period when no attacks were made on the concept of negotiations, Peiping repeated its more explicit commitments to Hanoi. Yet since February 18 Peiping has not once reiterated the formula--first used in the August-September Tonkin crises and again in February--that "aggression against the DRV is aggression against China." If, however, this threat of Chinese intervention was, in accompaniment with the probe for negotiations, intended to deter U.S. escalation, then its purpose of deterrence had failed but its probing effect of determining U.S. intentions had succeeded, at least from Peiping's view. No further purpose would be served in such public threats once U.S. escalation had been launched and their reiteration before Peiping was ready to intervene, or attempt a new political gambit, could only weaken Peiping's posture among friends as well as foe. As will be clear below, however, the dropping of this public threat by no means signifies that Peiping feels its bluff has been called and is going to remain passive as escalation continues.

(p. 7) Certainly the increased hardness of Hanoi after the March 2 strikes would appear to reflect an unwillingness to "sue for negotiations under duress" while it still feels confident of eventual victory in South Vietnam. The fall of Khanh, the battlefield trends, and the public talk of negotiations in South Vietnam all provide Hanoi with continued evidence of disarray in the enemy camp even as U.S. strikes against the North increase in scope and frequency.

But a more basic Communist assessment may have been reached, namely that regardless of what hints of American interest in negotiations come to

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light, we are not willing to settle for anything remotely acceptable to the Asian Communists and are instead determined to gamble on our escalation as forcing acceptance of our terms, even if that escalation risks another Korean War. In sum, they may feel that in view of their political moves and postures in December, January, and February, and our responses in Vietnam and our non-responses to the Paris probe and the Mao interview "prove" we are not yet willing to negotiate for anything other than our maximum terms as publicly stated.

(p. 7) The Asian Communist Calculus

If Peiping and Hanoi failed to deter escalation and failed to elicit any dialogue prior to escalation, they seem most unlikely to renew any political initiative before they have made some kind of military response to escalation which will redress the presently unfavorable situation wherein political negotiations begun by them would seem to concede weakness and fear of further U.S. attacks. ...

(p. 8) Assuming that no negotiatory initiative occurs on our part, however, what should we expect from the enemy? Our own plans have been long and consistently bruited about in the press so that Peiping and Hanoi can be reasonably assured of three things: (1) we have begun a systematic series of attacks against North Vietnam which will not cease until we are expelled from the South or we receive major concessions from the North; (2) these attacks will move very gradually and sporadically up a list of targets that is both geographically and qualitatively determined; and (3) so long as Communist responses are measured and controlled, the U.S. is unlikely to jump rapidly to expand the war territorially into China or qualitatively into nuclear attacks.

In responding to this situation, Peiping and Hanoi have had more than a year within which to consult, plan, and implement their plans. Accelerated activity in South China and North Vietnam following the Gulf of Tonkin episodes gives us some clues as to the initial points of Communist preparation--intensive buildup of North Vietnamese anti-aircraft defenses, development of air bases on Chinese territory adjacent to North Vietnam, and deployment of 34 MIG's to Hanoi with Chinese pilot and ground control training missions. On three occasions Chinese Communist fighters have crossed into North Vietnam shadowing or attacking U.S. reconnaissance aircraft which had overflown China or were headed in that direction. On one occasion to date North Vietnamese fighters have scrambled in response to U.S. attacks but held at a point seventy-five miles below Hanoi.

This evidence strongly suggests that, as we forecast in the Special National Intelligence Estimates of November and February, the initial Communist military reaction to our escalation is most likely to be in the air. Its purpose would not be to inflict a stinging defeat on our forces but only to provide a show of defiance whose political effects would hopefully bring maximum pressure on us to desist and might deter us

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from escalating further. At some point, if this political impact is to be effective, the Communists must contemplate visible, physical Chinese involvement. This could take the form of surfacing Chinese long present at Phuc Yen as "volunteers" following the precedent of the Spanish Civil War (specifically used as a justification when Peiping sent "volunteers" into Korea) and Soviet pilots in the war with Japan. Alternatively or in addition, Peiping might deploy additional MIG's to Hanoi as "volunteer" squadrons. Still another option is to shadow U.S. attacking aircraft with flights from bases on Chinese soil. avoiding attack initially but providing public warning that further action carries ominous consequences. Finally, of course, Peiping could do what it did in the Korean War and launch hostile craft against U.S. planes from Chinese soil in defense of the Hanoi-Haiphong complex.

(p. 9) Since we do not believe Peiping actually wants a war nor is seeking to entrap us in one, and since we believe Hanoi is even less desirous of "another Korea" with all of its consequences, we would expect this initial intervention to be carefully timed and controlled so as to have whatever effect possible on bringing about negotiations. Its military implications would be marginal, from the Communist point of view, and definitely subordinate to its political impact. Therefore slight as the above moves might appear in a military context, Peiping and Hanoi would probably feel they carry considerable political promise if appropriately timed.

This timing then, becomes crucial. Again, if the Korean intervention and the Sino-Indian war provide precedents, Peiping's preference is to delay actual military moves until the enemy has clearly and consistently over-extended himself politically, if not militarily. This "justifies" Chinese moves, places the enemy in the maximum point of isolation and vulnerability, and permits Peiping to place "defensive" connotations on its aggressive use of force. Such a point would not seem apparent in our attacks below the twentieth parallel. However any attacks in the Hanoi-Haiphong complex or on Phuc Yen, much less on the communications routes between Hanoi and Communist China, would--given the previous weeks of bombardment, ground deployment to Vietnam, etc.--appear optimal to Peiping for initial intervention. It would also seem minimal to Hanoi if it is to assure its populace of "socialist support."

A coincidence in Western planning may bring about this intervention in the next three weeks. ... If Washington is to be persuaded by such pressures, the Wilson visit would seem to coincide with a rising escalation of U.S. strikes to place a premium on new Communist responses before mid-April. Only after such responses would we expect any renewed political signals from either Hanoi or Peiping.

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(p. 10) The imperatives which brought Peiping into the Korean War--at a time when its control over China was still insecure and when its military-industrial capability was primitive--once again seem operative in the immediate future. Peiping's sense of its prerogatives as a power requires demonstrating an ability to take military action in defense of a friendly regimes on its own borders. Peiping's self-declared mission in the "world revolution" requires proof of a willingness to take risks in confronting "U.S. imperialist aggression." An additional imperative has emerged in the Sino-Soviet dispute--the contest for leadership over Communist states cum satellites as well as over Communist parties throughout the world, a contest which is embedded in the basic question of strategy, risk-taking, and the use of force versus political means in advancing Communism.

....Hanoi feels that Chinese manpower, not Soviet missiles, provides the ultimate safeguard, if not absolute deterrent. Finally, if Hanoi sees its choice as between an irrevocable loss of the South through conceding to U.S. ultimata, as against dependence on Peiping in a prolonged war, it would probably reject concession and invite in the Chinese.

(p. 11) In sum, it appears highly unlikely that Hanoi will sue for peace on our terms in the present phase of our attacks against North Vietnam, and equally unlikely that Peiping will absent itself from the situation once our attacks threaten vital targets in North Vietnam. Therefore the time would seem to be limited if we are to probe Hanoi's responses to any suggestions of a negotiated settlement before Peiping's greater involvement limits the maneuverability of Washington as well as Hanoi.

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IN, "Hanoi Lays Down "Basis" for Vietnam Talks," Apr. 15, 1965, p. 1.

The recent flurry of North Vietnamese policy statements reflects a change in Hanoi's position on negotiations by allowing that talks are possible after certain principles have been "recognized" as the basis for a settlement. Actually the conditions for settlement enunciated are not new, but heretofore Hanoi has not conceded the possibility of a conference at any remotely reasonable point. For the most part, North Vietnamese spokesmen had simply ignored the subject. This change probably is primarily a reflection of North Vietnamese concern that their intransigence harmed their political position abroad, particularly after President Johnson offered "unconditional discussions." However, we cannot rule out that the North Vietnamese desired to test Washington's response in order to establish if there is any basis for negotiations in light of the President's speech. In commenting on that speech, Hanoi has not attacked negotiations per se or in fact directly turned down the offer for "unconditional" discussion," suggesting anew that while the North Vietnamese are not anxious for talks they do not want to preclude possible talks in the future.

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MM-RFE-65-123, "Negotiating Under Pressure--Hanoi's Position," Apr. 23, 1965,
p. 2.

Conclusions

It is most unlikely that Hanoi will take any diplomatic initiatives while our attacks continue. It is possible, though by no means certain, that Hanoi would agree to sit at a table with the US to deal with Laos or Cambodia, even while the attacks go on. If they did agree, they would probably not refuse "corridor conversations" on Vietnam with our representatives. It is almost certain that they will refuse any Geneva Conference (or other formal discussions) on Vietnam unless our attacks are suspended. If we halt the attacks but say openly or even indicate privately that they will resume unless negotiations get underway and unless there is some clear signal from Hanoi that it is willing to stand down the Viet Cong, it is unlikely that Hanoi will either ask for negotiations or offer to undertake any significant commitment to damp down the insurgency.

If we ourselves privately convey to Hanoi a proposal for informal discussions at a given time and place--without a halt to our bombings, a stand-down of the VC, or any other precondition--it is difficult to predict their response. In the unlikely event that they thought the talks could be kept from the world at large, they might agree. The chances of such agreement would be increased if the tempo of our air attacks were decreased, or even if it were merely altered to an irregular rather than a daily basis.

If we halt our attacks and ourselves privately propose formal or informal discussions, meanwhile indicating that unless the VC is stood down, the discussions will be broken off, it is also not easy to say how Hanoi would react. They might well be willing to engage in such talks, and perhaps even to order the VC to go on the defensive, in order to probe for our terms for a settlement. They would want to see some evidence that we were contemplating a "political settlement" in the South, i.e. a role for the Front in the Saigon government. They would not, however, be willing to withdraw any cadres from the South or halt the movement of supplies to the Viet Cong or otherwise weaken the capability of the Viet Cong to resume the insurgency. (Even if they did agree before or at the outset of talks to suspend infiltrated support of the insurgency, we would not know for several months whether they had kept their promise.)

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RM, RFE-23, "Vietnamese Positions on a Negotiated Settlement," May 18, 1965

(p. 1) Departing markedly from the practice of its predecessors, the Quat government has publicly stated its position on a negotiated settlement, a subject on which members of the government as well as other Vietnamese have also expressed themselves both publicly and privately. This memorandum summarizes these statements and examines their implications for the future.

ABSTRACT

...

While the Quat government's public position on pre-conditions for discussions has been clear and consistent, we know very little of the more detailed and contingent thinking of Quat and his advisors on the timing and modalities of negotiations. It is clear both from the government's statements and its actions to date that it recognizes the importance to its negotiating position of an increasingly aggressive military effort against the Viet Cong and North Vietnam, internal political stabilization, and strengthened support for the war effort at home and abroad. It is not clear, however, whether the Quat government is thinking in terms of negotiations only after the Viet Cong have been decisively defeated or whether, short of this, it is carrying on the war with a view to stabilizing the situation and arriving at a position of greater strength from which to negotiate. Private statements suggest some interest in the latter.

For the moment at least, the Quat leadership appears to believe that a flexible position--a determined military effort coupled with a qualified disposition to negotiate--has broader support than a call either for total military victory or for unconditional negotiations. Although we cannot be certain of the actual extent of support for the strong stand the government is taking on negotiations, there is little evidence of defeatism despite the increase in war weariness among the public over the past year or so.

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RM, RFE-29, "North Vietnam and Negotiations," July 28, 1965

(p. 1) 1. Has Hanoi shown any interest in negotiations?

Yes, repeatedly. In September 1964, Hanoi privately agreed to U Thant's proposal that North Vietnam and the US meet secretly in Rangoon to discuss the Vietnam war. In December and January 1965, Mai Van Bo (Hanoi's trade representative in Paris) twice accepted French invitations to discuss the Quai's views on a negotiated settlement. On April 8, Premier Pham Van Dong formally proposed Four Points as the "best basis" for a settlement, the US acceptance of which allegedly could lead to a conference. On May 18, Mai Van Bo called on the Quai at his initiative to stress the "best basis" aspect of the Four Points, implying, as did Pham's original statement, receptivity to possible US counterproposals. On June 11, Mai Van Bo expressly queried the Quai on whether his May 18 presentation had been passed on to US officials.

...
3. What is Hanoi's preferred forum for discussions?

Bilateral talks arranged in Paris seem to be preferred by Hanoi. Outside of North Vietnam, Mai Van Bo has held the most authoritative conversations to date. Hanoi officials themselves have become increasingly cool to the Seaborn channel and non-communist revelations of its last use probably close it for the future. Rangoon was accepted by Hanoi last fall as a possible venue; it has not since been ruled out but neither has it been activated. Our initial effort to communicate directly in Moscow aborted, perhaps because of an ad hoc decision by the North Vietnamese ambassador.

(p. 2) 5. Does Hanoi have preconditions for negotiations?

Probably not in the military field, but almost certainly in political terms. Hanoi nowhere calls for a total cease-fire as a precondition for talks and its statements increasingly suggest that no withdrawal of US forces will have to occur for talks to begin. Even suspension of our bombing in the North may not be an absolute precondition, although the overwhelming burden of evidence indicates that Hanoi will require this, at least before formal public negotiations commence (as distinct from a private dialogue). Politically, however, Hanoi seems adamant on some form of US acceptance of its Four Points if only as part of an overall agenda, thereby foreshadowing political concessions by the US justifying negotiations by Hanoi on behalf of the National Liberation Front.

(p. 2) 7. How do Hanoi's terms compare with ours?

Critical differences separate Hanoi's terms from ours in terms of procedures and objectives. Hanoi insists that the US negotiate with the National Liberation Front at some point and in some capacity other than as Hanoi's agent. Hanoi refuses to admit its aggression against South Vietnam, much less withdraw all the man and equipment infiltrated from the North. Hanoi agrees with us principally in the eventual objective of withdrawing all US forces from South Vietnam and in the country determining its own political course, ostensibly without foreign interference, preferably under the 1954 Geneva Accord provisions.

(p. 3) ...Therefore it may be receptive to counterproposals now and should become more so as the full application of US power nears but before it becomes so heavy as to require overt Chinese involvement. This period might well extend into mid-winter, but miscalculations on either side could trigger responses which would foreshorten this period of flexibility on Hanoi's part.

...

10. Is Hanoi a free agent in negotiations?

Yes, with respect to Moscow and Peking; generally so, with some limitations, so far as the Front-Viet Cong are concerned. Soviet advice and aid may influence Hanoi. But the Sino-Soviet dispute, especially in the Post-Khrushchev period, seems to give Hanoi more leverage over Moscow than vice-versa. Peking clearly lacks veto-power over Hanoi's decisions and has shown public concern over vacillation in Hanoi concerning negotiations. However, the Front-Viet Cong movement can sabotage Hanoi tactically by military action, constraining somewhat Hanoi's simple acquiescence in our demands. Moreover, whether Hanoi counts eventually on military or political means to win the South, it knows that its word there will be worth little if it appears to "sell out" again as in 1954 simply because it is taking the punishment of US air strikes.

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Memo to G fm INR, "Hanoi's Responses to US Political Initiatives,"
Oct. 8, 1965, pp. 2 and 3

Factors Affecting Hanoi's Responses

It is difficult to assign weights to the factors dictating Hanoi's essentially negative response to US political initiatives. However, we believe that the most important element is the US bombing of the North and the leadership's overriding concern not to appear to be capitulating to this US pressure. This concern pervades public and private North Vietnamese comment on the subject. ...

While the US strikes clearly inhibit flexibility in Hanoi's position, the leaders there seem convinced that their country can survive the bombing and that the US will have to pay an increased price. ...

Another major factor is Hanoi's estimate of US intentions in proposing negotiations. At least in April, the North Vietnamese probably were convinced that the proposal for unconditional talks was largely for propaganda purposes to counter adverse reaction to US military policy. They probably still feel that this plays a large role. In addition, there appear to be many leaders in Hanoi who are genuinely convinced that the United States is interested in negotiations only on its own terms and is not willing to make any significant concessions, particularly in our current flush of cautious optimism.

The effect of the situation in the South on Hanoi's political decisions is complex and difficult to isolate; in fact Hanoi's estimate of the situation at any given moment is generally very well concealed. Although the DRV leaders may have been sobered by the recent setbacks, there is no reason to believe that they have lost their abiding faith in eventual victory through protracted warfare leading to a collapse of Saigon's authority. The North Vietnamese leaders do seem to have consistently estimated that the situation in the South was not ripe for negotiations. They have felt that the Viet Cong would have to attain a more favorable position before negotiations could assure gains sufficient to offset the possibly unfavorable impact of talks on the VC war effort. How they would react to a sustained series of VC setbacks is difficult to predict. The immediate effect of the battles this summer has probably been to increase Hanoi's reluctance to embark on any negotiatory track.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

Oct. 8, 1965

To : G - Ambassador Thompson
From : INR -- Thomas L. Hughes [initials]
Subject: Possible DRV Responses to a Pause

V-17

A. Evidence

Among the scant evidence indicating how Hanoi would probably respond to another "pause" in our air attacks on North Vietnam, the most solid, of course, is their response to our May pause. In addition, since May a limited number of public and private statements by DRV spokesmen bear on this question.

The direct response in May was most discouraging. The DRV Embassy in Moscow, without knowing what our message was, attempted to avoid receiving it. While reflecting on our message (which had no doubt been received from the Soviets and also copied during its brief sojourn in the DRV Embassy), Hanoi continued routine protests to the ICC against reconnaissance flights and alleged strafing. On May 15, a VNA release described "the news spread concerning the order to suspend the airstrikes and the proposal to stop them" as a "deceitful and threatening trick." By May 17, the North Vietnamese had apparently determined on their dual response -- a public statement and a diplomatic demarche.

The government statement of the next day made public the gist of our proposal: that our suspension of attacks on the North should be reciprocated in the South. It said that this proposal "can fool no one," and reasserted the right of "the South Vietnamese people" to take up arms against "the aggressors and their henchmen." The DRV thus rejected any formal, admitted link between itself and the actions of the NLF/SV. At the same time the statement disparaged the significance of the pause. It said that "since May 12 US air and naval craft have repeatedly intruded into the air space and territorial waters of the DRV for spying, provocative and strafing activities." The statement did not say that we had bombed during these days, but its objective was clearly to get on the record the idea that hostile activities against the DRV were not really terminated. As could be expected, the DRV statement was generally interpreted as denying that any real pause had occurred. The statement then set forth the DRV demands: that the US "end its US aggressive war in South Vietnam," that it "stop for good" the attacks on the North, and that it "scrupulously observe" the 1954 Geneva agreements. The statement reaffirmed the four points as "the only sound basis" for a political settlement.

Along with this harsh but carefully worded public response, the DRV made a private diplomatic move. On the same day, May 18, Mai Van Bo, at his urgent request, was received in the Quai d'Orsay. He quoted from Phan Van Dong's

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speech of April 8 as follows: "... the position expressed above constitutes the best basis for reaching the fairest solution to the Vietnamese problem." On being questioned, he said that his government's position was that US withdrawal, if admitted in principle, could be linked to the conclusion of negotiations. He amplified that if we are agreed on the "bases," then "the ways of implementing the principles will be found," and that a conference would be possible. He concluded by observing that "the position we suggest does not humiliate anyone."

The net effect of these public and private actions was to reject any arrangement which tied a suspension of US attacks on the North to a suspension or reduction of VC activity, while counter-proposing a discussion of the four points as a basis for formal negotiations.

Since May, DRV spokesmen have addressed themselves to the topic of a pause on several occasions. On August 24 the head of the DRV liaison mission to the ICC was quoted by the Czech News Agency as saying: "the US must unconditionally and permanently stop their air raids on DRV territory. Any 'temporary' halt calculated to deceive world opinion cannot be taken into consideration." The Foreign Ministry memorandum of September 23 refers to US proposals to "cease bombing the North if there is some 'response' from Hanoi." The memorandum "solemnly declares that the US authorities must stop their criminal war acts against the DRV. They have no right to impose any condition on the DRV Government." The point the Vietnamese are making thus has two closely related aspects: they will not make any concession in return for a halt in the bombings (as distinguished from making a concession during a halt in the bombings) and therefore any halt which has conditions attached to its inception or to its prolongation or which has a terminal date -- and is thus "threatening," even though no condition is made explicit -- any such halt will simply be disregarded. In his interview with a Mainichi correspondent on October 4, Pham Van Dong summed up the DRV position: "Earlier the US propagandized that it had suspended bombings against the North for some days. However, we were not able to respond, as the suspension was aimed at eliciting our consent to demands which we cannot possibly accept. The temporary suspension was rather a pretext for further escalation. We cannot possibly accept such temporary suspension or such demands."

The statements of DRV spokesmen on a pause have been supplemented by the Soviets, the most persistent advocates of a halt in the bombings. Probably the clearest such statement was Foreign Minister Gromyko's to Ambassador Kohler on June 25, declaring that for the US to "announce suspension of hostile action against the DRV, and simultaneously inform the DRV that unless it behaved according to our prescription the punishment would be resumed, was bound to lead us nowhere." The most succinct comment was undoubtedly that of Gromyko to Secretary Rusk in Vienna on May 15, terming the US experiment "an insult."

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B. Probable DRV Responses

On the basis of the evidence above, it is possible to predict with reasonable confidence what the DRV reactions might be to certain contingencies. If the US proposes a cessation of the bombings to take effect at a given date provided the DRV meanwhile has taken certain actions or has promised to take certain actions, the proposal is almost certain to be ignored or rejected. The DRV is most unlikely to give any quid pro quo explicitly linked to a cessation of our attacks. Its rationale, implied but never precisely spelled out, is that any concession thus explicitly linked invites the US to threaten resumption of the bombing at each and every difficult point in the negotiation for an eventual political settlement. In addition, Hanoi no doubt fears the effect among its leadership elite and its people of such an open surrender to US pressure.

If the US unilaterally halts the bombings and more or less simultaneously conveys to Hanoi that they will shortly be resumed unless the DRV undertakes certain actions or engagements, the prospect is almost equally unpromising. In May, one aspect of the DRV rejection was that our terms were substantively unacceptable, but another aspect related simply to the deadline or "ultimatum" character of our move. It thus seems probable that the DRV would refuse to make even such an inherently harmless response as entering into negotiations. An explicit threat to resume bombings is of course quite superfluous since Hanoi would be well aware that it would be within our power to do so at any time.

If the US simply halts the bombings and waits silently to see what the DRV reaction will be, it is likely that we will have to wait a fair length of time. The initial DRV reaction would probably be, as in May, to draw attention to continued "aggressive" acts by the US. They would protest overflights, even if only reconnaissance, and might well allege attacks which had not occurred. They would denounce our actions and those of our "puppets" in South Vietnam, particularly any arrivals of US forces. They would disparage any public statements by us, suggesting evil motives and deceptive intentions. Hanoi is most unlikely to order any general standdown of VC activity, though it might have the VC avoid large-scale or spectacular operations, especially if the US/GVN side were to reduce the level of its offensive efforts. After a week or two, Hanoi would begin to feel a need for a new formal statement of its position in the light of the changed situation. This would be particularly felt if Hanoi was being pressed by Moscow and by neutral governments for some sort of a negotiatory response.

US actions in this period would be of critical importance. At least some elements in Hanoi appear to agree with Peking that negotiations are bad per se and they would seize on any US statement, even off-the-record remarks by unnamed officials, which could be twisted into describing the pause as involving an ultimatum. They would also play up any US action which might appear to demonstrate dishonest or bellicose intentions. Nevertheless, there would also be elements in Hanoi who favored a negotiatory track, if only in order to tie up the US and inhibit the resumption of our bombings of the North while the VC moved ahead in the South.

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If the US played its cards just "right," (and domestic pressures would, of course, make it most difficult to avoid the sort of explanation of the pause that would play into the hands of North Vietnamese "hawks,") there is a fair chance that Hanoi's official response would contain encouraging as well as inflexible aspects. It would certainly include yet another reiteration of the four points. It would include a demand that these be "recognized" by the US. It might indicate even more clearly than did Bo on May 18 that the form in which the US was to recognize them would be subject to negotiation and that a preliminary negotiation over this "recognition" problem should precede any formal conference.

The DRV would probably, as in May, accompany its public position with private moves. These would be in part responses to whatever non-aligned pressures had been exerted on it and might involve no more than paraphrases or expansions of its public statement. At least one of these diplomatic demarches would, however, be likely to suggest greater flexibility than Hanoi felt it could admit in public. The motives of those authorizing such a demarche might of course be merely to "entangle" the US in negotiations and defer or prevent a resumption of the attacks. In fact, the possible benefits of such a maneuver to Hanoi are so clear and the immediate cost is so minimal that it is difficult to imagine that it would not be attempted, provided (a) the channel seemed secure and Hanoi's face thus seemed likely to be preserved, and (b) no essential bargaining position was conceded in this preliminary sparring. Thus whatever flexibility the DRV might indicate privately would almost certainly not extend to compromising the present position of the Front (i.e. through a formal cease-fire), or its eventual role, nor would Hanoi promise to refrain from further assistance to the Front. If, however, our objective at this stage were simply to "entangle" the DRV in negotiations, with substantive concessions to be extracted only later under the implicit threat of resuming our attacks, there would be a good chance that it would mesh sufficiently with DRV objectives to permit some progress in this direction. Each side would, in effect, have wagered that its will and nerves would be superior to its opponent's in a situation which involved negotiations and in which the US threat to the North was again potential rather than being implemented.

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V-1

MM, "Credibility of Hanoi Responding Through Souvanna," Jan. 19, 1966

In conclusion, we see Hanoi's representation to Souvanna as a genuine diplomatic effort to respond within the time-frame of our pause. Whether it was stimulated by the Shelepin mission, the Gottlieb suggestion that "seeking clarification of the 14 points" would suffice as a response, or the concatenation of Polish, Hungarian, and other pressures, we believe Hanoi may consider that it has returned the ball to our court.

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V/19

RM, RFE-4, "Patterns of Communist Activity in South Vietnam Before and After the Pause," Jan. 26, 1966, p. 1

As you requested we have examined the pattern of Communist activity, particularly military action, in the last quarter of 1965 as compared with the period since December 24, 1965. We have only tentative indications of PAVN participation in military actions since the Plei Me/Ia Drang engagement of October-November. However, except for the diminution of activity of all kinds during the Christmas and Tet truce periods, we see no other significant differences between the patterns established in the last quarter of 1965 and those beginning to be evident in 1966. We see rather a consistent pattern of intense, although characteristically fluctuating, action in which the Communists have drawn on all the weapons and techniques at their command to mount incidents ranging from individual acts of terror to multi-battalion attacks and to engage or evade allied forces as their own tactical considerations dictate. The narrative below, describing significant activities on a monthly basis for the last quarter of 1965 and on a weekly basis for the period beginning December 25, 1965, demonstrates the consistency, intensity, versatility, and willingness to accept heavy casualties with which the Communist forces have sought to achieve a variety of tactical objectives.

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V-20

Memo to S/S from INR, "UPI Story on Level of Viet Cong Military Activities," Feb. 2, 1966.

