DEFENSE TECHNICAL INFORMATION CENTER

Information for the Defense Community

DTIC® has determined on 10/15/2010 that this Technical Document has the Distribution Statement checked below. The current distribution for this document can be found in the DTIC® Technical Report Database.

☒ **DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A.** Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

☐ **© COPYRIGHTED**; U.S. Government or Federal Rights License. All other rights and uses except those permitted by copyright law are reserved by the copyright owner.

☐ **DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT B.** Distribution authorized to U.S. Government agencies only (fill in reason) (date of determination). Other requests for this document shall be referred to (insert controlling DoD office)

☐ **DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT C.** Distribution authorized to U.S. Government Agencies and their contractors (fill in reason) (date of determination). Other requests for this document shall be referred to (insert controlling DoD office)

☐ **DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT D.** Distribution authorized to the Department of Defense and U.S. DoD contractors only (fill in reason) (date of determination). Other requests shall be referred to (insert controlling DoD office).

☐ **DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT E.** Distribution authorized to DoD Components only (fill in reason) (date of determination). Other requests shall be referred to (insert controlling DoD office).

☐ **DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT F.** Further dissemination only as directed by (inserting controlling DoD office) (date of determination) or higher DoD authority.

Distribution Statement F is also used when a document does not contain a distribution statement and no distribution statement can be determined.

☐ **DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT X.** Distribution authorized to U.S. Government Agencies and private individuals or enterprises eligible to obtain export-controlled technical data in accordance with DoDD 5230.25; (date of determination). DoD Controlling Office is (insert controlling DoD office).

SAMI- 7103828

REFERENCE COPY

[COMMITTEE PRINT]

17103828

UNITED STATES-VIETNAM RELATIONS
1945–1967

STUDY PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

THE AIR WAR IN THE NORTH

BOOK 6 OF 12

DO NOT DESTROY
30 DAY LOAN
RETURN TO SAMID
RM 1D 384 PENTAGON

20101015575

14676

Printed for the use of the Committee on Armed Services

Legacy Number: 7103828 17103828

[COMMITTEE PRINT] SAMI- 7103828

UNITED STATES-VIETNAM RELATIONS
1945–1967

STUDY PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Printed for the use of the House Committee on Armed Services

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
67-244 O WASHINGTON : 1971

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402 - Price $50 per set of 12 volumes, sold in sets only
Stock Number 5270–1201

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

NINETY-SECOND CONGRESS. FIRST SESSION

F. EDWARD HÉBERT, Louisiana, *Chairman*

MELVIN PRICE, Illinois
O. C. FISHER, Texas
CHARLES E. BENNETT, Florida
JAMES A. BYRNE, Pennsylvania
SAMUEL S. STRATTON, New York
OTIS G. PIKE, New York
RICHARD H. ICHORD, Missouri
LUCIEN N. NEDZI, Michigan
ALTON LENNON, North Carolina
WILLIAM J. RANDALL, Missouri
G. ELLIOTT HAGAN, Georgia
CHARLES H. WILSON, California
ROBERT L. LEGGETT, California
FLOYD V. HICKS, Washington
SPEEDY O. LONG, Louisiana
RICHARD C. WHITE, Texas
BILL NICHOLS, Alabama
JACK BRINKLEY, Georgia
ROBERT H. MOLLOHAN, West Virginia
W. C. (DAN) DANIEL, Virginia
G. V. (SONNY) MONTGOMERY, Mississippi
MICHAEL J. HARRINGTON, Massachusetts
HAROLD RUNNELS, New Mexico
LES ASPIN, Wisconsin

LESLIE C. ARENDS, Illinois
ALVIN E. O'KONSKI, Wisconsin
WILLIAM G. BRAY, Indiana
BOB WILSON, California
CHARLES S. GUBSER, California
ALEXANDER PIRNIE, New York
DURWARD G. HALL, Missouri
DONALD D. CLANCY, Ohio
CARLETON J. KING, New York
WILLIAM L. DICKINSON, Alabama
CHARLES W. WHALEN, JR., Ohio
JOHN E. HUNT, New Jersey
G. WILLIAM WHITEHURST, Virginia
C. W. (BILL) YOUNG, Florida
FLOYD D. SPENCE, South Carolina
———— (Vacant)

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

JOHN R. BLANDFORD, *Chief Counsel*
FRANK M. SLATINSHEK, *Assistant Chief Counsel*
EARL J. MORGAN, *Professional Staff Member*
WILLIAM H. COOK, *Counsel*
RALPH MARSHALL, *Professional Staff Member*
JOHN J. FORD, *Professional Staff Member*
GEORGE NORRIS, *Counsel*
JAMES F. SHUMATE, Jr., *Counsel*
WILLIAM H. HOOAN, Jr., *Counsel*
H. HOLLISTER CANTUS, *Professional Staff Member*
ONETA L. STOCKSTILL, *Executive Secretary*

INTRODUCTION

The following is the unclassified text of the 1968 Department of Defense study, "United States Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967," popularly known as the Pentagon Papers.

At the time the existence of this study became known, through unauthorized public disclosures, the Committee on Armed Services requested a copy of the study, which was provided to the Committee and which has been continually available for inspection by Members of Congress. At the same time, as Chairman of the Armed Services Committee and with the concurrence of the senior minority member, Rep. Leslie C. Arends, I asked the Department of Defense to declassify the study on an expedited basis so that it could be made available to Members of Congress and to the American people.