(p. 1) As shown below in the statistics on the Viet Cong reported by MACV, the level of Viet Cong incidents dropped from 916 during the reporting week of January 15-22 to 781 during the last complete reporting week--that of January 22-29. Last week's incident level is below the weekly average of 852 for the last quarter of 1965* and below the weekly average of 954 for the five-week period December 18, 1965 - January 22, 1966, but is still appreciably higher than the weekly average of 606 for all of 1965.

* UPI uses the figure of 883 for the weekly average for the last quarter of 1965. We do not know the source of their figure; we have no MACV weekly average statistics. The figures we have been using are derived from our own calculation based on official weekly and monthly figures.

...

The UPI story also cites "US military headquarters" as the source for the comment that there have been "fewer instances of Communist resistance" in any one-week period during the past five months even though allied forces have initiated "a record number of probing patrols." The fluctuations in the number of GVN or US small scale operations or "probing patrols". The fluctuations in the number of GVN or US small scale operations or "probing patrols" resulting in contact with Viet Cong forces are themselves a meaningful criterion as to the progress of the war. True, the percentage of contacts of small-scale GVN and US operations has decreased during the past week--but, as has been the case for some time, operations with contact amount to less than 1% of total small scale operations.

(p. 2) UPI, citing the "South Vietnamese High Command" as its source," also states that the "Viet Cong's main force still has made no appearance since the Christmas ceasefire." While we cannot readily determine what Viet main force units have carried out specific attacks, it is highly likely that the seven multi-battalion and battalion-size Viet Cong attacks which occurred during December 25-January 28 were executed by main force units. Moreover, since the Viet Cong main force organization includes independent companies, it is probable that some of the larger number of company-size or multiple-company attacks since Christmas have been initiated by main force units. We still have no confirmed information that PAVN forces have initiated any of the armed attacks or have been involved in engagements initiated by Allied forces since the Ia Drang valley fighting last November although their involvement in some of these engagements has been indicated in as yet unconfirmed information.

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V-21

RM-RFE-3, "Why Is Hanoi Reluctant to Negotiate?" January 26, 1966
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This complex of problems -- their conditioned reflex against "negotiations," their inability to envisage any acceptable compromise, their problems with their hard-liners and with VC morale, and the question of the Chinese -- is complex indeed, so tangled that a decision to negotiate may be impossible for Hanoi. Yet such a decision is clearly under consideration: there has been no acceptance of our invitation to negotiate, no unambiguous signal has come through any of the many channels available, and at the same time there has been no rejection of our invitation, either. It would have been very easy for Hanoi in the early stages of the pause or at any time since to slam the door even more resoundingly than last May. And if a negative diplomatic response proved inconvenient, there have been other channels available: a vigorous offensive in South Vietnam by PAVN forces, for example. (We do not look on the inaction of the PAVN as a positive "signal" that negotiations and de-escalation have been chosen, but rather consider the inaction as a negative indication, a sign that Hanoi does not yet want to close the door to negotiation.) While Hanoi wrestles with these problems, we can expect a certain amount of confusion, inconclusive, even contradictory evidence as to what course they are selecting. In fact, they may try to have their cake and eat it -- for example, to engage us in negotiations while they go on the offensive in the South. Until a clear decision is made -- if indeed one ever is -- we can only be sure that their irresolution is producing strains in Hanoi, and particularly acute problems with the VC and Peking.

V-22

IN-61, "Ho Chi Minh Letter Explains Hanoi's Stand on Negotiations, Jan. 28, 1966.

(p. 1) Ho Chi Minh's letter of January 24 to heads of communist states, first made public by Hanoi Radio on January 28, represents an effort to explain Hanoi's failure to respond favorably to US overtures. It also presents Hanoi's own position on negotiations. Hanoi Radio reports that letters were addressed to "many" other interested leaders on the same day, but these have not yet been released. ...

(p. 2)Moreover, in another portion, for the first time, he clearly calls on the United States to "negotiate" with the National Liberation Front -- albeit at the same time demanding recognition of the Front as "sole representative" of the South Vietnamese people.

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IN, "Peiping Promptly Endorses Viet Cong Statement, Expresses
Readiness to Send Men," March 26, 1965

(p. 1) Peiping's March 25 People's Daily editorial responded with surprising rapidity to a South Vietnamese National Liberation Front statement of March 22. Peiping declared that it: (1) will send "all necessary material aid, including arms and all other war materials" to the Viet Cong; and (2) is "ready to send our own men, whenever the South Vietnamese people want them to fight together with the South Vietnamese people to annihilate the US aggressors." The Chinese response thus preserved the distinction made in the Front statement which said it was ready to continue to receive material and moral support from socialist countries and others and that, if the US continued to send US or other foreign troops into South Vietnam and to expand the war to the north, it would "call on the peoples of the world to send troops and youths" to come and assist it. ...

(p. 3) Implications of Chinese Threat. In addition to giving a boost to the morale of the Viet Cong and Hanoi and hopefully deterring further inputs of US or associated combat forces, Peiping's commitment suggests a stage of Chinese involvement in the Vietnam war intermediate between its present implied commitments to defend North Vietnam against "US aggression" and actual use of its army and air force to implement that pledge. Thus the People's Daily pledge raises the prospect of a wider war which would yet fall short of an inevitable confrontation between Chinese Communist and US military forces. By threatening first to send weapons to the Viet Cong, and subsequently manpower if asked, Peiping undoubtedly hopes to maximize political pressures on the US to desist from its present course without at this time taking a step which would make a US disengagement virtually impossible. However, by threatening to extend its involvement beyond the 17th parallel in this unprecedented, explicit, and public fashion, Peiping has deepened its commitment to the war and brought itself closer to the point of no return in its obligation to support Hanoi should US escalation persist.

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IV-2

MM-RFE-65-102, "The Threat of Foreign Volunteers to Aid the Viet Cong,"
April 6, 1965

INR has reservations with regard to the attached OCI memorandum (OCI 0795/65). I believe that it in general places too much stress upon the "bluff" aspect of recent Asian Communist statements on sending arms and men to South Vietnam. While this aspect is, of course, always present, I am also struck by Peiping's willingness at this time to make a more direct public commitment to the outcome of the war in South Vietnam, to the point of stating that the next US step will be aggression against China and that China's security can only be assured by "throwing the US out of South Vietnam." Hanoi too has gone further than previously by publicly threatening to send its forces south, even though described as "regrouped southerners."

Although one purpose of the recent statements undoubtedly is to deter the United States, I feel it would be unwise to overlook their domestic thrust as the OCI memorandum does. The Communists have broadly publicized their more threatening statements to domestic audiences, thus preparing the people for the possibility of an escalated conflict. In making such "propaganda" moves, the Communists must be aware that their statements may not deter the United States, and that the more specific those statements are the more difficult it will be not to back them up with deeds if called upon to do so.

Obviously, there are many dissimilarities between the present situation in Vietnam and that which existed in Korea in 1950. If the Chinese do intervene, it will probably initially be in a quite different form, i.e., through the use of Chinese MIGs from South China bases in the defense of sensitive North Vietnamese targets or the introduction of limited numbers of "volunteer" forces into North Vietnam. Nevertheless, danger of the development of a Korean-type war remains.

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V-2

IN, "Peiping's Domestic Handling of the Vietnam Crisis," April 23, 1965

Conclusions. Evidently, even if Peiping is prepared under certain conditions to engage in the war in Indochina, it still does not want this engagement to arise from pre-emptive US actions based on a misapprehension to the effect that Peiping is itself on the point of moving. The low tempo of announced political activity in recent weeks may well be a reflection of this concern. However, one should not read too much into the apparent restraint in internal propaganda and mass political activity, both because our information on what may be happening at the lower echelons is very fragmentary and because the masses were already conditioned by the intensive indoctrination in February and last September not to be surprised at any developments. The April 20 NPC resolution probably presages an extensive internal campaign in support of Vietnam. By so doing, Peiping may seek to underline to Hanoi and the world its commitments on Vietnam and, at the same time, to counter the effect of the Soviet pledges in the recent Soviet-DRV communique. Such a campaign would further prepare the population psychologically for possible involvement in the Vietnam conflict. If Peiping remains concerned over the danger of US pre-emptive actions against it, we would expect Peiping to emphasize the exhortative aspects of the campaign and to give little publicity to any mobilization measures and other contingency preparation it might undertake concurrently.

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V-26

USIB Memo, "Recent Indications of Communist Intentions in South Vietnam,"
April 9, 1965

6. Of the whole range of Communist statements, none makes an immediate commitment to direct intervention. Material aid, including weapons, is promised, but personnel are promised only if the Viet Cong needs and asks for them. We believe such statements are designed to bolster the morale of the Viet Cong and the DRV in the face of stepped-up US pressures and, more especially, to deter the US from extending its bombing and increasing its forces in the area. Nevertheless, their willingness to go as far as to threaten intervention suggests that the Communists are prepared to take some further steps to fulfill their warnings with token numbers of "volunteers" from other Communist countries.

7. In order to deter the US and to stimulate international and domestic pressures for a change in US policy, the Communists, particularly the Chinese, are seeking to raise the spectre of a Korea-type war. Actually, at this stage, the Chinese Communists have less reason to intervene in Vietnam than they had in Korea 15 years ago and more reason to fear the US reaction if they should do so. The Communists almost certainly believe that the best way to advance their cause is to prevent further US escalation of the war and to press their advantage in the South.

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8. This is apparently exactly what the Communists are doing: while using threats in the hope of limiting US participation in the conflict, they are preparing for increased military activity in South Vietnam. Talk of the obligation to send personnel will probably be used to justify the introduction of foreign military technicians, and any PAVN units sent to the South could be called "regrouped Southerners returning from the North." Considerable numbers of foreign specialists may be introduced into North Vietnam in coming months, but very few are likely to join the Viet Cong in the South. The Asian Communists (especially those in Peiping) are both sensitive and arrogant; they could be provoked into irrational actions. On balance, however, in the absence of other indicators, we believe that the recent Communist threats do not presage a Korean-type intervention now.

9. A more immediate military threat lies in South Vietnam, particularly, we believe, in the northern part. There has been clear evidence in past months of an accelerated buildup of Communist forces in this region. Viet Cong have been brought in from other regions and there is considerable evidence that regular PAVN units have been introduced into Western Kontum province. Introduction of regular PAVN units would indicate lessened concern on the part of the DRV to conceal its involvement in South Vietnam. This buildup in capabilities almost certainly indicates an intention to undertake offensive actions of greater scope and significance than

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SNIE 10-5-65, "Communist Reactions to Certain US Actions,"
April 28, 1965

VI-27

11. As indicated above, we think that, if the initial Chinese air action was not part of an all-out offensive, the first US retaliation probably would not produce an immediate Chinese choice between those alternatives. As US strikes against fighter bases in South China continued, however, the pressures on the Chinese to make such a choice would rise. Although it is impossible to estimate the exact scale of retaliation which would produce a Chinese decision, we think it likely that Peiping would make its choice some time before its capabilities in South China for supporting air action had been completely destroyed.

12. There is an almost even chance that the Chinese choice would be to break off the air battle and make political moves designed to dissuade the US from continuing its bombings of the DRV. On balance, however, we think it somewhat more likely that they would make a major military response to the continuation or expansion of US strikes against China.^{1/} The exact combination and timing of military moves could vary greatly. If they had not already done so, Chinese Communist forces would probably move into North Vietnam. Chinese or additional DRV forces would probably move into Northern Laos. The DRV armed forces, with Chinese support, would probably

^{1/} The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the Chinese are much more likely to make a military response to the US bombings, as described in the latter part of this paragraph, than to seek to dissuade the US solely through political moves. Moreover, he believes that such a response will come, if not immediately after the initial US retaliatory strike, very soon after any continuation of such retaliatory strikes.

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V-28

IN, "Reactions in North Vietnam to US Strikes," May 3, 1965

(p. 1) Our limited evidence on popular morale in North Vietnam consists of letters from Vietnamese, observations of foreign residents, and--by indirection--the regime's propaganda output. In this material we find no indication of dissidence or opposition to the regime's policies, although there is anxiety, uncertainty and, at times, apathy or resignation. Hanoi's limited evacuation effort has caused financial and psychological hardship, but resentment appears to be directed at the Americans and their "puppets," not at the DRV. In short, the population seems to have reacted in a fairly disciplined fashion, and many letter writers express patriotic confidence in the regime's ability both to withstand the attacks and to triumph in the end.

(p. 3) The Regime's Precautionary Measures. Hanoi seems well aware of the problems which might arise from our attacks and for over a year has prepared the population for them. These efforts received new impetus with the early February strikes and particularly with evidence that the United States had embarked on a daily bombing program. Campaigns have been organized for all segments of society--women, youth, and military personnel--who are urged to register to "go anywhere and do anything" under the guidance of the regime.

In this manner, the regime seeks to increase its control over the people, to heighten their identification with the regime, and to prepare them for enduring a "protracted struggle," involving hardships and self-denial. A series of governmental meetings in early April evinced increased concern about economic dislocations. Remedial measures included evacuation of offices and industries, longer working hours, and a drive for greater exertions in industry and agriculture. At the same time, the campaigns have given a stronger patriotic flavor, trying to capitalize on nationalistic feelings against a common foreign enemy. Thus the latest drive is called an "anti-US national salvation" movement.

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V-29

IN, "The Effects of the Bombings of North Vietnam," June 29, 1965

(p. 1) Effects on Popular Attitudes. Rather limited but quite uniform and convincing evidence indicates that the US strikes against North Vietnam have had no significantly harmful effects on popular morale. In fact, the regime has apparently been able to increase its control on the populace and perhaps even to break through the political apathy and indifference which have characterized the outlook of the average North Vietnamese in recent years.

(p. 3) Mobilization Costs. It has been suggested by some that the intense mobilization of North Vietnamese society for defense, involving major social changes, represents a "cost" inflicted by the attacks. The argument cites the disruption caused by the evacuation of urban dependents, the excessive air raid and militia organization and drill, the expansion of military mobilization, and the reforming of enterprise organizations along military lines. The argument, however, mistakes the regime's use of patriotism as a lever of social control for a "cost." It seems clear that as a result of these actions the North Vietnamese population has become considerably more regimented, mobile, and responsive to the regime's demands, resulting in economic gains outweighing the economic "costs."

(p. 4) Military Costs and Problems. The rationale and design of the air attacks has been to interfere with the military support given to the Viet Cong in South Vietnam through destroying military and transport facilities south of the 20th parallel. While few expect that the effort will sharply reduce this support, it obviously makes the support more difficult and costly. (No solid information is available since interrogation reports are lacking on prisoners infiltrated after the bombings began.) Yet a few calculations suggest that these costs will be minimal. The North Vietnamese response will be minimal. The North Vietnamese response will be to curtail non-essential activities (such as training in the area), to disperse storage facilities, and to move supplies by more diffuse and primitive means. Current military traffic requirements of the area are estimated to be in the order of 100 tons daily, which could hardly present any major problems or costs. While some specialized construction units appear to have been detailed to the area to repair damages, it is difficult to envisage any substantial drain on the total skilled manpower available within the economy.

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V-30

MM-RFE-65-158, "Consequences of US Strike Against IL-28's and SAM's
Near Hanoi," May 27, 1965

(p. 1) In response to Mr. Bundy's request, we have assessed Communist and non-Communist reactions to the deployment of B-52's from Guam against the IL-28's and SAM sites near Hanoi. We assume this to be a single night attack which will be explained publicly on the basis of hard intelligence concerning the emplacement of offensive bombers behind a developing SAM screen which posed an intolerable threat. We further assume the strike will not be followed by any change in the pattern of other US air strikes on North Vietnam. Under these circumstances, we find no significant Communist response, such as Chinese air or ground intervention or Soviet countermoves elsewhere. Non-Communist responses will vary according to present lines of support or criticism of US policy, but are unlikely to show any appreciable change.

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10-6-65

"Probable Communist Reactions to Certain US Actions," June 2, 1965

... Our present estimate is that the odds are against the postulated US attacks' leading the DRV to make conciliatory gestures to secure a respite from the bombing; rather, we believe that the DRV would persevere in supporting the insurgency in the South.*

....

5. If Hanoi did persevere, it would be unlikely to revise its military strategy or basic timetable in response to the US strikes. Nevertheless, for psychological effect on both Communists and anti-Communists, Hanoi might order retaliatory Viet Cong raids, sabotage, or sneak attacks on major bases or installations in South Vietnam. For similar reasons, Hanoi -- perhaps encouraged by Peiping -- would almost certainly re-examine the possibility of striking at the US carrier force in the Tonkin Gulf by sea or from the air, and would certainly study the feasibility of an air strike against US installations in South Vietnam. Though Hanoi would probably estimate that the chances of seriously damaging US forces were not great, the effect of a successful attack would be psychologically so advantageous that Hanoi might make the attempt if it had the capability.

6. If the US strikes had destroyed their air offensive capabilities, the North Vietnamese might consider an overt invasion of South Vietnam. Because of the great risks of such an action, however, we believe they would not do so. Hanoi would certainly continue and, to the extent possible, step up its support of the Viet Cong and would

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almost certainly seek to inject an increasing number of North Vietnamese line units into Viet Cong forces with little or no effort at concealment. The fears engendered by the US bombings would probably not destroy Hanoi's determination or loosen its control of the country. Indeed, it might have the opposite effect of rallying the population behind the regime.

7. Probable Chinese Communist Reactions. Although the Chinese Communists have professed to believe all along that the US would expand its air strikes, the bombing of SAM sites and airfields north of the 20th parallel would still be regarded in Peiping as a major and serious development. However, the Chinese leaders probably are more optimistic than Hanoi, and certainly more so than Moscow, that the US is nearing a humiliating defeat in the South, and will urge Hanoi to stand firm whatever the cost. The use of SAC bombers would increase Peiping's concern that eventually these strategic forces might be used against targets in China, particularly in nuclear attacks against advanced weapons facilities. Nevertheless, the Chinese would feel a strong need to do something more to help the North Vietnamese, and to prevent Moscow from gaining more influence in Hanoi and in the Vietnamese situation in general. They would also seek to exploit the situation to further weaken Moscow's influence in the international Communist movement and in the underdeveloped world.

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8. It is likely that Hanoi would request -- and that the Chinese would provide -- additional support, e.g., ground equipment and personnel for air defense purposes or engineering help for constructing and repairing airfields. The Chinese probably would also supply fighter aircraft units on request, providing they could be based in North Vietnam. They would not wish to use bases in China because of the risk of US retaliatory strikes against these bases.* The Chinese might offer to send ground combat troops to North Vietnam as an earnest of their commitment to defend their ally, but we do not believe bombing of airfields and SAM sites would bring Hanoi to the point of accepting such an offer by Peiping. Unless and until Peiping concluded that the existence of the Hanoi regime was in danger, it would probably not unilaterally send a "rescue mission" into North Vietnam. Peiping might, however, make threatening troop movements and additional air deployments in South China with the objective of deterring the US from further bombings.

* The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the assumed vigorous US air attacks on major DRV targets would probably evoke the employment over North Vietnam of Chinese air defense from bases in China. Current deployment of Chinese aircraft to South China, the apparent completion of an airfield just north of the DRV border, and explicit Chinese statements alleging willingness to accept US bombing of China, suggest Chinese readiness to test US assertions that no sanctuary will necessarily exist should Peiping provide important support to Hanoi.

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Memo to U from INR/RFE, "Where Do We Go From Here?" June 24, 1965

(p. 5) ...The critical question, however, is whether Peking will join in the latter venture. Our earlier estimate still holds, namely, that at a time of its choosing--when the prospect of tactical success is best or when the need to demonstrate support is greatest--Peking will enter the air over North Vietnam from Chinese bases against American planes. Peking may count on our raids eventually straying over into China, thereby justifying a Chinese Communist response. If not, Peking can always claim such intrusions occurred since our raids will have come so close as to make U.S. disclaimers to the contrary dubious at best. Indeed, Peking may well make such charges in all sincerity, given the known confusion that can arise from radar tracking and pilot behavior.

Until recently, many estimates have held that Peking and Hanoi are deterred from further escalation by the prospect that we might retaliate with full-scale attacks on whichever Communist power raised the ante. Now, however, we must ask whether our increase of troops and geographical spread of air strikes do not make the prospect of our greater attacks so imminent at some point in time, so far as Communist calculations are concerned, as to eliminate the deterrence factor altogether.

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10-9-65, July 23, 1965

I. VIET CONG AND DRV REACTIONS

2. At present the Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese (DRV) leaders appear confident that their course in South Vietnam promises ultimate and possibly early success without important concessions on their part. They seem to believe that they can achieve a series of local military successes which, sooner or later, will bring victory through a combination of a deteriorating South Vietnamese army (ARVN) morale and effectiveness, a collapse of anti-Communist government in Saigon, and an exhaustion of the US will to persist.

3. We do not believe that inauguration of the US actions here assumed would basically alter these expectations. The VC and the DRV probably have come to expect increased US commitments, and they probably believe that the VC, with increased North Vietnamese assistance, can find ways to offset the effect of larger US forces. Nor do we think that the extension of air attacks to military targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong area would significantly injure the VC ability to persevere in the South

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or persuade the Hanoi Government that the price of persisting was unacceptably high.*

4. If the extension of air attacks were to include sustained interdiction of land lines of communication leading from South China, these actions would obviously make the delivery of Soviet and Chinese aid more difficult and costly, and would have a serious impact on the limited industrial sector of the DRV general economy. It would still not have a critical impact on the Communist determination to persevere and would not, at least for the short term, seriously impair VC capabilities in South Vietnam.

5. If, in addition, POL targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area were destroyed by air attacks, the DRV's ability to provide transportation for the general economy would be severely reduced. It would also complicate their military logistics. If additional PAVN forces were employed in South Vietnam on a scale sufficient to counter increased US troop strength, this would substantially increase the amount of supplies needed in the South. The VC also depend on supplies from the North to maintain their present level of large-scale operations. The accumulated strains of a prolonged curtailment of supplies received from North Vietnam would obviously have an impact on the Communist effort in the South. They would

* The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, disagrees with the judgment made in this paragraph.

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certainly inhibit and might even prevent an increase in large-scale VC military activity, though they would probably not force any significant reduction in VC terrorist tactics of harassment and sabotage. These strains, particularly if they produced a serious check in the development of VC capabilities for large-scale (multi-battalion) operations might lead the DRV to consider negotiations.* But the final decision on whether to seek negotiations would depend to a great extent on political developments in the Indochina area and elsewhere, and on the actual course of combat in South Vietnam.

6. In response to the US program, the Communists would almost certainly undertake measures to increase their own strength in South Vietnam for a higher level of struggle. They are already augmenting VC units and dispatching additional PAVN forces to South Vietnam; the assumed US actions would probably result in a speeding up of this process. By the end of 1965,

* The Director of Intelligence and Research, for the Department of State, and the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, believe that in spite of greater damage and harassment caused by sustained air attack on lines of communication (LOC) and other targets, the capacities of DRV and Laos LOC are sufficient to permit support of the war in South Vietnam at the scale envisaged in this estimate. Other significant factors supporting this position are the impossibility of doing irreparable damage to LOC capacity; demonstrated Communist logistic resourcefulness and ability to move large amounts of war material long distances over difficult terrain by primitive means; and the difficulty of detecting, let alone stopping, sea infiltration.

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the total of PAVN regulars in organized units in South Vietnam could reach 20,000 to 30,000 men. Although the Communists are aware of the dangers of concentrating their troops in large numbers, they might, during the next few months, attempt major assaults against GVN forces and positions, seeking to shatter ARVN before the increased weight of US strength could be brought to bear.

....

14. If air strikes were extended to the Hanoi-Haiphong area and particularly to lines of communication from South China, the chances of Chinese Communist air intervention from Chinese bases would increase. This would particularly be true if the air strikes were effective in cutting the main roads and rail lines over which the principal supplies are moving. While we believe the Chinese would be reluctant to engage the US in an air war or to risk US retaliation against Chinese military installations, we consider the chances are about even that Chinese aircraft would deliberately engage the US over North Vietnam from bases within China. We do not believe, however, that this would lead to greatly increased Chinese Communist participation in the conflict. In any case, if large numbers of US aircraft were operating close to the frontiers of China the likelihood of hostile encounters would be high.*

* Footnotes of dissent from this paragraph appear on the next page.

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15. If, in the circumstances described in paragraph 9, the Viet Cong and the DRV at some point wished to move toward negotiations, an important divergence might open up between Hanoi and Peiping. The Chinese are themselves not suffering direct military damage and they fear that negotiations would give the USSR a chance to increase its role in Vietnam. Thus they would exert strong pressures to dissuade the DRV from entering into negotiations.

* The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence); Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; and the Director of NSA, do not agree with the judgment expressed in this paragraph. They believe that it should read as follows: "If air strikes were extended to the Hanoi-Eaiphong area and particularly to lines of communication from South China, the chances of Chinese Communist air intervention from Chinese bases would increase. Nevertheless, we believe the Chinese would be reluctant to engage the US in an air war or to risk US retaliation against Chinese military installations. We therefore consider it unlikely that Chinese aircraft would deliberately engage the US over North Vietnam from bases within China."

The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the chances are better than even that Chinese aircraft would deliberately engage the US under these circumstances. Even if air engagements were accidental they would have extremely dangerous repercussions and if they were deliberate they could not fail to lead to a wider war.

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RM, RSB-70

"Free World and Communist Bloc Reaction to US Interdiction of Maritime and Railway Access to North Vietnam," July 7, 1965.

(p. 1) Introduction

This paper assesses the reaction of the major free world countries involved in trade and shipping with North Vietnam, and also the reaction of the Soviet Union, the communist countries of Eastern Europe and Communist China to four possible US measures to isolate North Vietnam from the outside world. These are (1) a naval quarantine, which would involve the boarding and search of incoming ships for arms and military cargo; (2) a full naval blockade of the North Vietnamese coast, which would prevent all shipping from entering or leaving North Vietnamese ports; (3) the sowing of mines in North Vietnamese harbors and coastal waters; and (4) the bombing of railway lines which connect Communist China with North Vietnam.

The bombing of the railway lines, aside from being regarded as a dangerous act of further escalation in the Vietnamese war, is not considered to be of immediate concern to the free world countries in this survey. Reaction in free world countries to the other three measures is dealt with as a whole, although it is understood that a quarantine alone, which would permit passage of non-military cargo, would not provoke as severe a reaction as a full blockade. Reaction to mining, which for some countries carries strong emotional overtones, could be almost as severe as to a blockade, but would vary depending on whether or not damage or loss of life were incurred.

(p. 2) Communist Countries

The USSR would immediately try to exploit adverse world public opinion resulting from US actions, especially in the UK and among the non-aligned nations, but it is unlikely that the Soviets would try to run through a US blockade or even try to pass a quarantine line which would necessitate their ships being boarded and searched. Unable to reach North Vietnam by sea, the Soviets would make increased demands upon Peiping for access through mainland China. It is possible that new Sino-Soviet frictions on this issue might arise as they did in the spring of this year. Violent Soviet diplomatic and propaganda attacks on the US could also result in a further paralysis in Soviet-US bilateral relations. Moscow might try to extend further aid, including minesweepers, to Hanoi to compensate for its increased isolation. The possibility cannot, of course, be overruled that the USSR would take more serious retaliatory steps, such as harassment of routes to Berlin or probing maneuvers against US Naval blockade lines.

...
Although Communist China's diplomatic and propaganda reaction would be virulent and stormy, it is doubtful that she would try to run convoys through blockade or quarantine lines. Instead, increased reliance would be placed on junks and other small craft, the use of inland waterways and land transport. Peiping might try to retaliate for interference with its shipping by hit-and-run air and PT-boat attacks against US naval vessels. Likewise, it might launch air attacks to protect railway lines from mainland China. The planes involved might be disguised as North Vietnamese to reduce the possibility of US counter-attack against Chinese bases. Peiping would almost certainly offer to send antiaircraft and engineer units into North Vietnam to defend and repair the railway, and might also send infantry to prevent landings along the coast.

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SNIE 10-11-65, "Probable Communist Reactions to a US Course of Action,"
September 22, 1965

.... The following is the position of the Director of Intelligence and
Research, Department of State:

1. The Director, INR, Department of State, dissents fundamentally from the key estimates made above. He believes that the postulated air strikes against the DRV's SAM sites, airfields, thermal plants, and prime rail, road, and traffic targets would be seen by the Communists -- as well as by most other observers -- as marking a fundamental change in the character of our escalation of the Vietnam war. Separated strikes on these targets, carefully spaced over time, would help reduce adverse reactions, although these would be serious in any event. The composite program assumed here, however, would be regarded as a political and military watershed comparable to that of last February when our bombing of the DRV began.

2. Hanoi, Peking, and Moscow would all view the strikes as initiating -- and in large part executing -- the highest level of militarily significant escalation available in the DRV short of ground invasion. Even assuming precision bombing, the strikes would inextricably involve industrial and civilian losses beyond the objectives deliberately targeted, as well as almost certain Soviet and Chinese casualties. In operation the new program would appear to have exempted only deliberate attacks (of no military significance) on the population itself. Communists and non-Communists

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alike would consider that this sudden massive action contradicted the many prior official indications, public and private, that we intended to respect the special sensitivity of the Hanoi-Haiphong complex. They would regard these undifferentiated and simultaneous strikes as a gross departure from our past policy of graduated pressure. They would probably conclude that we had decided to forsake further efforts to project a judicious combination of political-military pressures against the infiltration network, and had chosen instead the blunt instrument of a broad military assault on the chief elements of the DRV economy and its self-defense capability. The credibility of our protestations of limited objectives would slump, and our actions would just as plausibly be seen to invite the capitulation of the DRV under pain of total destruction, raise the specter of an eventual invasion on the ground, and in any case appear to threaten the DRV's ability to survive.

3. Under these circumstances, it is unlikely that Hanoi would choose to move toward negotiations or compromise; it is unlikely that Moscow could afford or would be willing to urge Hanoi to do so; and it is certain that Peking would press Hanoi to persevere. These positions would be mutually reinforcing.

4. The DRV leaders, as the estimate notes, have recently indicated that their terms for negotiation may not be as inflexible as they have sometimes seemed. The assumed attacks, however, would immediately deter Hanoi from any diplomatic overtures it may possibly have been contemplating.

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It would fear that any sign of compromise under such pressure would be read by friends and enemies as capitulation, would undermine all possible future bargaining positions, would irreparably damage Viet Cong morale, and would predispose the US to renew these pressures at any time and under any conditions it thought appropriate. Whatever hesitancies the DRV may have had would now be resolved in favor of militant prosecution of the war and of more insistent requests for, and far fewer qualms over, Chinese and Soviet aid.

5. Far from seeking a respite from the bombings, the DRV would attempt to retaliate by raising the tempo of the ground war. It would send additional ground forces to Laos and South Vietnam as rapidly as the infiltration routes permit. It probably would surface these efforts, at least to the extent of acknowledging the despatch of "regrouped southerners" and "volunteers," both to raise Viet Cong morale and to discourage the US and its supporters with the prospect of a long jungle war.

6. The DRV would certainly at once press Peking and Moscow vigorously for prompt aid in rebuilding its defenses against air attacks. Inhibitions about additional Soviet and Chinese presence in the DRV would diminish. Hanoi might well drop whatever reservations it may have had against the use of Soviet or Chinese pilots. It would be most impatient with Sino-Soviet disputes about transit rights, but would expect those past hurdles to be overcome in the new atmosphere.

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7. Although Hanoi's reaction will continue to be of primary importance, the locus of decision making will shift perceptibly away from Hanoi to Peking and Moscow. Peking will have a major role in determining the overall Communist response to the assumed US actions. Given the preceding estimate of Hanoi's response, these reactions will be consistent. Hence the frustrating dilemma of the main estimate probably will not arise -- Hanoi's switching to a negotiatory track despite giving China's contrary views "great weight." (Compare paragraphs 9 and 15 of the SNIE).

8. It is almost certain that Hanoi and Peking have concerted their preparations and discussed plans for Chinese action in the event of US attacks such as the ones assumed here. The Chinese would strongly urge Hanoi to reject any thought of negotiations, and they will purposefully underwrite the DRV's will to persist. They would furnish the DRV with logistic assistance in prosecuting the war in the south and in making further US air attacks as costly as possible. They would give safe haven to any DRV planes which escaped our strikes and would permit them to operate from Chinese bases. They would probably provide Chinese planes and pilots to operate from the remaining DRV facilities if and when useable.

9. The Chinese would immediately increase their defensive air patrols along their frontier and perhaps over adjacent DRV territory in which their ground forces appear to be active. The danger of accidental encounters with US planes will be high and will increase as US planes approach the border. If the DRV airfields are successfully interdicted, there is a better than even chance that Chinese air will intervene from Chinese bases.

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10. The Chinese would probably in any case increase their presence on the ground in North Vietnam, furnishing anti-aircraft, engineer, and supply units and, if asked, providing combat forces to defend against a possible US invasion of the north, thus freeing DRV forces to go southward. With the destruction of the rail line into China, the logistical problem of supplying the DRV would increase. To the degree that the US program is successful and South China must become the operational and infrastructure base for further air defense of the DRV, the Chinese will need Soviet support and protection. Greater Soviet involvement might reluctantly be desired to deter the US. This is an additional factor likely to promote a constructive resolution of previous Sino-Soviet frictions over the speed, scope, and method of aiding Hanoi and bolstering South China bases.

11. We do not believe that the Pakistan-India war is likely to place any limitation on Peking's willingness and ability to carry out the foregoing responses. Peking has prepared its forces and its population for some time to face the eventuality of the US actions assumed in this estimate. Its likely actions against India, outlined in SNIE 13-10-65, will probably not be deterred by such US actions, nor will the Indian theater require the diversion of Chinese air or ground forces available to support North Vietnam and to defend South China.

12. Indeed in addition to the general increase in pressures generated by the interacting nature of the two Asian theaters of war, Peking would

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be aware of certain comparative advantages in an escalatory response to the American move in North Vietnam. Peking knows that the Vietnam theater tends to bring the US into confrontation with both China and the USSR, while the Indian theater tends to bring the US into confrontation only with China. Therefore Peking would hope to breach US-USSR relations on the matter of Vietnam, reducing thereby the freedom of both the USSR and the US to respond against Chinese pressures in the Subcontinent.

13. The Soviets would be specifically affronted by the assumed US course of action in Vietnam. They would almost certainly interpret it as an assault on the viability of North Vietnam, whose security they have committed themselves to defend. They would be likely to regard the US action as a direct challenge to themselves, the more so since it would probably result in Soviet casualties. They would be unlikely to place any credence in assurances that US intentions were still limited (something they have been prepared to do thus far). The sensational nature of the American initiative and the obstinacy of the Chinese and DRV reaction to it would harden the Soviet response.

14. Under these circumstances Moscow would be less likely than ever to press Hanoi to negotiate, and it would redouble its effort to participate meaningfully in the defense of the DRV. Moscow would renew its earlier offers of additional aircraft and pilots and would attempt to increase the flow of SAMs and technicians to man them. The Soviets would renew their proposals of last spring for a cooperative effort with the Chinese to aid Hanoi. The Chinese, for their part, would find it

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more difficult than previously to refuse reasonable cooperation in expediting Soviet aid, especially in view of the assumed destruction of DRV-Chinese rail lines. Despite the continuing hostility between Chinese and Soviets, their respective stakes in the struggle are likely to lead to competition to see who can help Hanoi most effectively.

15. Unfortunately for them, Soviet problems in providing rapid and effective aid would be serious. DRV airfields and associated installations would be unusable, heavily damaged, or under continuing attack. Previously prepared SAM sites would likewise be difficult to replenish, and the US would presumably not abstain from attacking sites in preparation, as it did during the installation of the present Soviet-supplied SAM capability. Under these conditions, it is likely that the Soviets would make a strong attempt to mount an air defense effort from Chinese territory and we believe that, despite haggling, some arrangement to this end would be consummated. As a bargaining factor with Moscow, Peking will probably request -- and Moscow provide -- sophisticated Soviet air defense equipment (MIG 21s and SAMs) to protect bases and logistical lines in South China.

16. We believe that fundamentally the Soviets would nevertheless remain interested in an end to the conflict. While under the stepped up military assistance effort which we believe they would be bound to make

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the Soviets would be prepared to run the risk of direct engagements with US forces in Vietnam, we believe that they would not contemplate these risks with any equanimity and would still attempt to prevent escalation from running out of control. Accordingly, even in addition to its greater military involvement, Moscow can be expected to resort to various forms of political pressures to deter the US, including a further substantial worsening in bilateral relations.

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J.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH*Reserve*
Memorandum

RFE-49, November 5, 1965

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes *Thomas L. Hughes*
Subject: Peking Prepares its People for Escalation of the Vietnam War

Despite intensive efforts by the regime to preserve secrecy in some fields, Peking's preparations for a possible war have become so pervasive as to permit a fairly comprehensive analysis of the program, particularly as it affects South China and the civilian population. Civil defense and political measures have provided more information than Peking's military and economic moves. In particular, "grass-root" sources such as letters sent abroad and refugee reactions have told us much about programs which the regime has sought to keep out of sight.

ABSTRACT

Since late 1964 Communist China has moved without publicity and on a nationwide scale to prepare for the possibility of a war with the United States. The regime has acted with restraint, perhaps to avoid a frenetic "war atmosphere" on the domestic scene and to keep its moves from attracting international attention. So far most of its concrete preparations, especially in civil defense, have been restricted to cities, but all indications suggest that efforts will proceed on a broad front for the foreseeable future.

Civil defense programs spread initially from Hainan Island in late 1964 to cities near North Vietnam in February and March. It is now likely that every major Chinese city has at least a rudimentary civil defense program. The most common measures include evacuation of "non-essential" persons and of industrial and other facilities from urban to rural and remote areas. Air raid drills and first-aid training, construction of rudimentary shelters, increased anti-aircraft defenses, and blood-type testing round out the program.

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Psychological preparations for an imminent war have included frequent warnings to the population that US actions against North Vietnam were threatening China's security. Incidents involving the US and Communist China, such as alleged overflights of Chinese airspace by US planes, are exploited by the regime to this end. An "Aid Vietnam, Resist America" campaign, begun in the spring of 1965, has obvious association in Chinese memories with its Korean War analogue. A May Red Flag article by the Chief of Staff and other leaders' pronouncements have warned of possible war. There is even evidence that Peking is preparing its people for possible nuclear attacks arising from the war in Vietnam.

Peking's military and economic contingency measures are harder to evaluate. The regime has moved since the beginning of 1965 to make possible an increase in the size of the ground forces, and air force strength in South China definitely has increased. With respect to economic measures, there has been some conversion to defense production in addition to dispersal of factories to the hinterlands.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S *OKK*
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes *TH*
Subject: China and the War in Vietnam

December 3, 1965

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We would like to call your attention to a series of developments which appear to reflect expectations in Peking that China's involvement in the Vietnam war, already manifested by the reported presence of People's Liberation Army engineer units in North Vietnam, may become overt in 1966 and may even submit the Chinese people to direct attack by the United States. These developments do not as yet foreshadow an immediate Chinese intervention, either in the air or with ground combat troops. Moreover, the absence to date of any new threats or public commitments from Hanoi or Peking concerning overt Chinese involvement undoubtedly reflects a desire in one or both capitals to keep options open and to delay this contingency until it becomes both militarily necessary and politically advantageous. Nonetheless, however illogical greater Chinese involvement might appear to be, the indicators of such a development are converging in

- 100-41 Peking Steps Up Psychological Preparations for Possible War
- 100-42 Liberation Army Policy on Vietnam Revisited
- 100-43 Peking Prepares for Possible Escalation of the Vietnam War
- 100-44 War on Vietnam - (Continued)

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Chinese Military Presence in North Vietnam

Since June, an initial report of Chinese Communist military personnel in North Vietnam has been followed by an apparently intermittent flow of regular PLA units sent to assist Hanoi. These units presumably repair interdicted lines of communications between Hanoi and the Chinese border. However, their continued augmentation provides an important token of Peking's readiness to assist North Vietnam, even if this entails placing sizeable military units in jeopardy of US air attacks.

As this PLA force grows, it becomes a responsibility in itself, in addition to the LOC's which it is to repair and perhaps defend. Should US air attacks inflict significant casualties on these Chinese units, additional air defense efforts -- initially by Hanoi but eventually by Peking -- would seem quite likely. Given the few air bases in North Vietnam and their demonstrated vulnerability to present levels of US air attack, any meaningful Sino-DRV air effort in the area between Hanoi and China almost certainly would have to involve some use of Chinese bases, either as safe haven for DRV fighters or as launch points for DRV or Chinese planes operating over DRV territory.

Chinese Airfield Construction

Since the fall of 1964, five major airfields in South China have been initiated or reactivated. Their proximity to North Vietnam and the absence of strategic targets in the region other than those immediately associated with supporting North Vietnam suggest that Peking's effort is primarily related to the needs of Hanoi. The augmentation of aircraft during the past

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year has concentrated more than one-half of China's MIG-19's in the area. The only known SAM site in South China protects Ningming, the airfield closest to North Vietnam's border which was begun in October 1964.

The construction of Ningming deserves special attention. This field is only fifteen miles from the border, about one hundred miles forward from the existing base at Nanning. Ningming is almost immediately next to the vital railroad transshipment point of Pingsiang, astride the Sino-North Vietnamese border, where all goods destined for Hanoi must be shifted from standard gauge to narrow gauge track. Were its primary purpose additional protection for South China, the Ningming field would logically have been placed somewhat back from the border so as to permit fighter planes to give advance protection to the field itself. Moreover, it presumably would have filled one of the lateral gaps instead of duplicating a field already covering this sector. It appears, therefore, that this field is related primarily to North Vietnam's defense needs, although whether as safe haven or operating base for DRV aircraft or Chinese planes is impossible to say at this time.

It seems clear that Peking's preparations center on the possibility of US attacks growing out of the Vietnam war and China's relationship thereto. If Peking feared US attacks in general, so heavy a concentration of airfield construction and aircraft deployment in the South would be highly irrational, if not hazardous, in view of our wide arc of bases and aircraft carrier mobility in the Western Pacific. Yet so far as is known, no comparable efforts have occurred elsewhere on the mainland. On the

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contrary, in placing so many of its advanced aircraft relatively distant from China's centers of population and industry, the regime appears confident that the most likely attacks will occur in the territory adjoining North Vietnam. Moreover, it may even calculate that it can limit the scope of warfare so as to reduce, if not exclude altogether, the risk to the rest of China.

Psychological Preparation of Populace for Possible War

Peking has undertaken two programs to prepare its people psychologically for possible involvement in war with the United States, a relatively low-key civil defense campaign beginning in late 1964 and a mass propaganda campaign released in November 1965. The civil defense measures which spread slowly from Hainan Island to South China in 1964-65 now presumably embrace, to one extent or another, every major city. The most common measures include a rudimentary "voluntary" evacuation program of "non-essential persons," certain small factories, and some governmental facilities from urban to rural or remote areas. Air-raid drills and first-aid training, construction of simple shelters, increased anti-aircraft defenses, and blood-type testing round out the program.

More impressive in some respects is the wave of propaganda materials released by Peking since November 1, virtually all of which in one way or another hit the theme of preparing one's mind for the struggle with US imperialism, including the literal acceptance of death in this great cause. A compendium of excerpts is attached to this report and merits reading in extenso to grasp the full flavor of Peking's message to the Chinese people. Regional broadcasts and simultaneous widespread front-page press coverage mark domestic media attention to the campaign.

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None of this material has been featured in Peking's foreign broadcasts to date.

Peking's failure to trumpet abroad its domestic preparations, whether in civil defense or propaganda, indicates that such preparations are serious rather than for demonstration effect. Nor is Peking likely to provide advance notice of its overt involvement in the war through renewed assertions of its willingness to "fight shoulder to shoulder" with Hanoi. Such assertions in the spring of 1965 failed in their objective of deterring US strikes against North Vietnam. Deterrence having failed, more weight will be given to deception so as to obtain whatever marginal advantages may accrue from the element of surprise. Even more important, perhaps, Peking's international silence with respect to its intentions or expectations preserves the options for both itself and Hanoi, keeping open the Chinese role in case the situation does not require overt intervention or in case unforeseen developments make such intervention far too risky a venture to contemplate.

The Timing of Chinese Involvement

The Korean war and the Sino-Indian war of 1962 demonstrated Peking's ability to delay action or, even after having attacked, to suspend action for weeks at a time. One factor contributing to delay is the regime's desire to justify politically its military moves, thereby hopefully isolating its opponent from world support and possibly even dividing his ranks at home. Such a consideration may be motivating Peking to pile up a record of US "provocations" in the form of overflights (six apparently occurred in

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October-November 1965), harrassment of shipping, and shootdowns of reconnaissance aircraft over Chinese soil.

Another factor making for delay is the difficulty of preparing the military infrastructure of South China for any serious involvement in war, especially against US air attacks. Slow as this task would be under normal circumstances, given the poor communications lines and arduous terrain, it is complicated even further by the presumed need to develop coordinated air defense arrangements with the DRV.

Conclusions

Two basic alternative explanations of Peking's present preparations may be offered. The first would see all of the foregoing activity as designed against the possible eventuality of a deliberate US escalation of the war against Chinese territory, in which case China would respond vigorously. Under this thesis, so long as US aircraft do no more than accidentally overfly Chinese border there is virtually no danger of overt Chinese intervention, unless of course the extremely unlikely and remote situation arose in which the North Vietnam regime was in literal danger of collapse.

The second alternative sees Peking's plans as anticipating a gradual escalation in US air attacks and concomitant growing need for Chinese involvement in North Vietnam's air defense. The links between Hanoi and Peking in this area as yet fall short of forging a solid chain of evidence which would point to plans for DRV aircraft utilizing Chinese bases or
o-versa. Under this thesis, the risk of Chinese involvement becoming

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overt exists even though US attacks are confined to North Vietnam and avoid seeking the total destruction of the regime.

Neither explanation conforms wholly to the available evidence and the accepted logic behind Chinese Communist thinking. An additional complication is the distortion in Peking's view of US intentions which tends to overestimate our designs on China and to underestimate our willingness to stand firm and prevail over Communist aggression. It is therefore impossible at this point to predict precisely when or under what particular circumstances Chinese Communist involvement is likely to become overt. However, the trend of developments over the past year -- covert and overt, in North Vietnam and in Communist China -- indicates that Peking itself estimates the possibility of such overt involvement in 1966 to be a serious one.

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Probable Communist Reaction to a US Course of Action," Dec. 10, 1965

(pp. 5,6) 9. To defend the DRV, Hanoi might ask permission to operate DRV fighters from Chinese bases, or might request the Soviets and/or the Chinese to provide fighter units of their own, operating from Chinese airfields. We believe that the Chinese would not comply with any such request.^{6/} Both the DRV and the Chinese air forces are ill-equipped to engage in sustained combat with US air forces; furthermore, such a contest would invite retaliation against Chinese territory. China would almost certainly not make its air facilities available for operational use by Soviet combat aircraft.

(pp. 6,7) 10. We do not believe that either Hanoi or Peking would be willing, at this point, to introduce substantial numbers of Chinese ground combat troops into the DRV. From Hanoi's point of view, such a movement could involve an undesirable expansion of Chinese influence. Moreover, it would seem to both Peking and Hanoi to involve undue risks of a Chinese-US military confrontation and a consequent widening of the war which we think the Communists would not wish to invite at this point in the conflict.^{7/}

...
12. The expansion of the bombing would be regarded by much of the non-Communist world as a serious new escalation of the war. ...

^{6/} Dr. Louis W. Tordella for the Director, National Security Agency; Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; and Major General Roy Lassetter, Jr., for the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, consider that the chances are about even that the Chinese, if requested by the DRV, would permit DRV aircraft to intervene from Chinese bases, or would even do so with their own aircraft, in the event of continued US air attacks near the Chinese border. They would not expect any of these measures, of themselves, to repel the US attacks militarily, but would hope to make our operations increasingly costly and possibly deter further US escalation while running high but acceptable risks of being bombed themselves.

^{7/} Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the estimate underrates the advantages and overrates the disadvantages which Hanoi and Peking might see in a larger Chinese military presence in North Vietnam. The present situation already indicates that Hanoi will receive whatever numbers of Chinese troops would be useful in repairing and protecting communication lines to China. As US air attacks increase, Hanoi and Peking may feel that a deployment into North Vietnam of a number of ground combat troops would be a salutary warning to the US of Peking's commitment to Hanoi's cause and of the specter of a wider war. While the North Vietnamese would not welcome the increase in influence which this Chinese presence might imply, they would feel this factor more than compensated for by the increasing Chinese contribution to their protection and to the prosecution of the war. They are aware that a very large Chinese presence was eventually withdrawn from North Korea. Neither Hanoi nor Peking would estimate that the mere presence of Chinese forces, nor even their efforts to defend themselves against US attacks, would involve a substantial risk that the US would widen the war. On the contrary, at this juncture such a deployment might well appeal to both regimes as the most effective and safest available deterrent to further US-escalation.

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13. Although the nature and extent of Communist and Free World reactions would vary somewhat depending on which targets were bombed, we do not believe that the differences would be critical.^{8/}

^{8/} Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that both Communist and Free World reactions would differ significantly according to the targets attacked. POL facilities could be most plausibly justified as targets relating to infiltration and logistic support of the insurgency in the South. Attacks on power plants, especially those embedded in urban areas, would evoke a stronger reaction from both Communist and Free World governments because it would be widely assumed that we were initiating an effort to destroy the DRV's modest industrial establishment. Attacks on lines of communications and other targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area would confirm the fears generated by the attacks on power plants and would inevitably entail a sharp rise in civilian casualties. The distinction between such operations and all-out war would appear increasingly tenuous. As these attacks expanded, Hanoi would be less and less likely to soften its opposition to negotiations and at some point it would come to feel that it had little left to lose by continuing the fighting. It would be likely to shed whatever political inhibitions it might then still have -- both against a larger PAVN intervention in the South (limited only by logistics) and against a further Chinese garrisoning in the DRV. The latter would become increasingly acceptable not only to deter further US escalation by the specter of Chinese involvement, but also to secure the North from US invasion attempts, to which the bombings might seem to be a prelude. To the extent that the Chinese presence in North Vietnam grew in response to our attacks, even such allies as Japan and the UK would be faced with still heavier domestic pressures to condemn the US openly and to cease all cooperation with our effort in Vietnam. Attacks on DRV airfields would be in a special class. They would be seen by Communists and others to be purely military and would thus not stir the strong reactions that other targets would provoke. Such attacks would, however, probably increase the risk of Chinese involvement as noted in our footnote to paragraph 9.

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24. Escalation. We find some difficulty in envisioning a practicable and effective way in which the Communists could attempt to reverse the tide in the assumed situation. A Korea-type march of large numbers of Chinese troops into South Vietnam through the DRV and the Laos panhandle would encounter extreme logistic difficulties, would be exposed to interdiction by US/GVN attacks, and would invite US retaliation against China. Yet the number of Chinese forces that could be infiltrated into the South and supported there, given the assumed situation, would be unlikely to achieve what many battalions of PAVN had failed to do, while still involving some risk of US retaliation against China.^{9/}

25. A large number of PAVN troops could be released to go South if Chinese forces moved into the DRV to provide local defense. Such an

^{9/} Major General Roy Lassetter, Jr., for the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, and Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believe that the last sentence does not properly highlight the Chinese Communists threat and the size of the forces that could be moved to and supported in the South. Based upon past performances in both Korea and Tibet, there is no reason to assume that once the Chinese Communists decided to commit ground forces in support of the war in Vietnam, they would not commit the total number of forces they consider within their capability to support in an effort to redress the unfavorable situation. Important factors supporting this position are: our knowledge of the results of air interdiction programs during World War II and the Korean War; the impossibility of doing irreparable damage to LOC capacity; demonstrated Communist logistic resourcefulness in covertly creating forward stockpiles of war materiel; their ability to move large amounts of war materiel long distances over difficult terrain by primitive means; and the difficulty of detecting, let alone stopping the infiltration of personnel over obscure jungle trails.

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additional increment to Communist forces in the South, however, would pose formidable logistic problems. It would also increase DRV concern over a greatly increased Chinese presence in their country.

26. A course somewhat more attractive to both Peking and Hanoi might be to try to disperse US strength and create alarm by developing a front in northern and central Laos and northern Thailand. This might be attempted initially by the use of Pathet Lao forces heavily encadred and supported by Chinese and North Vietnamese. Peking might hope that this tactic, at least in the early stages, would not result in US air attacks on Chinese territory. Other diversionary efforts could be directed at Taiwan, South Korea, or even India, but these would seem to be more useful as threats in being to worry the US than as practical means to alter the course of the war in South Vietnam.

27. None of these courses would carry the assurance of victory, and all of them entail the possibility -- in some cases the near certainty -- of developing into an outright Sino-American war. Peking would realize that this could mean direct attacks on Chinese territory, possibly including the use of nuclear weapons.^{10/}

^{10/} Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, and Dr. Louis W. Tordella for Director, National Security Agency, believe that Peking would feel that it could undertake actions at the lower end of the spectrum indicated in paragraphs 25 and 26 without undue risk of an outright Sino-American war. (See footnote to paragraph 10.) Peking would not, for example, anticipate direct US attacks on Chinese territory -- certainly not nuclear attacks -- in response to an enlarged Chinese ground presence in North Vietnam or to a combined PL/DRV/Chinese offensive in Laos. On the contrary, they would probably calculate that by bringing home to the US the dangerous implications of escalation their actions would probably deter further US moves. This Chinese calculation points to the danger so lucidly discussed in paragraphs 29 and 30 of this estimate -- the danger that the US and China might slide slowly into war, almost without realizing what was happening.

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28. In the light of all these considerations, we believe the odds are better than even^{11/} that, dogmatic and ambitious though the Communists may be, they would, in the circumstances postulated, choose some form of retrenchment rather than further escalation. Looking this far into the future, in light of the many changes that may have taken place in the meantime, we cannot with confidence estimate which of several possible forms this retrenchment would take. We believe that the North Vietnamese, who are bearing a heavy burden, would be the first to incline toward retrenchment. The Chinese, who are not much hurt by the war, would probably be slower to come along, but their ability to stop such a move by Hanoi is limited. The VC/NFLSVN would have to pay the greatest price in a policy of retrenchment and they would probably believe to the last that their cause could be saved if only their allies to the north would do more. However, they would not have the decisive voice.

29. The reasons for the Communists to choose the more prudent course of standing down to fight again another day are persuasive, and we would be inclined to place the chances of their doing so much higher were it not for those factors which, for want of a better word, we call "irrational."

^{11/} Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the odds are only "a little better than even."

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These include not only ideological fanaticism and a world view alien to our thinking but also deep-seated emotional factors including the arrogance of the Chinese leaders and elements of nationalism and racism. Peking's leaders have not always been prudent. Thus we cannot discount their choosing a course of further escalation as heavily as our own reasoning would indicate. 12/

30. The dilemma in Peking is not only a choice between the rational and the irrational. The Chinese have chosen to escalate by trying against their own interests to bring about a change in the level of Chinese forces and then the Chinese have refused to accept a change in the level of their forces. The Chinese have also failed to take the progressive measures that would bring them from the state of negative escalation to a state of positive escalation. If they had done this, they would have been able to bring about a change in the level of Chinese forces. Hence, the Chinese have chosen to escalate. The Chinese have chosen to escalate.

12/ Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, does not believe that the choice facing the Chinese leaders is wholly a choice between the rational (retrenchment) and the irrational (escalation), but rather that there is a substantial rational component -- deterring US escalation -- in the latter course. He therefore believes that in the assumed circumstances there is an almost equal chance that the Chinese would enlarge the war and bring in large numbers of Chinese forces.

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MM - RFE/ASW to U/Ball, January 24, 1966

In sum, the regime has not instituted any crash programs of civil defense or evidenced any panic in undertaking contingency preparations against the eventuality of US attacks. However, it has alerted its elite political and military groups to the sensed imminence of conflict with the US, related this conflict to the Vietnam war, and undertaken appropriate air deployments and construction efforts in South China, the area most immediately threatened by escalation. At the same time Peking has acted carefully but deliberately to increase its commitment of ground and air power to assist in the defense of North Vietnam.

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Memo to FE from INR re "National Elections in South Vietnam," Mar. 7, 1966

(p. 1) While these sentiments appear to be widespread, there does not seem to be any sharply rising pressure or groundswell of opinion that national elections be held immediately or even within the next several months. Indeed, on the basis of our preliminary scanning of reports from Saigon, Buddhist leader Thich Tri Quang is the only prominent individual advocating early elections. ...

(p. 2) ...The question of national elections was one of several issues discussed last August during a conference of student and intellectuals in Hue. It is possible that those who favor early action may be satisfied by another round of local elections, which the government has privately indicated it plans to hold this spring, and by the GVN's public commitment to hold a national referendum for a constitution in November 1966 and general elections sometime in 1967. However, there are almost certainly many Vietnamese who remain skeptical of this timetable and any indication that the GVN is procrastinating might well produce widespread public outcry.

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Memo to the Secretary from INR, "US and GVN Statistics on Viet Cong Control Conflict," January 7, 1966

(p. 1) Vietnamese Chief of State Nguyen Thieu recently stated to US AID Administrator Bell that only about 30% of the rural population in South Vietnam lives under a state of law and order. He did not elaborate on this assessment; however, last November, Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky, referring to the possibility national elections by the end of 1966, told Ambassador Lodge that elections free from Viet Cong intimidation could be held in only about one-fourth of the country's some 2,600 villages. Other Vietnamese leaders, notably Generals Co and Thieu, have made similarly pessimistic assessments.

MACV Estimates Differ. These judgments appear to be at some variance with MACV estimates. According to MACV, as of the end of November 1965, almost 52% of the rural population was in areas where the pacification program directed toward re-establishing government authority has been "completed;" less than 23% of the rural population is in areas "controlled" by the Viet Cong; and the remainder is in areas "undergoing pacification" (less than 6%), "cleared" of Viet Cong forces (less than 20%), or "controlled by neither" the Viet Cong or the GVN (less than 1%). ...

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IN-190, "Political Instability in South Vietnam: Some Positive Aspects,"
March 24, 1966

(p. 1) ...Past experiences in this regard, however, as well as Communist admissions of their weaknesses in the field of political struggle suggest that, although political instability has disadvantages in distracting attention from effective pursuit of the war effort, it may have certain countervailing positive aspects as a safety valve. If expressions of political dissent were completely frustrated, they might find an outlet in enhanced susceptibility to Communist propaganda.

(p. 2) Implications. It is clear from the Tien Phong article and from other intelligence data as well that the Communists regard the problem of enlisting support in the urban areas as an urgent one, and that they are addressing themselves to devising methods to meet it. Notwithstanding their lack of success in the past, we cannot safely assume that an intensified effort on their part will be equally unsuccessful in the future. It is instructive, however, that despite anticipations to the contrary, the Communists have not yet been able to win political benefits from the political ferment among the urban leadership groups and their followers. Indeed, it is arguable that it is the very confidence of the out groups that they will be able to influence the structure and policies of the Saigon government, even in the absence of formal and orderly channels, that has been a principal obstacle to any genuine Communist success in urban areas.

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IN-561, "Prospects in the South Vietnamese Elections Uncertain," Sept. 10, 1966

(p. 1) ...The central issue, however, is not which candidate will win or what political groups will be represented but whether there will be a substantial voter turnout. The Buddhists and the Viet Cong have repeatedly called for a boycott and are otherwise attempting to discredit the elections. The boycott campaign--whether conducted by Buddhists, Communists, or splinter groups--may evoke little in the way of widespread principled decisions to abstain. There is the danger, however, that many Vietnamese, beset by unprecedented and conflicting pressures to vote and not to vote, may find abstention the easier solution.

(p. 4) ...Although their employment of violent tactics has been much more marked in this election campaign than in previous elections, where their obstructive effort was primarily a propaganda one, they have by no means employed their full capability, perhaps out of concern that too high a level of harassment could result in something of a "backlash" among voters. In any case, the GVN will probably be able to maintain a fair degree of security during the polling and plans to take a number of measures just before to offset Viet Cong harassment of the polling stations and seizure of identity cards.

(p. 7) ...The Embassy itself believes that a 60% turnout is more likely but that even a 50% turnout can be considered a victory for the government. Unless the returns are manipulated, it is difficult to see how the government can hope to match the 73% turnout of the tranquil and unmolested 1965 local elections, given the intense opposition activity that has developed in recent weeks. There may well be a 60% turnout in these elections but, if this includes an appreciable number of invalidated ballots, the government's mandate can be seriously challenged.

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MM, "Assessment of the Current Situation in South Vietnam,"
October 7, 1966

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(p. 3) However, Ky's and Thieu's ability to remain in power, aside from US support, appears to be due more to the absence of any effective challenge within the military establishment than to their command of its positive support or loyalty. Individual military leaders remain pre-occupied with their own perquisites, ambitions, and rivalries. Despite their unity during the Buddhist crisis, they can be expected to defy any efforts by Ky or Thieu to curb their power positions or subject them to unduly strict control.

(p. 5) Despite increased logistic problems, the Communists appear to maintain an adequate level of supplies and to distribute these supplies within South Vietnam in quantities sufficient to sustain their operations. Nor has the bombing of North Vietnam severely restricted the flow of supplies to the South; indeed, given the expansion of the road system in Laos, and the road improvements in North Vietnam, Hanoi has probably increased its net capabilities to support the fighting in South Vietnam. These capabilities moreover, according to recent intelligence community estimates, are far from fully utilized at this time.

(p. 6) However, actual pacification has gone little beyond the planning and training stage. To be sure pacification is being implemented in some areas, but there is little evidence that political, economic, and social measures are being effectively coordinated as a back-up to military clearing operations. The old problems of apathy and misunderstanding of the nature of pacification still persist at all levels.

...

The Mission has reported that a number of long-standing problems continue to obstruct the pacification program. Chief among them has been the continuing inability of ARVN to operate in support of hamlets undergoing pacification. Despite numerous attempts to change the situation, ARVN apparently continues to view its own role almost entirely in terms of "search-and-destroy" operations, which may hurt VC forces

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INR blind memo to Mr. Katzenbach, June 24, 1967.

(p. 1) The results of the upcoming elections in South Vietnam may well create a political situation unprecedented since the fall of Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963. US policy alternatives, whatever their limitations today, may in turn suffer a severe and possibly irretrievable set-back. In the meantime, the US is no less committed to the establishment of constitutional representative government in South Vietnam than it is to its defense against Communist aggression.

...
Under these circumstances, there is serious doubt whether a military victory at the polls, however impressive the victor's "mandate," will substantially strengthen the extent of the public's sense of commitment to the government or willingness to cooperate or serve it. Many articulate Vietnamese will probably interpret a military victory as the final seal for a general's regime that offers little, if any, foreseeable prospect for a meaningful sharing of power or a political solution to the war. The US will almost certainly be held responsible on the grounds it defaulted, acquiesced, or actually supported the regime. Finally, a military-controlled election may well hand the Communists an unprecedented and possibly decisive political victory.

B. Proposals for Major US Action.

The minimum objective for US policy at this point is the preservation of the credibility of the elections. The elections must be free of excessive GVN control and manipulation and open to all contestants, the only exceptions being the Viet Cong and its Liberation Front. This will require strong, unprecedented, and unrelenting pressure on the GVN, reinforced by a completely unequivocal US public posture on free and open elections. We are clearly aware that the situation may be irretrievable and that our proposed actions may well be categorically rejected by the generals. We are also aware that some of our recommendations constitute a change, if not a reversal, in US policy. ...

(p. 2) 2. Provisional Government

The US should pressure the generals to establish a caretaker government to conduct the elections. This has been suggested several times by a number of prominent Vietnamese civilians. Ky and Thieu should resign and ministers appointed from the judiciary or other "non-political" sectors. Our position with Ky should argue that by such a single move Ky destroys the opposition's charges on the conduct of the elections. Both Ky and Thieu have indicated in the past that they might be willing to step down during the election period.

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(p. 3) The US should press Ky to send Loan abroad at least for the election period or remove him from all positions of authority. Ky is likely to be reluctant to act against Loan, and he would argue that he has effectively curbed Loan's power by relieving him of his MSS duties. We should not accept this position, arguing that Loan's reputation outweighs the usefulness of his services. At the same time, we should recognize that Loan's complete neutralization by no means resolves the problem since Ky's own ambitions are the main sources. Loan is merely the symptom.

(p. 4) We should make it clear to Ky that the US supports Minh's participation in the elections. This would substantially reinforce the position that the elections are free and open to all and thus encourage the opposition candidates, and would seriously challenge Ky's chances at the polls. There is, of course, no guarantee that Minh would win or that he would rally the votes of the other candidates. However, should he lose, Ky's victory may be much more defensible while, on the other hand, a Minh victory would give Vietnam the first unquestionably popular President.

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Memo to S/P from INR, "Huntington's Report on South Vietnam, Jan. 18, 1968

(p. 1) ...We are in particular agreement with some of his conclusions: (1) pacification has produced relatively little "lasting" security in the countryside; (2) urbanization rather than the extension of government presence through pacification policies has probably been "the single most important factor" in the increase in the number of people in "secure" areas; and (3) in the highly fragmented and diverse Vietnamese body politic, group identity is more operative than national identity and group political organization more effective than central government political organization.

...

Huntington seems to be overstating the future significance of political accommodation or decentralization in strengthening South Vietnam's political viability. Virtually all of these groups are to varying degrees themselves divided and even inimical toward each other. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to see how one goes about strengthening which faction of which group. Huntington's recommendations on accommodation include the Viet Cong, and on this point we question whether he is fully aware of the pervasiveness and unity of Communist organization which, unlike that of the non-Communist groups, extends outside the areas of Viet Cong control.

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MM-RFE-66-48, "Leon Goure's Briefing Notes on the Viet Cong," Aug. 9, 1966

(p. 1) Captured documents and GVN-conducted interrogations of POW's generally substantiate Goure's conclusions that various adverse trends have impaired Viet Cong morale. However, the documents do not support a conclusion that these internal difficulties have already significantly weakened Viet Cong capabilities. Defections and desertions have increased, but there has not been one confirmed report of a regular unit, even a squad, surrendering or deserting as might be expected if morale and discipline had gravely deteriorated.

(p. 2) ...Given their demonstrated ability to adjust to pressures and the substantial progress they achieved before 1965, one cannot be confident that the critical point in the Communists' capability to wage an effective and widespread military effort will be reached soon.

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RM, RFE-41, "The Vietnam War: Situation and Prospects," Oct. 11, 1966

(p. 1) ABSTRACT

The massive introduction of US forces into Vietnam beginning in 1965 retrieved a situation that was all but desperate. In the period immediately preceding our intervention on the ground, the GVN military response to the Communist drive had become virtually ineffective. With the GVN military fabric increasingly stretched and torn, the prospects that the country could be held together politically to support continued resistance over any long period were growing dim.

US intervention faced the Communists with a force of great mobility, vast fire power, and increasing strength.

(p. ii) This said, however, it must also be noted that the Communists retain the capability and, by all evidence, the will to prolong the war over a considerable period. They have shown that they are still able to increase the number of the small unit and harassing actions that have been the real key to their success to date, maintain their political infrastructure, interdict lines of communication, and reinforce and supply themselves from both North and South. For its part, the GVN has not yet been able to increase its control of the countryside to any appreciable extent despite its own and our efforts to move more rapidly into effective pacification programs.

The Communists can still utilize or at least deny to the government much of the terrain and resources of the countryside. They are also fielding a combat force almost equal in number to allied forces actually committed to combat, and thus still have some basis for believing that in due course they will be able completely to undermine the resistance of the South. In their apparent confidence that domestic and international pressures will make it impossible for the US to stay the course, they are open to misreading a situation with which they have little or no first-hand familiarity. They may well be closer to the mark however, in their belief that they can maintain much of their position in the countryside and that--as the war presses increasingly heavily on an urban population thus far relatively immune to their political influence--they can make political inroads in the cities to the point where the impact of the US presence as well as the level of conflict will become intolerable to the people of South Vietnam.

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(p. iii) In the North, the war appears to be having a severe but not unbearable impact. The North Vietnamese people seem somewhat weary but not disaffected, and the regime has no evident difficulty in exercising effective control.

Although it is too early to make any final judgment on the effects of the Peking purge, it has yet to result in any increased militancy on the part of the regime. The Chinese continue to view the conflict as essentially a Vietnamese affair. Like Hanoi, they may feel that Communist prospects in the war are far from bad and that current levels of Chinese aid, together with North Vietnamese resources and assistance from other Communist countries, may be enough to maintain Hanoi's will to fight and to lead eventually to the wearing out of American patience and determination. In addition, fear of US retaliation in all probability weighs importantly in China's calculus. Thus it appears that at the war's current level of intensity, which involves neither a threat of invasion of North Vietnamese or Chinese territory nor the destruction of the Hanoi regime, the Chinese will not actively and openly intervene in the fighting.

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Memo to the Secretary: "Comments on the CIA Paper, The War in Vietnam,"
January 13, 1967

(p. 1) In the main, the report concludes that as a result of the massive US intervention during the past eighteen months, the Communists have suffered major strategic and tactical setbacks in the South. They are no longer able to initiate massive offensive military operations and cannot count on an outright military victory to take over South Vietnam. ...In the meantime, there is "no evident diminution" in the Viet Cong's or Hanoi's capability and will to continue the war, US air attacks against the North notwithstanding....

However, the report treats pacification only briefly, rightly avoiding an explicit prejudgment of the final outcome of this effort. The implication of this omission may be that CIA believes that there will be a measure of success sufficient at least to cause further political losses to the Communists vis-a-vis the peasant. Nor is there any mention or evaluation of a second new factor in the US-GVN strategic concept, i.e., the introduction of US combat forces into the highly populated Mekong River delta. It is widely recognized that while US troops in the delta may help break the military stalemate in this area, there is considerable danger that the US involvement could precipitate serious adverse political and economic repercussions..

(p. 2) It would also appear that insufficient weight is given to the fact that the GVN and US are gearing up for a war of pacification at the same time that the Viet Cong are starting to re-emphasize guerrilla warfare. The uncertainties that inevitably accompany this dual orientation make any judgment of the political and military outcome of the war in the countryside during 1967, including CIA's conclusion that the Communist military position in the South will deteriorate further, seem premature.

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Memo to the Secretary from INR, "Comments on CIA Study of the South Vietnamese Army," Dec. 19, 1966

(p. 1) The study presents a rather discouraging picture of ARVN. It concludes that neither the sharply increased level of US military assistance nor the large-scale commitment of US combat forces has significantly improved overall ARVN performance. While ARVN is considered generally capable of maintaining internal security in most major population centers and along certain lines of communication, it is wholly incapable of prolonged effective resistance against North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units in South Vietnam. The main causes are: inadequate training in counterinsurgency tactics; inferior firepower; insufficient qualified, aggressive, or highly motivated officers and NCOs; serious deficiencies in the promotion and discharge systems; and the large number of understrength units caused by excessively high desertions and the general manpower shortage.

However, it should be noted that these deficiencies in ARVN are long standing and have been merely aggravated by the sharp increase in Communist capabilities during the past two years. Even before the massive infusion of US combat troops, individual ARVN battalions frequently were unable to meet Viet Cong/NVA units on numerically equal terms. They have also been, for some years, incapable of or unwilling to apply counterinsurgency tactics and have been repeatedly outgunned by heavier Communist firepower. ARVN commanders therefore were and still are inclined to operate in large-unit formations and to rely heavily on massive artillery or air support in order to achieve rather limited objectives against a numerically smaller Communist force.

(p. 2) Indeed, unless massive US advisory and assistance measures are undertaken it seems likely that the impact of such deficiencies as inferior firepower and understrength units would become even more serious in pacification operations when ARVN will be required to operate in smaller-unit formations and therefore may not have sufficient artillery, armor, and tactical air support immediately available.

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MEM-REF-66-32

May 7, 1966

VI-12

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary

FROM : INR - Thomas L. Hughes

SUBJECT : Cambodia Paper (SC 08436/66)

The attached "informally coordinated" study is reasonably satisfactory to INR and to FE with one very important exception. This is the sentence at the end of the second paragraph on page 7 -- "This role could have an important effect on the outcome of the war."

Nothing resembling this sentence appeared in the original version of the text, nor has there been any forewarning that a conclusion of this type would be included in the final version. No such conclusion has been reached in any past Community study nor in any formal position adopted even by DIA. Moreover, this statement falls outside the terms of reference of the study. It is not an intelligence judgment based on the existing situation but an intelligence estimate, and one with major policy implications. Finally it prejudices the answer to a question that will be considered in a forthcoming NIE (North Vietnamese Capabilities for Fighting in South Vietnam) scheduled for completion in June.

We have no doubt that Cambodia is useful now to the Communists and can be more useful in future, both as a source of supply and as a safe haven, and that this utility will, to a degree, compound our own difficulties. We do not believe, however, that Cambodia could constitute an asset of such importance to the other side as to compensate significantly for success on our part in interdicting the supply routes in North Vietnam and Laos and in turning the tide against the Communist military effort in South Vietnam. One could theorize that when we reach this point two developments could occur: (a) with the supply routes from North Vietnam through Laos to Cambodia interdicted on land, supplies could still be moved by sea to Cambodia and thence to South Vietnam, and Cambodia might in addition make its own military resources available for use in South Vietnam; and (b) with Communist bases in South Vietnam increasingly denied them and their freedom of movement seriously hampered, the Communists might then use Cambodia as a major staging area.

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L-101-16

"Strategic Concept for Vietnam: An Analysis, Jan. 6, 1967

(p. 1) Basic precepts behind the counterinsurgency doctrine have survived in principle but have been little applied in practice. As program has succeeded program, not only have the principal deficiencies in implementation become increasingly clear, but it has also become evident that these deficiencies have been essentially the same ones from the outset. They may be summarized as follows:

1. With rare exceptions arising from the attributes of individual commanders, the Vietnamese Army (ARVN) has never escaped from its conventional warfare mold. Both in its military tactics and in its relations with the people, it has all too often acted counter to the basic principles of counterinsurgency rather than in support of them. The US military leadership in Vietnam has, on balance, done little to reorient ARVN toward counterinsurgency. In the meantime, the paramilitary forces, locally recruited and locally based and theoretically the backbone of any counterinsurgency effort, have been repeatedly ignored or misused.

2. Despite elaborate planning and creation of machinery to execute and sustain a combined political-military pacification campaign, relatively few Vietnamese leaders have clearly understood the goals of pacification or articulated them effectively through the supporting administrative apparatus. Some leaders have viewed pacification largely in a military context while others, however committed to the political principles involved, have lacked either a pragmatic appreciation of their impact on the peasant or a willingness to approach pacification in revolutionary terms.

3. As a result, the GVN, despite increasing US assistance in men and materiel, has been relatively ineffectual in meeting the Communist military and subversive threat at the rice-roots level. Pacification has thus far failed to give the peasant sufficient confidence in the GVN's ability to maintain security, the first prerequisite in pacification, or, in longer run, to redress basic economic, political, and social inequities.

(p. 4) Critique.

a. Despite the formulation of a new national pacification-hamlet plan and the expansion of the GVN civilian and military apparatus, implementation was considerably less effective than under the Diem regime. Khanh and his advisors failed to develop a clear concept or to provide strong direction and coordination from Saigon; province and district chiefs were constantly reshuffled for political reasons; and GVN military commanders remained unconvinced of the merits of pacification.

(p. 6) g. Despite the efforts of some US military advisors at the local level to reorient their ARVN counterparts toward counter guerrilla operations, MACV and ARVN continued to be wedded to the organizational and tactical concepts of conventional warfare. Some ARVN generals sought to oppose this prevailing attitude. In his report to General Khanh, General Minh obliquely criticized the deployment of large ARVN forces in Corps I, noting that they did not "achieve the desired results" and dangerously exposed some areas to attack by Viet Cong mainforces. In any event, ARVN and MACV estimated that, on balance, Viet Cong capabilities had so significantly increased during the Khanh period, that the extensive use of artillery and air strikes was the only "equalizer" against the insurgents.

(p. 8) B. Critique.

1. While the two wars have been waged simultaneously, they have not been mutually supporting. US forces in the north have inflicted serious losses on North Vietnamese and mainforce Viet Cong units and disrupted their bases, but there has been relatively little effort to consolidate these victories through pacification. As a result, the Communists are able to replace the losses inflicted on their large formations by the US through recruitment from VC regional forces as well as by infiltration. The latter has increased substantially, despite intensive bombing of Laos and North Vietnam.

...

3. ARVN meanwhile is also fighting essentially conventional war whether in sparsely settled areas or in populated ones such as the Mekong delta. Its commitment to pacification is negligible, and it continues to regard its mission essentially in conventional military terms. Even in areas where ARVN is engaged in pacification, the fairly low level of ARVN casualties shows that its commanders still remain unwilling to commit their troops in a manner best suited to finding the Viet Cong, and for periods of time sufficient to establish a realistic base of security from which pacification can begin. The principal if not the only security force in most pacification areas continues to be the under-manned and inadequately trained paramilitary forces, which of all Vietnamese forces are now suffering the greatest number of killed-in-action casualties over the past year.

(p. 9)There is also the tendency among some US officials, primarily CAS, to look on these cadres as a panacea for all pacification problems. Finally, while US officials point to the increase of almost 500,000 in government-controlled population registered during the first eight months of this year as an indicator of progress in pacification, a substantial portion is accounted for by the movement of about 200,000 refugees into already secure areas. Even the flow of refugees is due more to the intensity and destructiveness of the fighting than to any shift in the allegiance of the peasant.

(p. 11) B. Critique

1. The Role of ARVN

Despite Ky's six-months conversion timetable, the reorientation and restructuring of ARVN will be a long-term process and any assumption that it can be otherwise is highly unrealistic.

(p. 12)For many, moreover, the size of the forces under their command constitutes a source of political power both within their own tactical zone (which in many instances they have converted into virtual fiefdoms) as well as at the national level. Thus, they can be expected for political reasons alone to resist any attempt to remove units from their immediate authority for pacification purposes. Even if they do consent, it is by no means certain that they will refrain from withdrawing these forces for other purposes before the completion of their mission.

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VI-13
(CONT'D)

(p. 13)Nor is there any evidence that the US Mission has concurred in the Study Group's recommendations about the organization and deployment of the Regional and Popular Forces. -Indeed, the GVN has already taken actions which could increase still further ARVN control over the paramilitary. For example, the separate command structure of the Regional and Popular Forces has been abolished and integrated into the ARVN chain of command from the Joint General Staff down to the Corps and Division levels. ...

....Moreover, the unpopulated stretches between populated areas are far smaller in size in the delta than in the highlands, and therefore there is greater danger that US forces operating in unpopulated areas could be drawn in the populated areas. Nor is it entirely certain that US forces will restrict their missions to search-and-destroy operations against Viet Cong mainforces. Indeed, it is to be expected that some US units will eventually participate in pacification, as in Danang for example, in order to protect the perimeters of US base facilities or encampments. As the size of the US force increases, it would be logical for MACV to attempt to expand these defense perimeters regardless of the proximity of populated areas. There is also the possibility that US commanders will be inclined to commit their units to pacification simply on the grounds that the Vietnamese are not doing the job efficiently.

Finally, although it is generally accepted that a military stalemate has existed for some time in the Mekong delta, it is by no means certain that the GVN's inability to shift the balance against Viet Cong forces in the area is the result of lack of manpower resources. The basic problem is the manner in which ARVN forces are deployed in the delta rather than in the number of ARVN forces committed there. The current ratio of ARVN to Viet Cong mainforces in....

(p. 14)Even if Ky does finally activate a mobile Ranger interdiction force of 10,000 to patrol the Laos border, its more feasible objective would be intelligence reconnaissance rather than interdiction. Any realistic expectation that Communist infiltration through Laos can be substantially curtailed would probably require the additional deployment of at least several divisions with massive logistic and air support.

IV. Conclusion

....Equally, the obstacles that have created the appalling gap between past planning and implementation remain formidable, indeed with the passage of time are perhaps more formidable than ever. We cannot expect quick results. If we do so and hence fail to accept the necessity for unremitting, determined, long-term action, in which pacification is given closest attention and highest priority, we will run the risk of repeating on a larger-scale the costly mistakes of the past.

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MM-REA-67-49, "Comments on CIA Study--The Vietnam Situation," June 1, 1967

(p. 1) We have prepared more extensive comments on the CIA all-source study on Vietnam on which we briefed you orally on Monday. In general, the study is an excellent one, bringing together a great deal of useful and illuminating material. However, we disagree with some aspects of its analysis of Communist military strategy, find it overly optimistic in its treatment of longer-term prospects for pacification and over-simplified in its treatment of political prospects. We differ also on the effectiveness of the bombing in North Vietnam which we rate more highly than does CIA. We find that in estimating Hanoi's intentions the study fails to address itself to a number of pertinent questions such as, for example, the manpower situation.

South Vietnam

We are in full accord with CIA's principal conclusion that the strategic balance in South Vietnam has not altered decisively over the past two years because: the Communists have been able to keep pace with the expansion of allied forces; improve their logistic and firepower capability; adjust their strategy to the dual requirements of impeding pacification and diverting allied forces; and maintain their formidable infrastructure intact at middle and higher echelons despite evidence of some morale problems at lower levels.

....

1) Military Capabilities. We do not accept the CIA argument that Communist plans for offensive action have been frustrated and the overall military initiative has largely shifted to the Allied side. Our own conclusion is that US ground intervention has changed the types of initiative the Communists can undertake with any hope of success and forced them to cope with Allied initiatives of a much greater range and scope than any they faced while ARVN held the ground alone. Within these limits, there is room for the exercise of considerable initiative of which the Communists have taken ample advantage, as demonstrated by attack levels over the period in question and the degree to which contact remains a matter of Communist initiative even in operations mounted by our side, not to mention the most dramatic current example of a Communist initiative, the campaign in I Corps. A number of CIA's descriptive passages, moreover, belie their conclusion. ...

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(p. 2) We also disagree with CIA's description of Hanoi's current strategy as one of "attrition." In fact, Hanoi has--according to General Vinh-- specifically rejected Peking's proposal for a war of attrition. The North Vietnamese are not only attempting to weary us of the conflict, but also to keep us continually on the defensive and to persuade the South Vietnamese people (and the US) that the massive American military presence cannot change the ultimate outcome of the war. The DMZ operation, and the continual pattern of guerrilla attacks, are both part of the same strategy of keeping US units tied down, off balance, unable to attack Viet Cong base areas and unable to engage in pacification. The DMZ campaign was also designed to inflict a heavy morale blow on US forces and on the Vietnamese in the Hue area, at lesser military cost and risk than a similar campaign would have incurred in the Central Highlands.

We would, therefore, not regard the objectives of the DMZ and the expected Highlands campaigns as "modest." They are politically highly significant--not because Hanoi expects to destroy US forces but because it wants to undermine Southern political stamina.

....
....Except for the limited evidence we have concerning recruitment problems in the South, there is little on which such a conclusion can be based. Moreover, even assuming that recruitment becomes increasingly difficult, we have no reason to believe that North Vietnamese infiltration has reached peak levels.

(p. 3)However, for years we have had sound concepts (very similar to those upon which we are now operating) that have never been effectively implemented and it is worth recalling that the vigor with which the Communists attacked the strategic hamlets was repeatedly cited as evidence of the progress of pacification under the Diem regime.

....Other factors of potential importance are not considered--for example, the impact on political development and even on political stability of a military victory that is widely regarded as having been achieved only because the military were heavy-handed in exploiting their control of governmental machinery. Moreover, in view of the very real possibility that Ky and Thieu will compete, we believe that more serious attention should have been given to the possible consequences of a civilian victory. Would the results inevitably be as disastrous as the study suggests? To what degree would possible gains in political development compensate for possible losses in political stability? To what degree could the US presence serve to limit instability?

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(p. 3) 1) Effects of US Bombing of North Vietnam. We concur with the general estimate that the bombing of North Vietnam, while damaging the North Vietnamese economy, has neither prevented the regime from continuing its war effort nor brought it to the negotiating table. We also concur with the statement that Hanoi's decision to continue the war will ultimately be most influenced by the situation in South Vietnam, not by the bombing of the North.

(p. 4) However, we do not concur with the implicit conclusion that the bombing has had only marginal value, and we believe that the estimate of its effectiveness cannot be stated in absolute terms. For example, the paper states that the bombing did not of itself cause Hanoi to make the Trinh proposal for negotiations in exchange for a bombing cessation. While this may well be true, we think it would be worth suggesting that the bombing may have played a role.

We also think that the bombing has had a number of other positive effects. It increased South Vietnamese political morale and confidence in the American commitment at a crucial point in the war, and probably continues to serve as an important factor in maintaining South Vietnamese confidence. It has forced Hanoi to divert massive resources, which could be used directly against South Vietnam, to defense of the North. It has put Hanoi under direct pressure, and has thus affected its military strategy and probably its analysis of its own prospects.

....

The above discussion is not intended to suggest that the bombing is the principal weapon in our arsenal, but to indicate that its effect is definitely more than marginal, even though not sufficiently great to induce Hanoi to pay a significant price to have it halted.

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(pp. 1,2) However, the strategic balance has not altered decisively. The expansion of Communist forces has kept pace with the expansion of allied forces; local recruitment and infiltration increased Communist strength by more than one-third during the past year. The Communists have improved their logistic capability and firepower, utilizing heavier and more sophisticated weapons, and have demonstrated increased tactical mobility in evasive, offensive, and hit-and-run operations. They have maintained their formidable infrastructure intact at middle and higher echelons, despite morale problems at lower levels, and have adjusted their strategy to the dual requirements of impeding the government's Revolutionary Development (RD) or pacification effort and diverting allied forces. They have not lost the military initiative, despite sustained allied offensive and "spoiling" operations. Indeed, Communist small-scale armed attacks increased from a weekly average of 14 during the first half of 1966 to a weekly average of 36 during the first quarter of 1967. That the Communists have retained considerable initiative is further demonstrated not only by the campaign now being waged in Corps I, but also by the degree to which battlefield contact remains a matter of Communist initiative even in operations mounted by allied forces.

(p. 2) On balance, however, there has been no significant progress in the implementation of the pacification program. The performance of ARVN units committed to pacification has been spotty at best, and they have failed to take the kind of aggressive action required to counter the intensified Viet Cong campaign against pacification.

(p. 3) In sum, outside the gains limited to some coastal areas, there has been no major shift in the relative postures of the GVN and the Communists in the countryside. Of the 12,000 or more hamlets in South Vietnam, roughly one-third are controlled by the Communists, and government influence is at best marginal in another third.

(p. 4) Nevertheless, there are important adverse undercurrents. The presidential ambitions and personal rivalries of Premier Ky and Chief of State Thieu pose a serious threat to military unity and raise the prospect of another round of coups, countercoups, and street demonstrations. ...

(p. 5) A military election victory could also be seen by the Vietnamese people as threatening to prolong the war indefinitely. Some civilian candidates, at least, probably believe that negotiations will become possible if the GVN's military-political position improves to the point where it could negotiate at an advantage. ...

In sum, the issues at stake could make the next several months as politically significant to South Vietnam and US policy interests as the period immediately preceding the fall of Diem.

VI-13

IN-161, "The Countryside in the Wake of the VC Urban Offensive,"
February 29, 1968, p. 1.

As a result of their urban offensive the Viet Cong have expanded their control in South Vietnam's rural areas and have made pacification virtually inoperative. To restore the GVN's position in the countryside will require regaining areas which have been taken or undermined by the VC, reviving the faith of the people in the ability of the GVN to protect them, and re-establishing the interest of the GVN in pacification.

VI-17

IN-172, "VIETNAM: Communist Strategy in Retrospect and Prospect,"
March 2, 1968

(p. 1) The massive introduction of US combat forces into South Vietnam in 1965 eliminated the possibility of an immediate Communist military victory and forced Hanoi and the Viet Cong to adopt a military strategy of attrition. Until recently, this strategy aimed at tying down US combat forces in protracted campaigns in remote, unpopulated regions while enabling Communist guerrilla forces more effectively to harass and impede government efforts to reassert itself in the rural populated areas. With the massive attacks against Vietnamese urban centers last month, the Communists have introduced a new and additional factor into their military strategy.

(p. 4)As a result, Communist morale, manpower, and logistic problems progressively increased, the combat effectiveness of many Communist main-force units declined, and Communist capability to mount concerted regimental-size attacks was substantially reduced. Moreover, the direct control previously exercised by Communist mainforce military units over most of the rural populace along the coast was broken in a number of strategically important areas.

These setbacks notwithstanding, Communist forces apparently were able to absorb losses without any major impairment of their capabilities..... Shortages were primarily of non-military supplies; the infiltration of heavy weapons and other military supplies substantially increased Communist firepower in virtually all corps areas. Casualties and local recruitment problems were more than offset numerically by infiltration of replacements.

(p. 6)Moreover, there seemed to be little prospect that security could be improved or that the remaining Communist forces could be further contained in the central lowlands without the introduction of additional Allied forces.

(p. 7)The Communists have now apparently decided to supplement their military and guerrilla-harassing campaigns in the countryside by applying more systematically in the cities the same tactics that have served them so well in the rural areas.

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(p. 9)This problem exists in all Corps areas but appears particularly serious in Corps IV. Reports from this region indicate that the countryside may be going to the Communists by default.New recruits are reportedly gaining experience by attacking security outposts which in turn are unable to count on relief or reinforcement. In short, the military situation in the countryside of Corps IV, heretofore regarded as a stalemate, is reportedly critical, with the balance of power for the moment at least having shifted over to the Communists.

(p. 10) The Short-term Outlook. The events of the past several weeks clearly indicate that the Vietnamese Communists are well-embarked upon carefully planned mutually-supporting military-political efforts directed toward a massive deterioration in the GVN position and an erosion of the political basis for a US presence in South Vietnam. Despite heavy casualties since the introduction of US forces more than two years ago and particularly since the current military offensive, the Communists probably believe that they are operating in the South from a position of considerable strength and that they have extended and tied down Allied forces to the point where they can either force a political settlement largely on their terms or continue to wage a war of attrition.

(p. 12)In short, the Communists will hope to achieve and exploit major political and military gains in the immediate situation, but will continue to bolster their assets and prepare for a protracted effort, regardless of developments during the next few months.

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VI-18

Memo to the Secretary from INR : "Comments on CIA All-source Study on Communist Capabilities in South Vietnam," Sept. 16, 1966

(pp. 1, 2) (1) The implication that an intensified bombing program will be able to diminish North Vietnam's ability to provide material support for the South.

(2) The conclusion that (a) the maintenance of allied pressures and Hanoi's perception of "no grounds for encouragement" will lead North Vietnam to reconsider basic strategy in the spring of 1967 with (b) Hanoi opting for negotiations, albeit without any cease-fire.

Effects of Intensified Bombing Program

In the summary and at the beginning of the "principal findings," CIA states: "So long as the US bombing continues at present levels, it is unlikely to diminish North Vietnam's continued ability to provide material support to the war in the South." While agreeing with this proposition as a statement of fact, we strongly disagree with the unstated assumption that could be inferred--namely, that an increased bombing program will diminish Hanoi's ability to maintain support. In point of fact, this is not even supported by the conclusion of the annex that outlines an intensified bombing program.

In sum, the increased bombing program would involve the closing of major seaports, day and night coastal armed reconnaissance, neutralization of remaining POL facilities and vital economic targets, and a highly intensified armed reconnaissance against all land connections with Communist China. The point would be to concentrate transport on the land communications with China where armed reconnaissance attacks could halt daytime traffic and disrupt that moving at night. There is little discussion of whether or not this actually could be done.*

Leaving aside the political problems and the risks of Chinese Communist involvement and hostile Soviet reaction that such a bombing program entails, we question whether this plan would have any significant impact on North Vietnam's war effort. In fact, the conclusion of the discussion in the CIA annex is that, even if effective, the program would have "little impact either in halting essential imports or the flow of POL necessary to sustain the pipeline to South Vietnam."

* In addition, there is no recollection of the Korean War's "Operation Strangle" which, according to a CIA study of May 1966, failed completely to deny the North Korean and Chinese Communist forces the supplies they needed for offensive pressures let alone defensive requirements.

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(pp. 2,3) "Day of Decision" in the Spring of 1967?

In a section unfortunately labelled "Day of Decision," the CIA conclusion discusses the possibility (an implied probability) that the North Vietnamese will consider a change in basic strategy in the spring of 1967. We are gravely disturbed by the implication that the Communists will be so severely weakened by that time that they will be forced to make any such major reassessment of their strategy and objectives. We would be less disturbed if this impression were not the main thrust and core of the report. We see no evidence to warrant confidence that the Communists will face a crisis of this magnitude in early 1967.

(p. 3) We are extremely reluctant to predict when Hanoi might opt for a change in policy, but we find it hard to believe that it would come so soon. In the first place, it seems likely that Hanoi will still see encouraging signs in the situation at that time. They are banking a great deal on the attrition of the GVN's political/military position as well as on neutralizing the impact of US strength, and we see no reason to believe that the former situation will be drastically altered in the next ten months. Furthermore, North Vietnamese strategy is predicated on a key assumption--that the Communists can outlast their enemy. At this juncture, there is no evidence that Hanoi's leaders have lost faith in protracted warfare, despite evident disagreement on just how aggressive their posture should be in the face of the improved US/GVN position. ...

(p. 4) ...We believe that Hanoi's willingness to engage in negotiations in the face of force has all along been over-estimated, as is evident in numerous SNIE's on responses to possible courses of US action. We do not believe the North Vietnamese will choose this course unless they decide that a compromise settlement not only is possible but also is more advantageous than continuing a lengthy and debilitating conflict.

Should this not be the case and their military position was deteriorating badly, it seems to us more likely that they would choose a fourth alternative. That is, they would decide to sustain guerrilla combat, following a more defensive and cautious policy, gradually reducing attacks (unless circumstances were ideal) and husbanding their forces for a renewal of large-scale action when circumstances were more favorable. This would not involve the withdrawal of any North Vietnamese forces in the short-run. Once again, the day of decision would be considerably delayed.

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Research
Memorandum

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

REA-55, November 28, 1966

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes *Thomas L. Hughes*

II-17

Subject: Would Peking Thwart a Negotiations Bid From Hanoi?

In view of Peking's firm position against a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, there has been some speculation over whether the Chinese might take drastic action to upset any North Vietnamese move to seek a cease-fire. We here evaluate the considerations bearing on the Chinese decision.

ABSTRACT

Throughout all the speculation that has taken place regarding Hanoi's position on a cease fire in the Vietnam war, Communist China has maintained a public position adamantly opposed to any solution other than unilateral US capitulation. Despite Peking's interest in seeing this "people's war" continue, however, it appears unlikely that the Chinese could reverse a North Vietnamese attempt to secure a negotiated settlement. While the Chinese might feel impelled to intervene directly in the war in the event of an actual US invasion of North Vietnam or the imminent collapse of the Hanoi regime, Chinese actions to head off negotiations alone would most likely be limited to as much cajolery, intrigue, and threat as Peking thinks Hanoi would bear without reacting in a way inimical to basic Chinese interests. If China's foreign policy follows its present relatively cautious course, unflavored by domestic extremism, we believe, on balance, that Peking probably would accept a cessation of hostilities as an inevitable pause and look forward to resuming "people's war" again when and where feasible.

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafold, Dir.
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Research Memorandum

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

REA-50, December 9, 1966

To : The Acting Secretary
Through: S/S
From : IIR - Thomas L. Hughes
Subject: Hanoi Silent on East European and Soviet Negotiation Probes

II-20

Soviet and East European representatives have in recent months made efforts to induce the US to cease bombing North Vietnam, giving the impression that nothing could be done until the US stopped its bombing of North Vietnam and that a bombing halt might create conditions under which steps toward peace might become possible. In this paper we compare recent Eastern European and Soviet statements with Hanoi's current position on negotiations and settlement.

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.
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ABSTRACT

The North Vietnamese view of recent Eastern European and Soviet efforts remains obscure, unilluminated by public or private comment. On the one hand, neither the North Vietnamese nor the East Europeans or Soviets have claimed any DRV sanction for the operations. On the other hand, with one exception, Hanoi has not denied anything that has been said. The latter fact does not prove that Hanoi welcomes the probes, however; for so great is the North Vietnamese need to demonstrate solid socialist backing that complaints about unsanctioned probes would appear to be excessively costly.

The general line from Hanoi has not changed appreciably in recent months, leaving ambiguous the North Vietnamese position on both negotiations and settlement. In much of Hanoi's propaganda, particularly the low-level statements, standard formulae are reiterated constantly. Certain changes of emphasis and modifications of wording by authoritative spokesmen suggest, however, that some North Vietnamese leaders think it advisable to take a slightly less adamant public stand, whether or not Hanoi's private stand has changed and

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whether or not DRV leaders welcome their allies' attempts to suggest they might now be more flexible. Our estimate is that some North Vietnamese welcome the Soviet and Eastern European intimations as a way of eliciting US terms and pressuring the US to stop the bombing; but that others, who realize that Hanoi has little leverage with which to stop the probes, object strongly nevertheless on the grounds that they may be interpreted as signs of flagging North Vietnamese will.

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafold, Dir.
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IN-3, "Pham Van Dong Makes Clear that Hanoi's Four Points Are Not Condition for Talks But Remain Conditions for Settlement," Jan. 5, 1967, p. 2.

Talks. Previous statements have suggested Hanoi has two preconditions for talks: (1) cessation of the bombing and (2) U.S. willingness to talk with the Front as an independent entity. Since putting forward the Four Points in April 1965, Hanoi has never stated clearly that acceptance of the points is a precondition for talks. What Hanoi has said is that the Four Points are the only correct basis for settlement of the Vietnam question, and that, "if the U.S. really wants peace and seeks a peaceful solution," it must recognize the four-point stand and show its good will by acts. This formula, which was expressed by Pham Van Dong on September 24, 1966, included two demands which apparently would be taken as proof of US good will: that the U.S. stop the bombing and recognize the NFL as "interlocutor." Dong's statement to Salisbury that the Four Points were not to be considered as "conditions" for peace talks thus does not represent a clear retreat. However, Hanoi has never before specifically denied that the points are conditions for talks. The fact that on this occasion Dong chose to make such a specific denial in an interview free of harsh invectives accordingly seems to indicate an effort to appear more reasonable on the point of initiating talks. Hanoi has therefore clarified the Four Points' relation to talks but without changing their relationship to settlement. Salisbury's original text, the last two sentences of which were altered by the NYT, reads:

The Premier stressed that the four points were not to be considered as "conditions" for peace talks. He described them as providing a "basis of settlement of Vietnam problems."
He said it was not correct to understand the program** as conditions, rather it was to be understood as "valid conclusions for discussion."

** The context seems to indicate that Salisbury used the word program to refer to the Four Points, although there is a slight possibility that he was referring to the NFL program.

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VI-22

IN-87, "Hanoi's Current Position on Negotiations and Settlement,"
February 3, 1967, p. 1

Recent Hanoi statements have clarified somewhat the North Vietnamese position on negotiations and on a settlement of the Vietnam issue, by splitting the former package of Hanoi demands into several parts. Hanoi has now specifically tied the cessation of our bombing and "other acts of war" to its subsequent consideration of US-North Vietnamese contacts --including negotiations; it has tied issues concerning South Vietnamese affairs to our willingness to recognize and deal with the Liberation Front apparatus; and it has clearly divorced its four points from the question of immediate negotiations while still maintaining that they must be the basis for a final settlement. Hanoi's position thus is concentrated more immediately on its two most urgent demands, which are the cessation of US bombings, and US recognition of the Front. Hanoi has made its position more flexible and is able to adjust to changes in China and in South Vietnam, without surrendering its ultimate demands or retreating from the principles it has established for a settlement in Vietnam. It is not certain, however, whether these principles can be maintained in the face of Hanoi's deteriorating situation in the South and in case of further turmoil in China.

(pp. 4,5)

Hanoi's Motives and Plans for the Future. The reasons for Hanoi's new position are still unclear on the basis of information available to date, but there seem to be four principal possibilities:

- 1) Hanoi may sincerely desire to end the war by a political settlement and to move in that direction. Though prepared to see a long separation between North and South Vietnam, with a neutral South Vietnam, it would seek to adopt the strongest possible bargaining position when talks begin.
- 2) Hanoi may hope its recent statements will make the US less reluctant to yield to its two immediate claims. Hanoi leaders may also calculate that international and US public opinion pressures upon the US to cease bombing and to talk with the Front will grow, since either act would of itself carry some promise (even if unspecified) of initiating a dialogue.
- 3) Hanoi, concerned about the turmoil in China and about military and political developments in South Vietnam, may wish to establish a position from which it can move in any direction, depending on a number of external factors (e.g., the situation in China, the Course of the war in the South, the attitude of possibly new Southern leadership elements both inside and outside the GVN, and the course of US public opinion and the 1968 elections).

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VI-22
(cont'd)

(p. 5 cont'd.)

4) Hanoi may intend to continue to prosecute the war for a protracted period, but with the pace of conflict slowed (and, if possible, the bombing halted). It might also be seeking leeway to strengthen its deteriorating political position in the South, where the hitherto smooth progress toward an elected National Assembly threatens to undercut the Front's pretensions to represent the Southern population.

Evidence currently available suggests that Hanoi is operating on the basis of the second motive as an immediate objective, with a view to the third and fourth motives over the longer run....

(p. 6) It is not at all certain, however, that these positions can be maintained under pressure: for example, Hanoi may find that it will have to yield something in exchange for the cessation of bombing and of the US build-up. The momentum which it has started to generate by its recent show of flexibility may thus compel it into compromises it may not now want to make, if it is confronted at each stage with US insistence on mutual concessions while its position in the South and the situation in China continue to deteriorate.

(pp. 7,8) There are a variety of possible scenarios and stages of discussion which might emerge in exchanges resulting from a discussion of a bombing cessation; while Hanoi still appears anxious to maintain its four-point program as its final goal, it may find itself forced to yield on a number of issues.

In addition, there are continuing signs that Hanoi will want to disclaim any overt role in the settlement of South Vietnamese affairs and will attempt to push the US into negotiations with the Liberation Front apparatus, so as to give the Front increased political stature and perhaps to undermine the US claim that we are in Vietnam to repel North Vietnamese attacks against the South....

Timing. Timing appears of the essence in Hanoi's eyes. The regime's recent actions not only relate to current developments in China and to military and political developments in South Vietnam, but they are also timed with the hope that the US will be more ready than before to engage in another long bombing pause if that pause could be initiated over the Tet holidays. Hanoi may also want particularly to boost the power and prestige of the Front apparatus quickly, with an eye to unfolding developments in South Vietnam. Hanoi may hope, for example, that US talks with the Front before the South Vietnamese Constitution is promulgated, or before national elections are held, might substantially improve the Front's status in relation to and in competition with the future Assembly, and the Front might even hope to preempt the Assembly's claim to represent the people of South Vietnam.

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VI-23

MM-REA-67-16, "Attached Report from the British," Feb. 7, 1967,
pp. 1, 2

The reported North Vietnam positions all relate directly or indirectly to the composition and powers of a negotiated future South Vietnamese government. This approach indicates that Hanoi is anxious to obtain our agreement on South Vietnam's political future before negotiations start and/or before the Southern constitutional development removes the issue from Hanoi's control and influence. Hanoi may in fact have chosen to raise these matters with us in hopes that we will be more apt to work them out than an elected or military South Vietnam Government.

....

Our general impression of this proposal, in conjunction with others, is that Hanoi now appears to be pulling out all stops. It wants the bombing stopped before it talks while at the same time committing us to discuss post-coalition formulas; should negotiations begin it also wants us to deal with the NLF. We assume Hanoi will be following any and perhaps all of these lines as long as it finds them open and attractive, as maximum bargaining positions, though we would venture to estimate that it is prepared to give ground.

An additional feature of the North Vietnamese points of possible significance is their implicit assumption of a cessation of hostilities. It seems highly unlikely that the kinds of North-South contacts and Southern political developments in South Vietnam here envisaged by Pham Van Dong would be feasible unless the fighting is stopped. This could conceivably be an oblique suggestion that a North Vietnamese military quid pro quo regarding a cease fire would be forthcoming in a scenario that included a US bombing halt and direct US-Hanoi talks. However, there is no indication of a willingness to yield control of areas currently held by the Viet Cong.

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MM-REA-67-52, "Study on Prospects for Vietnam Negotiations," June 14, 1967

As the memorandum indicates, we do not believe that the North Vietnamese Politburo has decided to make any substantial move toward a negotiated settlement. The factors influencing its decisions for and against such a move appear now to be in balance.

....They also see cause for concern in some external factors. There is thus a slight chance that they might be attracted by a preliminary "clarification of positions," provided they do not get the impression that we are trying to begin full-scale negotiations while the bombing continues.

....

If Hanoi makes any kind of positive response, we estimate that the following line would be best calculated to elicit further responses, though we would not expect major developments for some time: We might inquire into the exact relationship between Pham Van Dong's four points and Ho Chi Minh's demands made in his letter to the President. Ho's demands seem to differ from the four points since they do not include any reference to "reunification" or to any settlement of South Vietnamese affairs "in accordance with the program of the National Liberation Front." They do, however, call for the "Vietnamese people" to settle "their own affairs themselves" and for "recognition" of the Liberation Front, but there might be room for interpretation and maneuver once the North Vietnamese leadership decides to search for a solution.

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VI-25

MM-REA-67-61, "Prospective North Vietnamese Position and Tactics on Negotiations and Settlement," July 7, 1967, p. 4

US Alternatives.

American diplomatic potential for influencing Hanoi's decision process still appears limited. Public US efforts to press for discussion of all outstanding topics, or to move toward overall settlement, would probably now meet with a negative reaction from Hanoi. The Politburo does not seem prepared to go very far very fast. However, we may find it necessary to make such public offers as a means of countering a showy diplomatic campaign. Discreet probing on specific points where there seems to be room for maneuver, accompanied by attempts at mutual "clarification" of positions, would probably stand a better chance of moving Hanoi toward talks and settlement--provided it is so disposed. In order to determine Hanoi's mood, it would seem desirable to attempt the probing first. If it fails, suggesting that the Politburo now wants to put public pressure on us rather than to move toward settlement, the former course would be indicated.

VI-26

MM-REA-67-69

Memo to EA from INR, "Comment on Your Memo of July 17 to the Secretary on General and Diplomatic Factors Affecting Bombing Policy," July 18, 1967, p. 1.

...in that if Hanoi is looking for a face-saving way to explain away a shift in policy, the desirability of saving the dikes (or even of reducing the bombing pressure) could provide this "out." (INR is preparing an IN on Hanoi and the dikes.) At any rate, it is possible that Hanoi is, in fact, at least considering making a policy shift, if not immediately at least after the effects of the current step-up in Communist military activity have been assessed. We think that this shift will be toward re-opening some doors which have been closed to the US since the publication of the Ho Chi Minh letter to the President, and toward making a cessation of the bombing appear more attractive to us. We still think that there is little chance that Hanoi will change its negative attitude on the reciprocity issue, though this might be the next shift after the one currently in prospect. There also may be some verbal softening of the terms for settlement, but probably not any substantive change. In short, over the next few weeks and months an effort to appear more reasonable, to put greater pressure on us to stop the bombing and recognize the NLF, but no readiness to abandon the military effort as yet.

Accordingly, the logic of the situation would argue very strongly for no drastic shifts in our present pattern of operations against the North which might prejudice moves by Hanoi toward a less militant stance. Continuation of the present pattern could probably be continued without such an effect, however. Operations which could lead to a greater degree of Chinese involvement should in any case be avoided.

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VI-27

MM-REA-67-77

Memo to EA from INR, "Hanoi's Sensitivity to Peking's Pressure; the Possibilities and the Record," Aug. 2, 1967, pp. 6,7.

Implications for Future North Vietnamese Policy and Tactics

The above record shows how difficult it is to determine the influence which Chinese persuasion or pressure may have had on Hanoi's policy during the pre-Tet 1967 "peace campaign." We know that Hanoi during that period made a number of moves (including the Trinh interview) which it considered significant, no matter how small they may have seemed abroad. Because those moves failed to achieve their desired objectives, they were not followed up, but neither were they annulled. We also know that the Chinese exerted pressure on Hanoi during this period and this may have been one factor in Hanoi's decision not to sustain its "peace campaign" by further moves. Peking did not, however, stop Hanoi from making its initial move, or from maintaining some positions (particularly the Trinh interview) which Peking did not like.

In future terms, the record implies that Peking will use its influence to oppose any Hanoi shift toward a more flexible tactical line on negotiations and settlement, and that Peking might even bring very heavy pressures to bear if it was prepared to run the potential risks. The record also implies that Hanoi will be able and prepared to resist any but the most extreme forms of Chinese pressure, but that the threat of such pressure will inevitably have an influence on Hanoi thinking. The existence of such a threat also probably means that any Hanoi decision to move toward greater tactical flexibility and perhaps real compromise will require greater Politburo support than the moderates are now able to muster.

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VI-28

MM-REA-67-84, "Hanoi and Negotiations: An Interim Appraisal," Aug. 16, 1967

(p. 1) Some inconsistencies have recently appeared in North Vietnamese public and private statements on negotiations. These do not necessarily augur an impending change in Hanoi's basic attitude toward a political settlement; nor do they indicate any abandonment of North Vietnam's fundamental goals. Hanoi had previously changed its position (around the start of this year) on how negotiations might begin, when it expressed a willingness to talk in return for a cessation in the bombing. Though a distinct alteration and clarification of its diplomatic stance, this departure may have been primarily a tactic to intensify the already widespread criticism of our bombing policy, perhaps in the hope that we would then enter into negotiations which, however fruitless, would be difficult to terminate quickly.

Nevertheless, it appears that to Hanoi itself the Dong-Trinh position of last December and January, which tied a bombing halt to negotiation, represented a substantial departure and concession. Subsequently, ambiguities and even occasional softness have appeared, especially in private conversations, on the question of "permanent" cessation of bombing and to a lesser extent on the role of the Front in negotiations. Hanoi's statements during 1967 on matters related to negotiation thus at least suggest the possibility that some greater flexibility may be entering into North Vietnamese thinking on this subject.

(p. 2) Nevertheless, Negotiations Could Be A Lesser Evil

....Although the bombing has not deterred Hanoi from all-out support of the war in the South, there are increasing indications that it is seriously affecting popular morale and the regime's ability to manage the war effort and the economy. There are also signs that North Vietnamese leaders are concerned about possible bombing of the dikes and of Hanoi and Haiphong. As long as Hanoi's leaders are confident of their prospects in the South and of support from their rear, their concern over the impact of bombing on the North is unlikely to lead them to give up anything they value in order to bring about a cessation. To the undoubted pain of bombing, however, has been added concern about China's reliability as a stable rear area.

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(p. 3) US Possibilities for Influencing Hanoi

For the moment it would appear that what we are seeing from Hanoi are tactical maneuvers of no present strategic significance but with some potential as ground-work for an ultimate shift. We believe that our ability to influence Hanoi's stand on negotiations by manipulating our own terms are presently rather limited. Moreover, it is difficult to estimate whether a basic change in US policy (e.g., recognition of the Front, or readiness to stop bombing without counter-concessions) would have a stiffening or moderating effect on Hanoi. For example, a complete bombing cessation might force Hanoi to talk as it is now virtually committed to do, but it might also encourage Hanoi to become more obdurate in negotiations themselves. This does not mean, however, that there are no tactical advantages for ourselves in reiterating our general desire for a reasonable settlement while probing discreetly and precisely in areas where there might be flexibility in the North Vietnamese position. Though, as indicated earlier, Hanoi's statements are sometimes inconsistent, they do enable us to estimate where the best possibilities for movement now lie--i.e., in the conditions for a bombing halt and in the role of the Front. Direct efforts to obtain "clarification" of Hanoi's position on these subjects might open possibilities for maneuver. Hanoi may, of course, stiffen its stand in response to our show of interest, but the pattern and tenor of its statements on the subjects in question suggest that such stiffening would only be a temporary tactical device.

Hanoi may also find it useful to have clearer indications from us on the points which we consider important and on which we have held firm. The Dong-Trinh position, despite its multiple traps and reservations, may have been intended by Hanoi as a genuine concession, and the Politburo may have thought we would be prepared to stop the bombing in exchange for talks. Similarly Hanoi's reduced emphasis on our recognition of the Front's "sole genuine representative" character may result from our absolute refusal to contemplate such a formula. Its frequent omission of its demand for a "permanent" bombing halt may result from some of our earlier statements that we would undertake to exchange a bombing pause--but not a permanent stoppage--for negotiations. A clear indication of our stand on certain key points at issue would almost undoubtedly generate a strongly negative initial reaction from Hanoi, but it would enable the Politburo to estimate more accurately what it should do and how it should move if it really decides to talk. If there are officials in Hanoi who advocate negotiations that might lead to substantial compromise, their hand might be strengthened over the long run, particularly if we remain consistent.

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(p. 4) In this connection, the North Vietnamese might ultimately also be receptive to new formulae that would not compel total overt abandonment of their position but would still produce a sufficient modification of their stand to allow a measure of agreement. Hanoi would be most inclined to respond constructively to our probes if these were closely related or responsive to changes in the North Vietnamese position.

The impact of such a negotiating effort on the North Vietnamese Politburo would probably be small in the foreseeable future. If, however, changes in Hanoi's view of its prospects in the South, increased uncertainty over its rear, and the impact of bombing on the North combine to force Hanoi to moderate its position, indications of our precise interests and desires would enable the Politburo to decide more quickly and accurately how to move. This, combined with a clarification of Hanoi's current and evolving position, might enable both sides to avoid misunderstandings as to the significance of further modifications which Hanoi may later want to make in its position. This would enable us to start an orderly and efficient negotiations process under more favorable conditions than are now offered by Hanoi.

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VI-29

MM-REA-67-87, "The Loan-Algard Dialogue," Aug. 26, 1967

(p. 1) Over the past three weeks, the North Vietnamese Ambassador to Peking, Ngo Minh Loan, has had three conversations with Norwegian Ambassador Algard. The tenor and substance of Loan's remarks suggest that Hanoi is seriously interested in trying to learn more about the US position and in revealing more of its own, even in the absence of a bombing pause. Loan issued an outright invitation to Algard to visit Hanoi. This may indicate Hanoi's preference for a more secure locale, and perhaps for having a man of higher rank and greater familiarity with the issues handle the next stage of the talks.

Some of Loan's remarks point to a more forthcoming North Vietnamese position on negotiations but we cannot conclude that Hanoi has decided that substantial compromises are now necessary. It is possible that such compromises are under consideration, with the Politburo reserving judgment until it knows more about how far the US might be prepared to go.

(p. 3) Algard's account of Loan's statements on the 19th is too truncated to permit determination of whether Loan's comments on the Front were in response to Algard's August 5th description of the US position or whether they referred to the Front's role after settlement. Algard's cable reads: "He (Loan) said American recognition of national self-determination is the decisive point. Concretely he asked us to find out if the USA is willing to base possible negotiations on this principle and is willing to accept the Liberation Front as a political factor." (Underlining INR's) It is not clear whether he meant as a factor in negotiations or as a factor in post-settlement South Vietnam.*

Loan Probes on Nature of US Reciprocity Demand. In his statement of August 5, Loan complained that Hanoi would have admitted the existence of a state of war if it agreed to "respond" to a US cessation of the bombing with a corresponding reduction of forces. Algard replied that it was "probably not certain" that an official declaration by North Vietnam on the extent of a possible "response" was assumed. (Our instructions stated that the US has "never sought any formal declaration by the NVN Government as to what it might do in response to a bombing cessation.") Loan raised the issue again on the 19th, when he expressed Hanoi's interest in concrete information about what was meant by Algard's statement that the US has always made it clear that Washington was "flexible as to the form and nature of some corresponding restraint." Algard's brief account does not indicate how he phrased this whole point, and does not make clear whether Loan asked about the whole issue, or merely the point about reciprocity.

* Hanoi has publicly maintained that 1) the US must recognize the Front; 2) the Front is the sole genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam; and, occasionally that 3) the US must recognize the Front as the sole, genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam.

Neither Hanoi nor the Front has made clear, however, whether this refers to settlement, negotiation or both, Hanoi has stated privately that the US must discuss with the Front all matters related to South Vietnam.

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(p. 4) We do not know whether Loan was instructed to ask for a further definition of US requirements as he did on the 19th, which would indicate Hanoi's preparation to explore the issue, or whether he was simply probing on his own. In this regard it is noteworthy that Loan's complaint on the 5th was not about the entire principle of reciprocity per se, as it so often has been in the past, but about the US requirement of a reduction of forces. This leaves open the slight possibility that Hanoi might not object to some arrangement whereby reciprocity could take some other form, such as a cease-fire, or possibly no increment in the rate of supply ("aprovisionment") the latter having been suggested by Aubrac and Marcovich in their conversation with Pham Van Dong on July 24.

(pp. 5,6) Conclusion:

Hanoi appears Ready for Unconditional Preliminary Talks Through Intermediaries. Loan seemed to be indicating that Hanoi is prepared to enter into far-reaching exploratory discussions through intermediaries prior to negotiations. It would clearly distinguish this activity from negotiations with the US, for which a cessation of bombing remains a precondition. It thus appears that Hanoi is interested in going ahead with explorations through intermediaries on a no-preconditions basis, while retaining the demand for cessation of the bombing as the precondition for "negotiations" with Washington, which would take place only after what Loan termed "a favorable result" had been reached in the preliminary discussions. This, of course, would in itself amount to a substantial concession by Hanoi on the issue of actually beginning negotiations. Hanoi would use these exploratory discussions to indicate further areas of flexibility through intermediaries, and would hope the US would do the same. At this time, the Politburo may well not have decided whether to make far-reaching concessions; it would be more likely to make up its mind when it ascertains in the course of the explorations just how far the US might be willing to go.

It is clear that Hanoi places a high premium on secrecy. Loan keys this to the dangers that would arise from the dashing of hopes if the negotiations were unsuccessful. However, Hanoi may be at least as concerned over the damage that would be done to VC--and North Vietnamese--morale if it became known that drawn-out negotiations were taking place. It is equally possible that Hanoi wants to avoid Chinese pressure (that might, among other things take the form of cuts in aid or meddling in North Vietnamese internal politics) which might result from Peking's learning that negotiations were in progress.

The foregoing analysis, if correct, would have a considerable bearing on the scale of US operations against North Vietnam. Paradoxically, the North Vietnamese may not view a halt in the US bombing in the immediate future as being in their best interests, since such a move would immediately suggest to outside observers, particularly the Chinese, that something was afoot leading toward negotiations. On the other hand, a significantly intensified and prolonged step-up in US operations might lead Hanoi to conclude that the US had taken the North Vietnamese moves as a sign of weakness and was pressing for a military victory rather than a negotiated settlement.

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VI-3

MM-REA-67-98

Memo to S/P from INR re: "Vietnam and Domestic US Politics," Sept. 21, 1967

1. While the upcoming US electoral campaign and the prospect for a change in American leadership may play a growing role in Hanoi's thinking, its influence is secondary to such other factors as political developments in South Vietnam, internal problems in China, the situation in North Vietnam, or Hanoi's estimate of overall political developments in the United States.

2. Hanoi tends to view the current US leadership with unmitigated suspicion. It might be difficult to persuade Hanoi that a Republican hawk administration would be worse, and that it should negotiate in order to forestall that possibility.

VI-31

MM-REA-67-106 SECRET/EXDIS

Memo to the Secretary, "Appraisal of Hanoi's Current Approach on Negotiations, and Prospects for Timing of Future Actions," Oct. 13, 1967

(p. 1) Summary. Hanoi has recently followed a very hard line on negotiations and settlement, but has kept some channels open and has not foreclosed the possibility of a political settlement. It has also tried to push the NLF more into the foreground, and has pressed hard for a US bombing halt on its own terms. These statements and actions suggest that Hanoi, while ready for direct contacts following an "unconditional halt," is not now ready to change its position on key issues, and therefore would probably not engage in meaningful negotiations if an early halt occurred. However, recalling the year-end 1966-67 bombing pauses, Hanoi may be contemplating some shifts in its position around the end of this year in order to prolong one of the pauses into a long bombing halt. In the meantime, it will attempt to change the US stand, and will try to use private contacts to determine how it may have to alter its own position this winter if it decides to do so. American negotiating tactics at the procedural and substantive levels could thus constitute a crucial element in Hanoi's probings and current decision processes.

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(pp 2,3) II. A POSSIBLE SEQUENCE OF DEVELOPMENTS

Would Not Now Conduct Meaningful Talks for Bombing Halt. On the basis of Hanoi's past behavior and these recent statements and actions, we do not believe that North Vietnam is prepared at present to engage in meaningful negotiations and to make substantive concessions on its conditions for settlement, even if the bombing were to be halted without reciprocity. Despite its demand for a bombing halt and its inferred commitment to negotiate, Hanoi probably has not yet decided upon the concessions it should or must make in any serious bargaining process. Hanoi's initial position in attempting to yield as little as possible Hanoi will fall short of our minimum requirements to stop the bombing. It would then try to use its act of concession to produce enough international and domestic pressure to force us to halt. If a bombing halt does occur, we cannot now predict whether Hanoi would use it as a first step toward meaningful negotiations or as a tactical device to weaken the US position.

US Attitude Can Influence Hanoi. Before Hanoi decides to take any action during the Christmas-Tet season, it will probably want to have as clear an understanding as possible of US attitudes. Private exploration could thus have a major influence on any Hanoi decision to change its position during the Christmas-Tet season. American negotiating tactics can supply a crucial element in Hanoi's decision process by making it clear what Hanoi must do in order to obtain concessions from us.

VI-3

IN-842, "Burchett Dispatch," Oct. 23, 1967, p. 8.

....North Vietnamese theory calls for some military spectacles before negotiating, and Hanoi is probably well aware of the pressures upon the Administration to resume bombing which would be the result if Con Thien, Saigon, or Than Son Nhut should be assaulted after a bombing cessation. Hanoi thus would want to be certain that the US did not act on its "assumption" offer until the Communists had had time to prepare the way militarily in South Vietnam. At that point Hanoi may want to pick up the "assumption" offer, and therefore has refrained from explicitly condemning it in its public media while rejecting it indirectly through Burchett.

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

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Handwritten: e/Note - 951

November 29, 1967

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes
Subject: Hanoi Views the US Elections

Handwritten: VI - 33

There has been considerable recent speculation that the Hanoi regime is counting heavily on the 1968 elections to bring about changes in US policy in Vietnam. According to this speculation, Hanoi henceforth will plan its military and political strategy and tactics in accordance with its expectations of US political developments. We believe such speculation is exaggerated. Hanoi watches the US political scene very intently, but it must adjust its policy to many factors other than American domestic developments. Moreover, for a number of reasons, the Hanoi leadership is highly skeptical about trying to base its policies on US political developments or to attempt to influence them at the expense of other considerations. Nonetheless, it seems likely that Hanoi will mount an intensive propaganda campaign directed at US public opinion in the sensitive political atmosphere of the elections, and it may attempt to support this campaign with some military pressures and political moves. It will thus attempt to affect and exploit the general mood of the election campaign but not base its own strategy and tactics on the expectation that the election can or will lead to changes in American policy.

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VI-34

Memo to the Secretary : "Trinh Alters January 28 Formula," Jan. 3, 1968

(p. 1) ..., and whether Hanoi has taken note of the President's San Antonio speech (in which the President says that "we, of course, assume that while discussions proceed, North Vietnam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation"). The statement's avoidance of prolonged polemics and concentration on only one key point--the commitment to hold talks--appears to indicate that it was intended as an authoritative answer to a question which Hanoi may believe to be primary in our mind.

(p. 2) First Officially Sanctioned Public Statement Talks Will Occur

There have been many efforts by Hanoi's communist allies and by friendly correspondents to convince the US that Hanoi would talk after the bombing stopped. AFP, for example, on September 14 carried a story by its Hanoi correspondent that talks would begin 3 to 4 weeks after the US stopped air and naval bombardment, adding that Hanoi did not demand any official US statement concerning the cessation.* Trinh himself was reported by Vienna Volksstimme on July 2, 1967, to have made the promise that if the US unconditionally discontinues all raids and other acts of war, "then there can be negotiations." This Volksstimme interview actually went farther than does Trinh's new formula, in that it promised negotiations rather than talks, but it was never carried by Hanoi media. Trinh's new statement, made at a reception and carried over NVA (as well as over Hanoi domestic service, which was not true of his January 28 interview), is thus the first clear commitment to talk ever publicized by Hanoi media.**

* There were contradictory reports as to whether this AFP story was inspired by North Vietnamese or East European sources.

** It should be noted, however, that what Trinh promises is "talks," not "negotiations." We can recall no instances in which Hanoi media has ever used the word "negotiations" in connection with a cessation of the bombing. Furthermore, Wilfred Burchett's October 21 AP story quoted Trinh, Pham Van Dong, and other leaders as stressing a distinction between talks and negotiations, although Burchett does not report the content of the distinction. We believe Hanoi probably means informal discussions when it says "talks," reserving the word "negotiations" to refer to more formal, conference-table exchanges.

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(p. 3)Hanoi is, of course, aware of our concern about several issues which Trinh either did not address, or on which he was not forthcoming, such as the timing of talks, the subjects to be discussed, our objections to the Four Points as "the" basis for settlement, the role of the GVN and/or the NLF. Hanoi may not realize the importance we attach to clarifying some of these issues at the outset, but is fully aware that the latest Trinh statement falls far short of meeting our needs. The statement may therefore have as its primary purpose to gain international support for a concerted campaign to get the bombing stopped at minimum cost--i.e., an undertaking to hold talks with no commitments regarding timing, productiveness, or "advantage."

However, a third possibility is that Hanoi may genuinely believe that its agreement to talk is all that we require, and that the remainder of our demands are not vital. It may have seen the Goldberg September 21 statement as evidence that we placed great value on an overt assurance of Hanoi's willingness to talk. ...

(p. 4) ...; and a few stern Chinese admonitions to continue fighting which appear to reflect possible Peking concern about Hanoi intentions. However, recent North Vietnamese military and political actions can be explained either in terms of a policy of early negotiations (and probably fighting while--or just before--negotiating) or of protracted war. Moreover, there is as yet no evidence that North Vietnamese and US conditions for a final settlement have moved sufficiently to allow room for a negotiated accomodation.

On balance, we believe that Hanoi views the new Trinh formula as an important step toward the US position, but we are not certain whether Hanoi really expects us to believe that the formula meets our vital needs, or whether it hopes that we can be pushed into a bombing halt and talks on its terms through a minimal concession. Further exploration or further Hanoi statements may clarify this.

Where Does Hanoi Go From Here?

....

If the same pattern prevails this year as last (and it appears to prevail to date with some modifications), it seems likely that Hanoi will issue another statement of its position between now and Tet. This statement may involve another slight shift in its stand, or at least some clarification intended to increase the pressure for a bombing halt in return for talks. In addition, there will probably be private or public statements by North Vietnamese representatives.

Memorandum to the Secretary : "North Vietnamese Perspectives on the War and Negotiations," Jan. 6, 1968

(p. 1) Hanoi Accepts Idea of Talks. The latest statement by North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Trinh indicates that Hanoi now has seriously accepted the prospect of holding talks with the US, at least under certain conditions, and perhaps of preparing for negotiations. We believe it has accepted this in part because it wants to stop the bombing, which is having severe effects on the North Vietnamese economy. ...

They must also recognize the possibility that the political developmental process now underway in the South will generate political organizations capable of competing effectively with them. In the long run, too, Hanoi must see real problems in both maintaining and improving the combat effectiveness of its forces in the South, particularly in the light of the increasing dependence of these forces on external support.

....

However, Hanoi Assets Largely Intact. We cannot conclude, however, that Hanoi now sees the war as having reached the point where it has no alternative but to talk under restrictive conditions or to negotiate a compromise settlement. ...

(p. 2) In the meantime, the bombing of North Vietnam and the infiltration routes notwithstanding, Hanoi still has considerable capability to reinforce its forces in the South without critically straining its own manpower and military requirements at home. Since January 1966, for example, Hanoi has introduced at least 28 NVA regiments into the South, besides smaller units and large numbers of replacements and cadres. ...

(p. 3) Hanoi for its part is now definitely committed to "talks" with respect to the North once the bombing "and other acts of war" cease. It is not committed to "negotiations," which it apparently considers a different and more advanced stage in the process. It is not yet committed to talks as soon as the bombing stops, but we believe that it will be prepared to shift to this position--if it concludes that an additional concession is required--....

...

...It probably believes that it has already won some points in that the US has abandoned its original demand for a complete halt to infiltration. Hanoi probably believes also that the fuzziness of the formula and the problem of detection will enable it to maintain and reinforce its assets in the South at adequate levels, even if it accepts the US assumption of no advantage. However, it must be sensitive to the danger that we will increase our troop levels further or even resume the bombings if Communist military pressure remains high. It must also feel some concern about the possibility that its acceptance of the formula will become public knowledge, thereby indicating at least some readiness on Hanoi's part to abandon its "Southern brothers." Hanoi may see the greatest danger as lying in the possibility that the formula will become increasingly disadvantageous for it with time, particularly if Communist fortunes of war in the South sink to the point where very large and rapid additional increments of North Vietnamese troops and supplies are required.

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(p. 4) ...That was why Trinh reiterated them and the NLF program as "the basis" for settlement. However, this problem does not have the operational implications of the participation problem; Hanoi can continue to reiterate its stand without demanding our acceptance. Hanoi's attachment to this condition also appears to be moderating. The Four Points have been mentioned less frequently in the last six months than before, but it is not certain whether this decline represents a shift in Hanoi's views or whether it is part of Hanoi's effort to focus attention on the NLF program.

(p. 5) ...At the present stage, Hanoi probably sees talks as a potentially vital but currently subsidiary track. Its principal immediate advantages are a bombing relief and an improved international diplomatic position. Talks do not yet appear to play an important enough part in the Communist strategic mix to induce Hanoi to pay a high substantive price for them (at least Hanoi has not offered one), but the opportunity to explore their potential interests Hanoi enough to warrant tactical shifts.

(p. 6) We believe that Hanoi probably sees itself facing a progressive series of problems and decisions which could confront it once talks are underway. It would seek to begin by insisting that US-NVN talks be restricted to matters concerning the North. The North Vietnamese would persist in this course as long as they felt it would afford them relief from the bombing without hampering their pursuit of other objectives. If this position proves untenable, they could move into discussions concerning the South. We see no indication that Hanoi has yet decided that it will take this next step. Should it decide to take this step, it would seek to do so without compromising its substantive position--that of gaining for the NLF a position of pre-eminence in the southern political scene. Most remote is a third choice--that of reconciling itself to a genuine compromise in the South. At present the North Vietnamese do not see existing circumstances as requiring them to consider this course.

(p. 7) Our Attempt at Clarification. Our immediate problem is to attempt to clarify Hanoi's position and to moderate it as much as possible. Since the latest Trinh formula does not meet all our needs, and because of the possibility that Hanoi's position can still be shifted somewhat before Tet, we believe it advisable to inform Hanoi privately of the problems which still remain after the Trinh statement. We can indicate to Hanoi that it can give us the additional assurances we need either privately or through the medium of some suitable public statement. For example, we can propose some specific modifications in the Trinh statement which would indicate that our needs have been met.

....

....We doubt, however, that such hardening will take place before Tet. Hanoi probably is expecting some effort to get it to modify its position, and will probably have decided how to handle it. Moreover, Hanoi probably still hopes that, despite our reservations about the latest Trinh formula, we will be compelled to initiate a prolonged bombing halt at Tet even though Hanoi restricts itself to a commitment to enter talks promptly, plus, perhaps, only some other minor modification of its stand. It is this problem which Hanoi's current tactics may leave us to confront in the immediate pre-Tet period.

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MM-REA-68-22, "Hanoi's Position in the Opening Round of Talks, and Elements Affecting the Further Evolution of That Position," Jan. 26, 1968

(p. 1)The "no advantage" issue is much more difficult to resolve, and we do not have the impression that Hanoi is prepared to shift its position on this issue now or in the near future. The "no advantage" formula strikes directly at Hanoi's interest in "fighting while negotiating" and at its claim to moral superiority. Hanoi may be able to live with some military elements of the formula, since its range of military actions would not be totally inhibited and since it could still mount some sustained campaigns and continue to attack the pacification program. It could also attempt to violate the formula surreptitiously. But the over-all concept, with its political and military implications, presents Hanoi with many problems. Hanoi may be ready to accept the concept only when its desire for a bombing halt or its estimate of the opportunities inherent in talks is greater than now. If and when the issue is resolved, it may be done only through some tacit understanding never formally acknowledged by Hanoi, perhaps as part of some larger arrangement from which Hanoi believes it derives sufficient benefits to compensate for the acceptance of "no advantage." Nonetheless, for the purpose of this discussion, we shall assume that Hanoi has in one way or another accepted the "no advantage" formula and is thus under some restraint.

(p. 2) Basic Hanoi Strategy in Talks

Once the bombing has stopped and talks have begun, Hanoi will have achieved its primary immediate objective, the bombing halt. It will, therefore, not be under any urgent pressure to see progress in the talks, though it may chafe somewhat under the restraints of the "no advantage" formula. It will probably hope that the pressure on us for successful negotiations will be greater than on it.We expect, therefore, that Hanoi will believe that it has a month or two to maneuver without too much danger of a bombing resumption. During that period, it will probably take a very hard negotiations stand.

The Problem of the Agenda

Stalling Device as Well as Substantive Matter. It seems possible, particularly after some of its recent statements, that Hanoi will press initially for some common understanding on the agenda to be discussed. There are two reasons for such a move: (1) it is a useful stalling device to delay the actual opening of talks through a maneuver which appears "reasonable;" and (2) the agenda might be vital in a substantive sense, because the issues to be discussed and the sequence of discussion could have great political repercussions. ...

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(p. 3) ...However, we would expect that Hanoi may be ready to agree to some compromise after a while so as to avoid the threat of an immediate bombing resumption. Such a compromise might be reached through the development of a limited agenda containing innocuous wording of some items and only some very general headings. In essence, both sides would reserve their positions. ...

(p. 4)We no longer believe, therefore, that Hanoi will be certain to raise the four points as a package demand, although we still feel that this remains possible. It is now at least equally possible, however, that Hanoi will attempt to obtain formal US "acceptance" or "recognition" of separate individual items in the four points and perhaps of certain principles of the Geneva Accords. Hanoi may hope that such a position will make it appear more reasonable than before, and thus make it more difficult for the US to reject some statements of principle which might work to Hanoi's advantage.

....

4) US Abandonment or Curtailing of Reconnaissance Flights. If, as we expect, Hanoi will initially meet with us while our reconnaissance flights over the North continue, it will still attempt as one of the first items in talks to bring about a stoppage, reduction, or limitation of flights. Most likely, if it cannot get US agreement to stop them, it will attempt to get them confined as far South as possible. It may also use any incidents arising out of the continuation of such flights as devices for pressure and delays.

.....

1) Call for Cease-fire. This is perhaps the most obvious point in the substantive discussions at which Hanoi could push for direct US dealings with the NLF. Hanoi will assert that the war is in the South, not in the North, and that the US must deal with the NLF on any matters relating to the South.

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VI-37

MM, "Hanoi Diplomat in Paris Hints at Hanoi Readiness to Cut Back 'Aid' to Viet Cong," Feb. 20, 1968, p. 3.

We do not have the impression that Tieng's statement foreshadows an immediate shift in Hanoi's position, but the above analysis suggests one direction in which Hanoi may move if it decides to shift its stand.

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Memorandum to the Secretary :: "Summary of Hanoi Statements on Negotiations Issues Since the December 29, 1967, Statement by Foreign Minister Trinh," March, 1968.

(p. 1) In its public statements since the December 29, 1967, statement by Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh, and in the private statements available to us, Hanoi has modified its position somewhat on some negotiations issues but remained stiff on the crucial matter of reciprocity. It has been able to modify its position on some issues and has even been able to generate a reasonable image without yielding on fundamentals by successfully applying toward this objective its skill in the fine diplomatic art of dividing issues into minuscule gradations. It has also developed a sophisticated "eye-dropper" approach in publicizing with much fanfare allegedly significant concessions, while alternately ignoring or rejecting with lofty moral scorn consideration of issues involving truly meaningful substantive compromise.

(p. 4) The only hints we have had that Hanoi might be considering a scaling down of its effort are: (1) a private statement by Huynh Tieng that "if we think the Americans might unconditionally stop the bombing, we might think about slowing our aid--including food and ammunition--to the South;" (2) French newsman Oliver Todd's report, allegedly based on remarks by a bloc diplomat, that Hanoi might order a cease fire and withdraw some troops if the US would withdraw from the DMZ--a report later publicly disavowed by Mai Van Bo; and (3) U Thant's January 19 comment to Ambassador Goldberg that Hanoi would talk and would scale down NLF military actions in South Vietnam after a bombing halt. But of these comments only Tieng's appears to have official standing. We do not anticipate any Hanoi shift on this issue in the near future.

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*Research
Memorandum*

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

RFE-19, April 27, 1966

VI-39

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : ENR - Thomas L. Hughes *Thomas L. Hughes*
Subject : Peking Continues to Key Its Political, Military Activities to the Danger of War

This paper, supplementing an earlier Research Memorandum on the subject (RFE-49, November 5, 1965), surveys information received during the past several months on Communist China's preparations for possible war.

ABSTRACT

Over the last six months Peking has steadily escalated its propaganda to convey the impression that the threat of a US attack upon China is definitely intended and possibly imminent. In contrast to the lack of publicity when Peking began to make various contingency preparations in winter 1964-5, its preparedness efforts in recent months have proceeded amidst an atmosphere of crisis and tension. Both the public and private statements of Peking's leaders and cadres contain more frequent references to the inevitability of a war that will be "forced upon China by US imperialism." Information from covert sources indicate that private statements of senior level as well as lower echelon cadres generally parallel the regime's propaganda statements.

The greater part of this effort has been directed at its domestic population, apparently to evoke greater support for the regime and to ready it for all eventualities. Particular attention has been given to the mainstays of the regime's strength, including

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its armed forces, the party, and mass organizations. It has had some success in intensifying public apprehension and concern and in spreading these feelings throughout the country. While these latest preparations essentially continue and expand the initial readiness efforts, there appears to be a significantly higher sense of apprehension among the population. Nevertheless, Peking recently indicated its concern that people did not take the US war threat seriously enough.

Although Peking's military preparations remain difficult to evaluate because of tight Chinese security measures, we find little basis for believing that Peking regards the imminence of war to be fading. The expansion and improvement of the net of airfields bordering the DRV as well as the rail and road systems in the area continues at a rapid rate. Reports of evacuation of personnel from urban areas to the countryside and of the relocation of a few factories and governmental institution continue to be received, but it is difficult to gauge the volume of activity involved. There is increased evidence that civil defense programs are now being implemented rather than merely being planned or discussed; these measures, however, are not being carried out with desperate urgency, and in some instances the civilian population has responded apathetically to the regime's exhortations.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

VI-40

4 August 1966

SUBJECT: SHIE 13-66: CURRENT CHINESE COMMUNIST INTENTIONS
IN THE VIETNAM SITUATION

CONCLUSION

The Chinese Communists have responded to recent US air action against North Vietnamese POL facilities and to Ho Chi Minh's July 17 appeal for more aid with massive propaganda demonstrations all over China. These occasions were used to renew pledges of complete support for Hanoi and to reiterate the Chinese view that the war must be continued to final victory. At the same time, the Chinese seem likely to provide more manpower for logistical and engineering functions in North Vietnam, and, for the first time, they may move some infantry troops into North Vietnam as a precautionary step against the contingency of invasion.

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We do not conclude, however, that the Chinese have changed their basic policy because of the recent air strikes. We have estimated that Peking would almost certainly intervene if North Vietnam were invaded or if the collapse of the Communist regime seemed likely. But we continue to believe that, at present levels of US action against NVN, China will not commit its ground forces to the war, nor its air force to deliberate and sustained action against US forces.

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RM, RFE-41, Oct. 11, 1966, pp. iii, iv

Although it is too early to make any final judgment on the effects of the Peking purge, it has yet to result in any increased militancy on the part of the regime. The Chinese continue to view the conflict as essentially a Vietnamese affair. Like Hanoi, they may feel that Communist prospects in the war are far from bad and that current levels of Chinese aid, together with North Vietnamese resources and assistance from other Communist countries, may be enough to maintain Hanoi's will to fight and to lead eventually to the wearing out of American patience and determination. In addition, fear of US retaliation in all probability weighs importantly in China's calculus. Thus it appears that at the war's current level of intensity, which involves neither a threat of invasion of North Vietnamese or Chinese territory nor the destruction of the Hanoi regime, the Chinese will not actively and openly intervene in the fighting.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

April 12, 1967

To : The Acting Secretary
Through: S/S
From : ICR - Thomas L. Hughes-^{1/11}

Subject: Probable North Vietnamese and Chinese Reactions to Augmented Military Pressure Against North Vietnam

I. Introduction

Augmentation of US military pressure on North Vietnam has been recommended with the object of destroying Hanoi's ability to continue its war in the South. This paper discusses the probable effects of such augmentation with respect to the course of the war and possibilities for US-Chinese confrontation. We assume a stepped-up program of strikes over a wider range of targets, including: bombing all thermal power plants, mines, and industrial installations in North Vietnam regardless of location; mining Haiphong and other harbors; bombing dock facilities, and naval and air campaigns to prevent off-loading anywhere along the North Vietnamese coast; bombing navigational locks and dams related to inland waterway transportation, and all bridges and transport and communication nodal points wherever located; and strafing or otherwise destroying the effectiveness of all North Vietnam's airfields. The augmentation assumed stops short of invasion, bombing of population centers per se, bombing of dikes and dams essentially related to agriculture, attacks in a prohibited area bordering on China, and use of nuclear weapons.

It is assumed that no restrictions will be placed upon the over-all number of sorties or upon airstrikes against all targets, including previously designated ones, so that maximum possible damage may be inflicted. It is

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also assumed that, including lead time, the period required for such actions to achieve maximum effectiveness will be about six months, and this paper, therefore, considers first the effects of the increased military pressure during this period and then the possible subsequent consequences.

II. In the Short Run: Hanoi Will Hold On

We do not believe that, in the half-year or so required to bring the augmented program described above to full effectiveness, Hanoi will be forced to make a major change in policy. Much of the infrastructure that supports Hanoi's war effort is primitive and diffuse. The communists have shown impressive ability to restore and improvise; they still have confidence in their ability to continue to do so. Moreover, the experience of World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnamese hostilities to date suggests that heavy bombing does not bring rapid results. Finally, although the war in the South depends heavily upon the infusion of manpower and weapons from the North, the communist effort in the South has strong assets in place and could continue for some time even if the bombing had major effects on the North.

Accordingly, we believe that Hanoi's initial reaction will be to carry on and to seek as much additional outside aid as may be required. Hanoi will need heavily increased material support and additional skilled manpower, which it cannot provide, to assist in operating sophisticated equipment and maintaining the infrastructure. As a deterrent to possible invasion, it might also seek a few Chinese combat units to be stationed in North Vietnam.

A. Increased Outside Aid

We believe that Hanoi's allies, Communist China in particular, will respond promptly and unreservedly. For Peking, the maintenance of protracted

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revolutionary warfare in South Vietnam in defiance of the US is a major national objective and is likely to remain one despite any foreseeable fluctuations in Chinese domestic politics. Like Hanoi, Peking will continue to calculate that the best interests of the communists lie in a protracted war. In such a war, they believe, a combination of international pressure and domestic United States considerations will ultimately weaken the American position to the point where our own negotiating terms will offer better prospects than either Peking or Hanoi can now see for achieving communist aims at the conference table. Peking would see in stepped-up aid a corresponding prospect of influencing Hanoi to maintain to the utmost a posture of uncompromising militancy.

The augmented material aid furnished by the Chinese to replace infrastructure would include such items as trucks, generators, tractors, textiles, foods, and vessels. The Chinese would be willing to bear the resultant strain on their economy for the sake of the cause. The Chinese probably would respond favorably to a request for port facilities, e.g., Chan-Chiang (Ft. Bayard), to substitute for bombed-out ports in North Vietnam. As North Vietnamese requirements become more urgent, Peking would see no alternative to expediting transit of Soviet aid goods via such ports, just as they have agreed to facilitate overland shipments.

To increase the cost to the US, the Chinese would provide, as far as they were able, increased supplies of weapons such as the large-calibre rockets and mortars already introduced, more artillery and more AAA units, coastal defense weapons and other sophisticated equipment, along with personnel to install and operate them. They might provide speedy, missile-equipped patrol

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boats, such as the Komars or the larger Osas, for which they could train North Vietnamese crews. Operating from coastal areas northeast of Haiphong, even a few Komars would pose a threat to US naval operations in the Gulf of Tonkin requiring costly precautions; any damage they might inflict on a US vessel would provide a priceless morale booster to North Vietnam. It should be noted, however, that the Chinese have only a limited number of Komars and Osas and would find it difficult to part with a militarily significant number of them.

B. Increasing Aid Will Bring Increasing Risks of Confrontation

As Hanoi's requirements grew, Chinese support would keep pace. Peking, however, still would desire to avoid precipitating a situation in which US power would be employed against Chinese territory in China's present state of comparative weakness. Though they may despise the US as a purportedly decadent and declining capitalist power, the Chinese Communists believe that an all-out US response is still a real possibility. Nevertheless, Peking has a great compulsion to support Hanoi and keep it fighting in the South; its internal problems have not altered its stance on Vietnam which, despite the Cultural Revolution, has remained consistent over the past year and is unlikely to change. The war in Vietnam has become so involved with Chinese interests in Southeast Asia that it is improbable that any likely leadership in Peking would attempt to scale down significantly China's commitment to North Vietnam. Accordingly, Peking would support North Vietnam to the extent necessary even though this might increase the risk of an undesired confrontation with the US. This increased risk might arise even at an early stage

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because of the forms Chinese assistance to North Vietnam would take. Peking would recognize and accept the risks arising, for example, out of the use of Chinese ports to supply North Vietnam and of Chinese airfields as refuge for North Vietnamese planes while airfields in North Vietnam damaged by bombing were being repaired.

While Hanoi would remain determined to keep control over its policies, the influx of large numbers of Chinese to support Hanoi's infrastructure and war effort would obviously have a marked effect on all aspects of Chinese participation in North Vietnamese affairs. The numerous units involved would require an extensive Chinese organization within North Vietnam for policing, coordination and support. Chinese officers in control of these units would probably participate in North Vietnamese military and civil councils, and the role of Chinese advisers and liaison officers would be enhanced. They would both color Hanoi's thinking and, with a developing professional and political interest in victory, would add their own voices to the pressures on Peking for ever-increasing support.

III. In the Longer Run: Crucial Decision

A continued campaign against the North of the type envisaged, together with the maintenance of our campaign in the South, would present Hanoi with the prospect of eventual collapse, although no major breakdown had occurred despite a half year or so of augmented attacks. North Vietnam would face a critical policy decision several months before such a collapse became a reality by projecting ahead the following grave results of a continuous pounding:

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(1) A steady disintegration of its administrative fabric and capacity to govern the country effectively, as well as to sustain its effort in the South, despite existing aid levels;

(2) Probable depletion of its assets in the South, together with other limitations on its ability to conduct operations there as before;

(3) Danger that continued bombing would extend to new targets such as agricultural dikes and dams or might be followed up by invasion, while the strains of war, producing dissidence and disaffection in the North, might threaten the existence of the regime from within.

Even in the unlikely event that Hanoi were to fail to recognize its predicament, Peking would take pains to point it out in order to push Hanoi into renewed resolve and speed its decision to accept increased Chinese involvement; for Peking would feel its own interests seriously threatened by the prospect that the North Vietnamese regime might collapse. It is this eventuality that the Intelligence Community has repeatedly pointed to as one that Peking would intervene to prevent. It would have observed that the widening of the scope of bombing had all but eliminated distinctions between military and economic targets, making the imminent danger of a North Vietnamese collapse all the more apparent in communist eyes. Peking, moreover, no less than Hanoi, might feel itself increasingly threatened. The extension of the bombing could already have indicated to Peking a continuum that, having attacked so wide a range of targets in North Vietnam, would move on to targets in China.

A. Destruction, Compromise, or Holding On

In its considerations, Hanoi would see itself as faced with the stark alternative of negotiating with its enemies from a vastly weakened position

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or of calling upon its allies for even greater support. It would face this decision at a time when its freedom of action might be circumscribed by the increased influence Peking had already derived from its greater role. Peking and Hanoi would both see a middle course, a tapering off or diminution of the effort in the South, as impractical, and would reject it as involving the loss of a major investment with the prospect of even less recompense than a negotiated settlement. Such a course would also leave the communists in both the North and the South all the more vulnerable to continuing heavy punishment since the fact that Hanoi was tapering off in the South could not quickly become apparent.

A decision to negotiate might seem rational to much of the outside world, and would offer a good chance of maintaining some assets in the South; but in Hanoi's and Peking's eyes, it would mean acceptance of defeat. Nevertheless, if Hanoi chose to negotiate what it would consider a defeat, we believe Peking would go along. However, it would make clear its preference that Hanoi continue fighting, assuring it all support necessary to maintain the regime. In offering these assurances, Peking would recognize risks to China but would still calculate, as would Hanoi, that continued stalemate at even higher levels of engagement might encourage the United States to back down rather than again raise the level of its response.

On balance, we believe that, rather than negotiate or taper off, the Hanoi regime would turn to the Chinese for the support required to sustain itself in the North and carry on the war effort in the South. Peking, having encouraged this decision, would respond vigorously, fully aware that this would greatly heighten the risk of confrontation with the US.

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B. Increased Probability of Sino-US Confrontation

We believe that aid from other Communist states would be forthcoming, but in any case China would be able to mobilize the resources required to maintain Hanoi's capacity to perform its essential functions in the North and sustain the war effort in the South. As China's support of North Vietnam increased, so would Hanoi's dependence on Peking. Not only would Hanoi's ability to persist depend on Chinese support, but Chinese control might be extended to cover Hanoi's responses to opportunities for negotiation.

At best, Peking would hope to keep the US bogged in an extended stalemate in Vietnam. It would recognize that such a stalemate could itself raise the prospects of confrontation since Peking would anticipate that its successful support of Hanoi might induce the US to strike directly at China as the major obstacle blocking Washington's attainment of its objectives. Moreover, Chinese piecemeal involvement could, in due course, create a cumulative risk of confrontation greater than Peking, Hanoi, or their field commanders might initially have realized. Finally, in its efforts to underline its own determination, and hence give the US pause, Peking might resort to provocative measures.

We believe that, rather than bring major ground units into combat with US forces in the South, Peking would try to maximize the deterrent effect of its other forms of military assistance to North Vietnam. China might openly place security and infantry units in North Vietnam in order to underline the risk of an invasion of the North. Hanoi or Peking would publicize claims that heavily reinforced Chinese AAA units stationed in North Vietnam had shot down US aircraft. Having expanded its commitment of manpower to the extent

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necessary to restore transport lines, electric power nets, airfields, and some industrial facilities, China might begin to publicize its assistance. It might announce that it was offering sanctuary to North Vietnam's planes whenever necessary. The Chinese could make public the presence of Chinese advisers with the NVA as well as the extensive Chinese military presence in North Vietnam. Less likely but also in the realm of possibility would be an announcement of the presence of Chinese advisers with the VC, perhaps even the formation of a Chinese "volunteer" unit for South Vietnam. Peking would hope that such steps would face the US with the challenge of precipitating direct confrontation with China, and would have the symbolic value elsewhere in the world of dramatizing Chinese involvement. Peking may well calculate that the US would be reluctant to respond because of world wide pressure and because the US and its friends in Asia would be fearful of widening the conflict.

Thus, Hanoi and Peking might hope to establish a protracted stalemate during which Hanoi's offensive against the South could continue; in such a circumstance, the Communist states could wait for the US to tire or err, in accordance with the doctrine of people's war.

IV. Conclusion

We conclude, therefore, that the likelihoods embodied in the increased military pressures on North Vietnam described in the introduction are:

(1) The level of violence in all sectors of the war will increase, without improving the prospects of bringing Hanoi to the conference table on terms less favorable than it now seeks;

(2) Barring major improvements in our political-military position in the South as a result of policies unrelated to the bombing program, the

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(CONT) 107
-10

stalemate will be re-established as a result of a Chinese decision to underwrite the North Vietnamese war for an extended period;

(3) The Chinese would be aware that considerable risk of confrontation with the US was involved, but would accept this as a price for increased control over the course of events in Vietnam.

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VI-46

MM-REA-67-144, December 16, 1967
Vietnam Participation."

: "China's Scope for Augmented

Although the Chinese Communists apparently intend to avoid direct confrontation with the United States over the Vietnam issue, it remains highly possible that Peking may calculate that, under the circumstances it envisages, there might be little risk and worthwhile potential benefit in increasing further its already substantial contribution to the North Vietnamese war effort. Each increment, of course, heightens the risk of confrontation by accident or miscalculation. In addition, Peking may exercise caution in its approach to such moves because it desires to maintain the conflict at the "protracted people's war" level. Chinese involvement in the Communist war effort on an increased scale could create important new problems for the US and exacerbate old ones; such involvement might precipitate small engagements that could expand out of control; a larger Chinese role in NVN would increase Peking's leverage against any elements in Hanoi less intransigent than itself; and world awareness of greater Chinese involvement on Hanoi's side might increase public pressures on the US to give up its objectives in Vietnam. ...

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MM-REA-68-47

G - Mr. Charles E. Bohlen

March 1, 1963

HR/REA - Fred Greene

II - 44

Probable Chinese Responses to Certain US Courses of Action in Indochina

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

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

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

Mining and/or Blockading of Haiphong

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

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The Chinese would probably be ready to assist in improving North Vietnamese coastal defenses, and might provide additional patrol boats, possibly including guided missile vessels.

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

China would probably be prepared to provide as much logistical support and labor as the North Vietnamese might need to keep society functioning in North Vietnam and to help Hanoi maintain the war effort in the South. Peking would probably be ready to increase its anti-aircraft artillery contingent in the South, (possibly sending SAM batteries), and would probably supply the North Vietnamese airforce with MIG-19's from its own inventory. Chinese airspace and airfields would be made available, as and when necessary, as a refuge for North Vietnamese aircraft. There is a strong possibility that Chinese pilots in MIG's with North Vietnamese markings would engage US bombers over North Vietnam. However, we would anticipate overt Chinese intervention only if the scope of the bombing seemed intended to destroy North Vietnam as a viable Communist state.

US Invasion of North Vietnam

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

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

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VII-1

IN-240, "Hanoi Declares Readiness to Contact US on Cessation of Bombing,"
April 4, 1968, pp. 5,6.

Where Does Hanoi Go From Here? We do not have the impression that the considerations set forth above will compel the North Vietnamese to move rapidly to full-fledged talks or negotiations, although Hanoi may decide to do so if it sees favorable opportunities arising out of US concessions and/or out of the American electoral campaign. Nor do we have the impression that Hanoi has decided to abandon its basic objectives or its basic conditions for a settlement. In fact, some of Hanoi's tactical purposes (such as restricting the bombing and putting pressure on the GVN) can be served as well by limited procedural contacts as by substantive negotiations. Hanoi may therefore attempt initially to limit and restrict the scope of the contacts very tightly within the terms set forth in its statement. At the same time, it will attempt to coordinate its continued build-up and its military operations closely with its negotiations tactics. It is probably sensitive to the pressures which could be placed on it during contacts for further modifications of its position, and is also sensitive to the risks to which the NLF might be exposed. It will want to watch and weigh these potential risks and pressures very carefully and to adjust its tactics accordingly. It may also find itself constrained to adjust its position. It will generally attempt to keep as many options as possible open for military and political actions while pushing for US concessions on substantive matters.

VII-2

Memorandum to the Secretary re: "Hanoi's Desires and Expectations from
the Impending Round of Talks," April 10, 1968,

(pp. 1,2)It has now decided to finesse it, agreeing with us to discuss a full bombing cessation without committing itself formally to exercise self-restraint. Nonetheless, we think it will maintain a relatively reduced level of military operations in the immediate future. It has already done so at Khe Sanh, probably because it was compelled to do so by our military pressure. The policy of restricting military operations, however, will be motivated primarily by tactical considerations rather than to avoid taking "advantage." Hanoi needs time to consolidate its control over recently occupied rural areas, to restore the losses of the Tet offensive, and to bring its infiltrating forces into an advantageous military position. Hanoi will not acknowledge that it is reducing its scale of operations, but it may hope to gain some credit from this reduction, and may hope that it will have some effect on US public and negotiating attitudes. At the same time, Hanoi is apparently intent on keeping up and even accelerating the pace of infiltration. We expect that it will step up its military and political pressure in the South, after the current lull in operations, whether or not a complete bombing halt is instituted and negotiations begin, though it will probably attempt to stop short of provoking a major US retaliation unless it is willing to see talks broken off.

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(p. 3) 4. On the basis of the above considerations, Hanoi may have decided that the chances of an early favorable outcome are now good enough to warrant exploration. ...

(p. 4)We cannot yet judge whether this new orientation will push Hanoi toward moderating its demands, but its concern to reduce future costs and dangers will also be a factor in Hanoi's calculations.

VII-3

IN-275, "Communist Courses of Action in South Vietnam during Contacts,"
April 16, 1968

(p. 1) Communist Assumptions. The Communists will assume that they are operating from a position of considerable strength. To be sure, in accepting "contacts" without a bombing halt, they may have been led to compromise their earlier position in part by heightened concern over the rising costs protracted war could impose upon them in the North and South. They were probably more strongly influenced, however, by the belief that over the last few months their position had advanced and that of the US and GVN had weakened to the point where a tactical retreat, even though on a point of principle, could enlarge their opportunities without seriously inhibiting their freedom of action. They probably recognize that, as talks proceed, they as well as we will be under pressure to keep discussions going; however, they are likely to see the pressures on us as much more potent than those upon them. This view, their continued faith in ultimate success, and their willingness to protract the war if they must will lead them, in this initial phase, to take hard and uncompromising positions which they will attempt to reinforce by their actions on the ground.

(p. 2) Patterns of Military Activity. Accordingly, at this stage, we would not expect any fundamental change in the patterns of Communist military operations. Such operations will continue to be directed toward protecting and expanding the present Communist position in the South, undermining the authority of the GVN and the confidence of the people in their government, displaying the frailty of ARVN, maintaining expectations of success among Communist forces, and keeping alive, particularly in the United States, the prospect of protracted, costly, and inconclusive warfare.

The mix of harassing, small-scale, and large-scale attacks and of engagement or withdrawal in response to Allied operations will probably be determined largely by Communist capabilities and by what Hanoi sees as the military/political requirements of the situation on the ground. These would lead the Communists to maintain a high level of overall activity and to intermittent efforts to achieve some spectacular military success. ...

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(p. 3) Infiltration. The Communists will keep men and supplies moving into the South. Movements up or down from present very high levels will be dictated primarily by logistic and other military requirements. The Communists will want to reinforce in order to sustain military operations, reassure the Southern cadre, and make clear their ability to raise the level of hostilities.
....

VII-4

IN-287, "Hanoi's Appointment of Xuan Thuy as Minister May Presage Role in Negotiations," April 18, 1968.

(p. 1) In fact, Hanoi may have announced the appointment at this time in order to indicate its readiness for negotiations and to contrast it with alleged US intransigence.

(p. 2) Might Serve as Chief Staffer in Negotiations. Because of his international experience, Thuy could be used in any forthcoming negotiations as a chief staff man, perhaps as deputy chief, for whomever should turn out to be Hanoi's top negotiator. He probably will not be the principal NVN representative at the initial "contact" stage, since Hanoi has indicated that these contacts were to be made at the ambassadorial (rather than ministerial) level. Conceivably, he might be used as top man at the "talks" stage, if Hanoi wished to keep its most prestigious negotiators in reserve for eventual formal negotiations. His current rank and status would mark him for the intermediate stage of talks, since he appears to be too high-ranking for initial contacts but too low-ranking to represent Hanoi at any final stage of negotiations.

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April 17, 1968

To : The Secretary
 Through: S/S
 From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes ¹⁹⁷³

RCH/SA

VII-5

Subject: South Vietnamese Reactions to US-Hanoi Talks

While acquiescing in the prospect of US talks with Hanoi, the Government of Vietnam (GVN) remains opposed to any US negotiations with the North involving substantive issues affecting the South.

Reluctant and Conditional Acquiescence. The rapid series of developments that began with President Johnson's speech of March 31 has undercut any effort the Government of Vietnam (GVN) might otherwise have made to forestall bilateral talks between the US and North Vietnam. President Thieu and the GVN leadership have felt themselves obliged to play the role of "good soldiers," to acknowledge publicly that they were consulted in advance about the limited bombing pause, and to affirm that they approve of bilateral "contacts" and, by implication, of any bilateral "talks" that may ensue. At the same time, they have predictably stressed that their acquiescence in such contacts is conditioned upon limiting the subject matter of bilateral contacts to issues affecting North Vietnam. Publicly too, the GVN has emphasized that the limited bombing pause is a "last" demonstration of good will toward Hanoi; it insists upon participation in any actual negotiations affecting the South; and that, if need be, it is determined to "go it alone," as symbolized in Thieu's call on April 10 for general mobilization of the nation's manpower and material resources. All of these public postures are consistent with the long-established position of the GVN, the most authoritative

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IN-283, "South Vietnamese Reactions to US-Hanoi Talks," Apr. 17, 1968

(pp. 4,5)

The one new factor that may influence Vietnamese thinking is the belated realization that US commitment to continue the war at its present intensity can no longer be taken for granted. While this realization may have an immediate salutary effect, it could also contribute to an unraveling of the constitutional system, lessened restraints upon irresponsible political activity, and a general disintegration of morale that would lead individuals and groups in or out of government to seek to insure their futures by leaving the country, adopting a flexible "wait-and-see" position, or making private accommodations with the Communists.

Nevertheless, we believe that the GVN will probably continue on the course of acquiescence in US bilateral dealings with Hanoi while attempting to strengthen its military, economic, and political position at home. In the meantime, the GVN will probably continue to hold out against a complete and unconditional cessation of US bombing of the North, no matter what sort of public or private assurances of reciprocal, de-escalatory action may be extracted from the North Vietnamese. It will demand public and private assurances from the US that its commitment to South Vietnam has not diminished in any way. It will hold out for the retention of US troop strength at the levels now announced and for the maintenance of present levels of economic aid and military training and equipment; it may seek additional Free World troop contributions from at least Korea and Thailand. The GVN will demand full reporting and consultation on the state of talks with North Vietnam and will oppose any early widening of the talks, either as to content or as to participation, in the hope of delaying any decisive stage at which the GVN might,

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IN-283, "South Vietnamese Reactions to US-Hanoi Talks," Apr. 17, 1968

(pp. 5,6)

for example, have to decide whether its own participation in negotiations was worth the price of recognizing the Liberation Front as a separate entity equally competent to participate. The GVN would thus hope to delay still further a realistic confrontation with the problems implicit in arranging a political settlement, for which it presumably is still almost totally unprepared. However, if it appeared that talks were moving inevitably in the direction of substantive negotiations, it is not entirely inconceivable that the GVN would attempt to bring about its own participation sooner rather than later in negotiations in order to maximize its own opportunities for influencing the course of events as well as for disruption and delay.

There will undoubtedly be a progressive rise in South Vietnamese suspicions of US intentions and with it may come an increased possibility of a military takeover in Saigon. Nevertheless, the chances still appear to be slightly better than even that the GVN, particularly if its overall military posture on the ground does not weaken, can be brought along reluctantly to accept widening of the talks into negotiations.

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VII-6

IN-307, "Viet Cong Upgrade Alliance Front into National Organization,"
April 26, 1968, p. 3

Communist Political Maneuverability Enhanced. Through this ostensibly new "non-Communist" organization, the Communists are obviously seeking to advance the impression of increasing support for their objectives. They undoubtedly expect that the inclusion in the Alliance of such prominent individuals as Hau and Tet will strengthen the Communist appeal where it has hitherto been weakest--wavering and opposition elements and the urban elite generally. The ultimate objective may well be to promote the Alliance as an independent and broadly representative political element in South Vietnam with which the NLF at some point would combine to form a "broad provisional coalition government" in the South, which the Communists would portray as having already wrested governmental authority from a weak and divided GVN.

The timing selected for the announcement suggests also that the Communists may see some role for the Alliance as a "third force" (in addition to the GVN and the NLF) in any negotiations and eventual political settlement. Communist experimentation with this possibility is suggested by the Alliance's statement on its program that it is ready to discuss with the US the problems relating to a peaceful settlement in South Vietnam.

VII-7

MM-REA-68-86, "Captured Document Statements on Upcoming Phase of Communist Offensive," May 1, 1968

The vast majority of significant and high-level documents are not at all explicit with regard to a time frame of offensive action and what political action may come thereafter. Nevertheless, recently captured documents, recent prisoner and defector interrogations and collateral intelligence do appear to indicate that the Communists are planning to start something soon in the way of offensive military action. The next phase may be presently scheduled for May, although it might slip into June as a result of US-Allied spoiling attacks. However, we have no firm indications on what the Communist objectives are for this phase of attacks. We tend to feel that a repeat offensive on the pattern of the Tet attacks does not appear likely, and that the Communists will be more selective this time around and, at a minimum engage in harassing and mortaring selected urban sites and military targets. However, the scale of the Communist build-up is sufficient to support an offensive of a nature similar to that of the Tet offensive, i.e., large-scale, country-wide coordinated attacks against urban areas. Presumably any renewed Communist military activity could fit into the framework of "fighting while negotiating" in which some form of peace initiative would be put forward by the Communists, either during the military phase or thereafter.

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VII-8

MM-REA-68-84, "Conflicting MACV and CIA Assessments of Enemy Strength in South Vietnam," April 29, 1968

(pp. 1,2) INR's own position has consistently been that CIA's estimative methodology, though it often results in wide-ranging and sometimes "spongy" figures, is superior to MACV's, is more objectively applied, and results in a more realistic portrayal of the total enemy threat. MACV usually aims at the lowest possible figures and (arbitrarily, in our opinion) excludes several categories of enemy personnel on the grounds that these elements do not contribute to the enemy's offensive military capability and that in any case our information is insufficient to permit any attempt at quantifying them.

MACV to a considerable extent is "boxed in" because for several years it had accepted and used Vietnamese estimates for some categories that, as everyone now agrees, were far too low. In the last two years or so, MACV's independent intelligence capability has grown markedly, but MACV believes that it cannot now accept figures--even though they may result from improved intelligence--whose cumulative total would be markedly higher than in the past; MACV is concerned that higher figures, if they appeared now, would discredit earlier estimates (and perhaps the policies upon which those estimates were based) and be read as repudiating MACV's own claims of progress in the war through the attrition of enemy forces. Last summer, when NIE 14.3-67 was in preparation, Ambassador Bunker concurred with MACV in this respect. He took neither side with respect to figures, but he was concerned at the policy implications of figures significantly higher than those MACV had used previously. He was satisfied, therefore, when MACV and CIA agreed on the figures that appeared in the National Estimate.

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III-9

IN-371, "How Does Hanoi See Things After the First Week in Paris?"
May 20, 1968

(p. 2) Covers Wide Range of Topics. Compared to Hanoi's narrow official definition of the talks' purpose, Thuu has ranged over an astonishingly wide variety of subjects. He has talked about Laos and Cambodia, the DMZ, and even the old 1956 election issue. He has challenged US readiness to see genuine self-determination in the South. He may have chosen to raise or discuss all these topics because he believed that he could make some propaganda hay from them, because he wanted to have the material on record for later reference, or because he felt that our presentation had to be refuted. But he must also have realized that they opened up room for discussions beyond the current officially announced purpose of the talks, and that we could and would exploit his readiness to discuss them.

(pp. 3,4) If, after several weeks and even months, the talks still fail to serve Hanoi's principal purposes, the regime will face some difficult decisions. If the talks do not, for example, lead to an early, complete, and unconditional bombing halt, or if the GVN is not drastically and favorably modified in composition, Hanoi will find itself involved in extensive negotiations while the bombing continues. Such a situation might be militarily acceptable, since the limited bombing would not prevent continuance of Hanoi's effort in the South or maintain great pressure on the Northern political structure, but it would violate Hanoi's long-standing opposition to substantive talks under bombing. It might also create problems in Viet Cong cadre morale--to say nothing of Northern Party morale--since they would have seen Hanoi weakening on what had been a major issue of prime importance.

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(P. 4) The policy alternatives at such a point would not be pleasant for the Hanoi leadership, since it might have to threaten to break off talks in order to force US concessions or to remove itself from the difficult position of talking under any kind of bombing. It has been careful to date not to threaten such a break-off. However, breaking off the talks would also generate problems, particularly if NLF and "Alliance" elements had been counting on them to produce desired changes in the GVN system, or if the break-off leads to a resumption and escalation of US bombing of the North. We can assume that Hanoi had thought through at least some of these possible dilemmas before it agreed to "official conversations," but Xuan Thuy's performance to date gives no clear indication whether or how the Hanoi leadership has made up its mind to handle them.

VII-10

IN-395, "Would Hanoi Break Off Paris Talks?" May 24, 1968

(p. 1) Though there has been some recent press speculation that Hanoi may contemplate breaking off the Paris talks, Hanoi does not seem likely to take such a step in the next month or two, and probably not even beyond that. It may, however, take steps short of a break-off in order to put pressure on us. In its maneuvers to place pressure on us, Hanoi might miscalculate and follow policies which might produce a break-off against its own wishes.

(p. 4) May Recall Xuan Thuy. We therefore believe that Hanoi is not likely to break off the talks in the near future and will think twice before doing so even after that. However, it may try to eat its cake and have it, trying one or a combination of tactical ploys. It could, for example, recall its chief negotiator or negotiators "for consultation" while keeping only a low-level liaison office to continue the talks in Paris. It may hope that this would increase the pressure on us without incurring all the risks and potential disadvantages of a break-off. ...

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VII-11

MM-REA-68-115, "Possible Hanoi Tactics Through the Summer and Fall of 1968," July 12, 1968

(p. 1) 1. Although Hanoi's successes in South Vietnam have fallen short of its high aspirations, by its lights the over-all political, military, and diplomatic balance is generally favorable to North Vietnam and generally unfavorable to the US and GVN. Hanoi is thus confident that, in time, it can achieve victory.

2. Nevertheless, Hanoi is under pressure to make rapid progress in settling the war, or at least in obtaining a token withdrawal of US forces from the South. Hanoi's problems--heavy casualties and recruiting difficulties in the South, manpower shortages and economic dislocation in the North, and concern with morale and security in North Vietnam--are leading the regime to seek some kind of agreement with the US by the end of the year, or possibly not later than mid-1969. If a satisfactory settlement cannot be reached within this time-frame, however, the Communists will be prepared to continue the war, though probably at a lower level.

3. Hanoi will assume that the US is unlikely to resume bombing north of the 20th parallel. Even if this happens, however, it probably calculates that the air war against North Vietnam will not be escalated beyond the point it had reached before the bombing limitation and that we will not, for example, systematically bomb the dikes or the population centers. Resumption of the earlier levels of bombing would cause serious difficulties, but would not, in itself, soon force any change of important North Vietnamese policies.

4. Hanoi probably regards it as unlikely that the US will send more troops to South Vietnam and believes, therefore, that the US cannot significantly escalate the war in the South.

5. Adequate supplies will continue to be received from China and the USSR, and China will not materially interfere with Hanoi's plans.

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(p. 2) On Reciprocity. Hanoi is currently faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, in part to undermine the GVN, it wants to advance the talks beyond the present stage to the point where political matters concerning South Vietnam are taken up. On the other hand, however, Hanoi has stated it would not move in this direction until we stop bombing completely. Assuming that the US maintains a demand for some reciprocity, Hanoi will want to find some way to get around or beyond the issue so as to move on to talk about political matters in the South. It might do so in a number of ways. For example, it might decide simply to begin probing into matters concerning South Vietnam during the Hanoi-US talks without waiting for a resolution of the bombing-reciprocity issue. Or it might try to discover whether the US will accept tacit de-escalation in phases, or perhaps a third-party assurance of a forthcoming small "act of good will" (such as stopping infiltration through the DMZ) as a quid pro quo for stopping the bombing.

Whatever course it chooses, Hanoi will be careful not to give any assurances that would significantly inhibit its freedom of action during a future large-scale offensive in the South. For example, to offer as reciprocity a promise that Saigon would never again be shelled or that there would be no attacks in the Thua-Thien area would force Hanoi either to pull a significant part of its offensive punch or to run the risk, if it did not abide by its commitment, of a serious backlash of opinion against it. ...

(p. 3) US and North Vietnamese Withdrawal. Hanoi may believe that the US is considering trying to negotiate a mutual withdrawal of US and North Vietnamese forces, leaving the affairs of South Vietnam to be settled by the NLF, the GVN, and other indigenous factions. Hanoi would probably investigate any US overtures in this direction or might try itself to interest the US in such a proposition. In either case, the North Vietnamese would try to arrange a withdrawal schedule that would favor Communist interests, and would not contemplate withdrawing NVA troops before US forces began to leave. Even if a mutually acceptable withdrawal could not be agreed on, Hanoi might feel that exploring the subject with the US would nevertheless be worthwhile, since this would increase fears within the GVN that the US was selling it out.

(p. 4) Hanoi might also decide that it should call or sponsor the calling of some form of international conference for the purpose of influencing United States policy, particularly should there be a recess or suspension of the Paris talks. It would do so, however, only if it felt reasonably certain that it could control the agenda, and that as a consequence the war, specific settlement terms, or any other sensitive topics, would be discussed in ways favoring Hanoi's position. What kind of forum would meet Hanoi's criteria is still open to question, although according to one report it has already expressed interest in using the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization as a vehicle. Possibly other forums, to include an admixture of non-Communist or neutral nations, might be considered.

(p. 5) Accordingly, at this stage, we do not expect any fundamental change in the patterns of Communist military operations. The Communists will maintain a mix of harassing actions, small-scale and large-scale attacks, and engagement and withdrawal during alternating periods of intense action and relative lulls, as has been particularly noticeable since Tet.* While the Communists probably have the capability to wage an intensive, coordinated effort throughout the country, similar to their Tet offensive, they are more likely to focus on one or more areas, say the Saigon capital region, Hue, the DMZ, and/or the western highlands. Indeed, intelligence tends to indicate that the first attacks in a renewed offensive may be against Saigon later this month or in early August. In any event, these campaigns will probably be preceded by periods of enemy troop deployments and regroupments, as is currently occurring, although it is to be expected that some of these movements and troop concentrations will be intended to tie up Allied/GVN forces in order to forestall reinforcement of potential target areas.

* Communist Incidents:

	1967 Monthly Average	1968 Monthly Totals					
		Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
Attacks	206	409	570	558	391	588	420
Harassment	1,603	1,615	1,289	2,585	1,929	2,329	2,122

(p. 6) Infiltration

The Communists will keep men and supplies moving into the South. Indeed, intelligence from all sources indicates that the current unprecedented high level of Communist personnel infiltration will continue through August. In addition to assuring that there are sufficient replacements for anticipated heavy losses, Hanoi will probably introduce new NVA regiments. Movements up or down from present very high levels will be dictated primarily by logistic and other military requirements. The Communists will want to reinforce in order to sustain military operations, reassure the Southern cadre, and make clear their ability to raise the level of hostilities. ... It is also possible that continued very high levels of infiltration could, at some point, reflect an effort by the Communists to place themselves in a position where--without excessive military hazards--a diminution in this flow could be traded off for some other advantage.

(p.) In short, the ultimate political objective of the Communists is the complete collapse of the GVN which at the moment they seek to achieve by a combination of military, political and diplomatic pressures. Should they see the prospects as progressively declining, they might turn more actively to efforts to achieve at least partial success by promoting arrangements between elements of the Saigon government and the Alliance, or some other "third force" that would result in a coalition arrangement. Such an arrangement, even though not fully reflective of their optimum objectives, would hold promise of ultimately falling under complete communist control. We believe it is unlikely, however, that they would retreat this far before the end of the year.

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VII-12

IN-626, "North Vietnamese Links Between the Lull in the South and the Bombing of the North," August 8, 1968, p. 1 S/NFD/CD

These gambits may reflect ambiguities regarding the degree and the clarity of Hanoi's policy choices at this particular time. Hanoi may still be undecided between two extreme policy choices at the ends of a spectrum of alternatives. It may ultimately select either extreme or some middle course which will appear to satisfy its needs.

One End of Spectrum is to Accept Reciprocity. One end of the spectrum, which may be reflected by the recent reports, is for Hanoi to decide that it must accept the principle of reciprocity. It can be argued that the recent hints suggest that Hanoi has already decided to do so, and that the lull is intended as a reciprocal gesture for a bombing halt. According to this line of reasoning, Hanoi does not wish to tell us this directly, because of internal and/or external pressures, and it has therefore chosen to use indirect channels....

IN-688, "Hanoi Attacks President Johnson," Aug. 30, 1968, pp. 2,3.

....It is possible to argue that the new line reflects Hanoi's conviction that it no longer has anything to expect from the present US administration and nothing to offer it, and that it can no longer deal with the President.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the present polemics are only designed to mask a further shift to a slightly softer line, or to make some impending public or private Hanoi concessions appear the greater against a pattern of earlier invective. At present the only possible evidence for this hypothesis is Le Duc Tho's absence from the 19th Session, perhaps because he felt he should not be personally associated with the new hard line. If this interpretation is correct, he may be used to signal whatever conciliatory move Hanoi is prepared to make.

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VII-13

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VII-10

IN-636, "Possible Communist Military Moves in South Vietnam," Aug. 13, 1968

(p. 1) For some time, intelligence indicators have pointed to Communist preparations for major attacks in various parts of South Vietnam. That the Communists have the capability to mount such attacks is clear; their intentions on the other hand, remain unclear. Their own fight-talk doctrine, references to a "third offensive" in documents and briefing sessions, high levels of infiltrations, and the known movements of Communist units all suggest the imminence of a major military effort.

(p. 2) Even within a flexible framework, however, we believe that the choices open to them can be defined as falling within the following four categories: maintenance of existing levels of military activity; another Tet type offensive with assaults focused on urban areas throughout the country but with diversionary attacks elsewhere; major attacks at exposed points or on one or another urban area without an accompanying increase in the level of hostilities elsewhere; and intensified small-scale operations countrywide, while maintaining the threat of major military action in strategic areas. ...

In attempting to estimate which of these four general courses of action Hanoi is likely to select, we are inclined to regard the first-- a continued low level of military action--as one that the Communists are unlikely to pursue for very much longer.

(p. 3) Accordingly we do not anticipate that the Communists, having now lost the advantage of surprise and having no situation comparable to the Tet holiday to exploit, will attempt a second round of attacks directed against GVN civil and military control in urban areas throughout the country. Rather we would anticipate some mix of the third and fourth possible courses of action.

(p. 4) We believe that, in this next round, the Communists will seek to mount a campaign of some duration, striving not so much for shock effect as for opportunities to whipsaw our forces, frustrate our response, and intensify impressions of allied impotence in the United States and South Vietnam.

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VII-15

IN-683, "The Current Communist Offensive in South Vietnam," Aug. 29, 1968

(p. 1) Beginning with a series of attacks in Tay Ninh province on August 17/18, the Communists have launched a coordinated but geographically staggered campaign of small, quick ground attacks, mortar and rocket shellings, and harassing actions,* essentially against secondary targets in outlying areas.

(p. 7) Main Features of Current Actions. In contrast to the simultaneous, country-wide offensive that marked the early stages of the Tet and May offensives, attacks thus far have alternated from area to area. Unlike the previous offensives, there have been relatively few sustained, large-scale actions. The enemy instead has concentrated on hit-and-run ground attacks by small units and harassing heavy weapons shellings or attacks-by-fire primarily against secondary targets in outlying areas; the Communists apparently seek to cause maximum physical damage while attempting to minimize their own losses.

* MACV definitions of types of incidents: (1) ground attack or assault, an incident involving both fire and combat troops; (2) attacks-by-fire, an incident involving the firing of 20 rounds or more to inflict damage or casualties; and (3) harassment, an incident designed to disrupt rather than inflict serious casualties or damage. There are also sabotage, propaganda, and anti-aircraft incidents.

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Intelligence

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

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Note

- 744

September 20, 1968

To : The Secretary
Through: S/3
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes
Subject: Where Does Hanoi Go From Here?

III-16

More than eight months have passed since Hanoi launched its strategy of "fighting while negotiating." During that time the North Vietnamese have participated in lengthy negotiations in Paris and have launched a series of unprecedentedly intense campaigns against US forces as well as against the South Vietnamese political and military establishment. But their vast and costly efforts have not to date produced decisive or even uniformly favorable results.

The Hanoi leadership apparently reviewed the results at a series of Hanoi meetings in late July and early August. At those meetings, it probably listed its assets and liabilities. It may also have decided to adjust its stand on reciprocity, to grant some limited but only tacit gestures in exchange for a bombing halt, while still rejecting formal reciprocity. Any such limited readjustment would be accompanied by further military/political pressure, however, and Hanoi also would continue to stick on other issues in the negotiations.

Intelligence and research. Aside from normal substantive exchange with other agencies at the working level, has not been coordinated elsewhere.

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VII-16
(CONT'D)

Hanoi therefore is committed to at least some forward movement in the talks, and its increasingly vitriolic tone at the public Paris sessions does not indicate that it sees no further use for the talks or is prepared to stall them indefinitely. On the contrary, the stiff tone may well be intended to precede or cover some shifts in Hanoi's position, which could bring about a bombing halt and permit Hanoi to push on other matters under less pressure. Those shifts could be communicated privately or through contacts elsewhere, or could be reflected simply in the conduct of the war.

Will Probably Grant Measure of Tacit Reciprocity. In order to maintain the talks, and to stop the rest of the bombing, Hanoi may be willing to resolve the reciprocity question. It probably hoped that its military pressure during the spring or the later "lull" would lead to a change in the American attitude. Neither has worked. The next step is to try to persuade us to accept some limited gesture of tacit reciprocity, in one or another area of potential de-escalation. Hanoi's position may even have advanced to the point where it is

VII-16
(CONT'D)

prepared to be somewhat more explicit than before about the connection between an American bombing halt and the steps it is prepared to take. However, we do not believe Hanoi is yet prepared to issue a categorical assurance. Instead, it may give us a slightly better basis for an "assumption," hoping that we will accept this under the framework of the San Antonio formula.

However, any such concession will almost certainly be accompanied by continued and perhaps intensified military and political pressure in South Vietnam. It may, in fact, be designed in part to forestall US reaction to such pressure. And, if Hanoi's move does produce the much-desired full bombing halt, it will not feel any urgency to yield its stiff position on the next matter to be discussed: the roles of the GVN and the NLF in negotiations. Heartened by our readiness to refer to the NLF in the official conversations, it might then believe that we will be prepared to accept direct discussions with the NLF to the exclusion of the GVN. It will certainly exert maximum pressures for direct US-NLF conversations before being prepared to review its position on that issue (e.g., by falling back on the "Alliance" and/or accepting some GVN role). And it will also probably reject any effort to discuss North Vietnamese troop presence in the South.

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VII-17

IN-825, "What Will Hanoi Do Now?" Oct. 19, 1968

(p. 1) A. Hanoi's Basic Attitude Toward the Negotiations. A principal reason why Hanoi has entered negotiations is because it would like to end the current stage of intense military conflict, moving either toward a different level and type of warfare or toward some settlement.

VII-18

IN-860, "Possible Communist Attitudes Toward a Cease-Fire," Nov. 6, 1968

(pp 1,2) Madame Binh's statement suggests reasonably clearly that the Communists are unlikely to respond favorably to a cease-fire proposal, much less make one themselves, in the near future. We believe that her negative attitude toward a cease-fire reflects more basically a belief on the part of the Communists that their military pressures, costly as they have become, will be useful and necessary for some time to come to advance their political objectives in Paris and on the ground. It seems likely that a cease-fire will not become attractive to the Communists until they become either much more encouraged or much more discouraged over their overall prospects than they have reason to be at the moment.

We see the Communists as more likely to propose or accept a cease-fire at a time when they believe that they have pushed their political controls, undermined the GVN, and reduced the Allied bargaining position to the point where they need no longer rely heavily on violence. Under these circumstances, they might move fairly quickly toward agreement on the modalities of a cease-fire since they would probably calculate that a strong political base and the implicit threat of renewed hostilities would give them an adequate coercive capability, despite their acceptance of mechanisms and controls for enforcing the cease-fire. They would not, of course, from this position of strength, agree to anything in the way of regroupment that would reduce their territorial position.

....

Should it appear to the Communists that while their military operations are being frustrated their political position is also deteriorating, they might then be attracted to a cease-fire as affording them relief from military pressures while not precluding efforts to retrieve their political position. Protracted bargaining over modalities might then become one of the weapons they would employ to improve upon a difficult position.

VII-19

IN-879, "Hanoi Propaganda Reflects Desire to Exploit and Exacerbate US-South Vietnamese Differences," Nov. 13, 1968, p. 1

.... Even though it was forced to accept GVN presence at the table, it has attempted to exploit the current dissension between the US and the GVN in order to weaken the GVN position. It may hope that ultimately the divergence in US and GVN positions and the resultant loss of confidence in the GVN by some South Vietnamese will cause the GVN to topple or at least to

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be reorganized. In adopting this approach, Hanoi may be recalling earlier Vietnamese history. It may be recalling the frictions between France and the State of Vietnam at the 1954 Geneva Conference, hoping that similar frictions will now develop between us and the GVN. It may also remember that the last public altercation between the US and the GVN led to the fall of President Diem.

VII-20

MM-REA-68-156, "Evans-Novak Story on Vietnamese Communist Morale, November 15, 1968, p. 2.

Caution is in order in drawing any general conclusions from Communist documents: Such evidence might conceivably be more of an indicator of determination to correct deficiencies, given the considerable importance the Communists attach to "self-criticism," than a measure of the magnitude and seriousness of morale and discipline problems within the Communist rank-and-file. It is recalled that throughout much of 1967 documentation on Communist morale problems was so voluminous that, on the eve of the Tet offensive, it was difficult to avoid the conclusion of an early and sharp deterioration in Communist discipline and will to fight on.

We do not have the impression that deficiencies in enemy morale have reached serious proportions throughout the Communist military and political apparatus. The situation probably varies considerably from unit to unit, echelon to echelon, and region to region. This is not only reflected in Communist documentation and prisoner testimony but can also be deduced from analysis of the background of Chieu Hoi ralliers and VC infrastructure cadres captured or eliminated through the Phoenix program; in both cases, a very small percentage of the Communist personnel are party and/or middle level cadre or come from NVA or VC mainforce units. With regard to the statistics cited by Evans-Novak, the high Chieu figures reflect a sharp increase in certain provinces in the delta rather than any national trend; total Chieu Hoi figures for the year are still about one-half the total for 1967.

VII-21

IN-863, "President Thieu May Pursue a Delaying Strategy," Nov. 7, 1968

(p. 1) It is entirely possible that President Thieu will find a face-saving device to enable South Vietnam to participate in the discussions in Paris. Indeed, some reports suggest that such a development can be expected soon. However, whether or not Thieu does engage the GVN directly in the talks, we should probably expect that over the next several weeks at least he will tend to pursue two major objectives. He will try to block or impede any discussion on substantive issues and minimize the role of the NLF as a separate political entity. The essence of Thieu's strategy would be to fight a delaying action.

(p. 2) In short, Thieu and his generals may believe that they are not now under any great pressure to accept significant compromises and indeed that in the weeks ahead they will be able to improve their bargaining position.

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VII-21

Telegram from INR/REA to Saigon re: "Hanoi's Future Strategy," Nov. 25, 1968

(p. 1) 2. In general, to lead with very advanced demands, not offering any concessions except very general phrases about post-war willingness to accommodate. Its opening position will be quite unrealistic, though presented in the most reasonable possible terms.

(p. 2) 3. Hanoi will probably be rather sticky on procedural matters. To the North Vietnamese--as to the South Vietnamese--procedure is substance, because procedure can determine substance. We can expect some very sharp demands about the status of the delegations and about such matters as separate positions, separate flags, tc.

(p. 3) 4. Even though it can be forced over time to yield on its extreme demands and to work out a negotiated solution on less than ideal terms, it will not move quickly in that direction. It may "take note" of our demands, but will not accede to them soon.

(p. 5) 7.

a) US/GVN tolerance of a resumption of small-scale actions from and across the DMZ, as well as the shelling of population centers. In this, as in its attitude on conference arrangements, it will in effect try to whittle away at the price it had to pay for a bombing halt....

(p. 6) b) Some reduction in US military operations in South Viet-Nam, particularly the B-52 operations and large-unit operations in VC areas (in exchange for indications that the talks would go better).

(p. 8) 10. a) Ceasefire: Hanoi makes a key distinction between a supervised general ceasefire and unsupervised truces, which may be temporary and/or local. Hanoi will probably not now or in the near future attempt to negotiate a supervised and controlled ceasefire without a general settlement. Hanoi may call for such a ceasefire if it sees itself virtually on the brink of victory and believes that it no longer needs to exert military pressure, but even then it would probably hesitate to issue such a call because US forces would still be left in Viet-Nam.

(p. 13) 11. As indicated in the specific cases cited above, we believe that the North Vietnamese position is subject to change, and that Hanoi knows that it must pay a price to reach an accommodation including a US withdrawal. The presence of our forces is our biggest asset.

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