I am now directing that it be printed as a Committee document and that a copy be provided to each Member of the House of Representatives. Copies will also be on sale to the public at the Government Printing Office. The 12-volume text here contains the first 43 volumes of the original 47-volume study. The last four volumes have not as yet been declassified because they deal with negotiations which are still in progress.

F. EDW. HÉBERT, *Chairman,*
Committee on Armed Services.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
Washington, D.C., September 20, 1971.

Honorable F. EDWARD HÉBERT,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: In accordance with the discussions which took place at the time of the delivery to the Congress of the classified version of the 47-volume 1968 study of "U.S. Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967," we are transmitting herewith for your use four sets of the declassified study. You will note that the declassified review contains 43 volumes. The last four volumes of the 47-volume set have not been declassified because they deal exclusively with sensitive negotiations seeking peace and the release of prisoners of war. Their disclosure would adversely affect continuing efforts to achieve those objectives.

As I am sure you can appreciate, the review of approximately 7,000 pages has been a difficult task, complicated by the pattern of prior unauthorized disclosures and pending and potential actions in the courts. Of course, some of the material has been declassified solely on the basis of prior disclosures. The review has been accomplished on an expedited basis in order to comply with your request for the material on a declassified basis for hearings which the Congress has indicated are in prospect. Because of the time constraint imposed on the review, it is possible, even probable, that errors of omission and commission have been made during the review. This, however, represents the best possible effort taking into consideration the time available and the numerous complicating factors which influenced the review. Other than the last four volumes, we have been able to make available to you in unclassified form the bulk of the study.

Sincerely,

RADY A. JOHNSON,
Assistant to the Secretary for Legislative Affairs.

FINAL REPORT—OSD Task Force, Vietnam

and

INDEX

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

THROUGH: Mr. Paul C. Warnke, ASD/ISA
Dr. Morton H. Halperin, DASD/Policy Planning and Arms Control/ISA

SUBJECT: Final Report, OSD Vietnam Task Force

15 January 1969.

On June 17, 1967, Secretary Robert S. McNamara directed that a Task Force be formed to study the history of United States involvement in Vietnam from World War II to the present. Mr. McNamara's guidance was simply to do studies that were "encyclopedic and objective." With six full-time professionals assigned to the Task Force, we were to complete our work in three months. A year and a half later, and with the involvement of six times six professionals, we are finally done to the tune of thirty-seven studies and fifteen collections of documents contained in forty-three volumes.

In the beginning, Mr. McNamara gave the Task Force full access to OSD files, and the Task Force received access to CIA materials, and some use of State Department cables and memoranda. We had no access to White House files. Our guidance prohibited personal interviews with any of the principal participants.

The result was not so much a documentary history, as a history based solely on documents—checked and rechecked with ant-like diligence. Pieces of paper, formidable and suggestive by themselves, could have meant much or nothing. Perhaps this document was never sent anywhere, and perhaps that one, though commented upon, was irrelevant. Without the memories of people to tell us, we were certain to make mistakes. Yet, using those memories might have been misleading as well. This approach to research was bound to lead to distortions, and distortions we are sure abound in these studies.

To bring the documents to life, to fill in gaps, and just to see what the "outside world" was thinking, we turned to newspapers, periodicals, and books. We never used these sources to supplant the classified documents, but only to supplement them. And because these documents, sometimes written by very clever men who knew so much and desired to say only a part and sometimes written very openly but also contradictorily, are not immediately self-revealing or self-explanatory, we tried both to have a number of researchers look at them and to quote passages liberally. Moreover, when we felt we could be challenged with taking something out of context, we included the whole paper in the Documentary Record section of the Task Force studies (Parts V and VI. A and B). Again seeking to fend off inevitable mistakes in interpretation and context, what seemed to us key documents were reviewed and included in several overlapping in substance, but separate, studies.

The people who worked on the Task Force were superb—uniformly bright and interested, although not always versed in the art of research. We had a sense of doing something important and of the need to do it right. Of course, we all had our prejudices and axes to grind and these shine through clearly at times, but we tried, we think, to suppress or compensate for them.

These outstanding people came from everywhere—the military services, State, OSD, and the "think tanks." Some came for a month, for three months, for six months, and most were unable, given the unhappiness of their superiors, to finish the studies they began. Almost all the studies had several authors, each heir dutifully trying to pick up the threads of his predecessor. In all, we had thirty-six professionals working on these studies, with an average of four months per man.

The quality, style and interest of the studies varies considerably. The papers in Parts I, II, III, and IV.A, concerning the years 1945 to 1961 tend to be generally non-startling—although there are many interesting tidbits. Because many of the documents in this period were lost or not kept (except for the Geneva Conference era) we had to rely more on outside resources. From 1961 onwards (Parts IV.B and C and VI.C), the records were bountiful, especially on the first Kennedy year in office, the Diem coup, and on the subjects of the deployment of ground forces, the decisions surrounding the bombing campaign against North Vietnam, US–GVN relations, and attempts at negotiating a settlement of the conflict.

Almost all the studies contain both a Summary and Analysis and a Chronology. The chronologies highlight each important event or action in the monograph by means of date, description, and documentary source. The Summary and Analysis sections, which I wrote, attempt to capture the main themes and facts of the monographs—and to make some judgments and speculations which may or may not appear in the text itself. The monographs themselves stick, by and large, to the documents and do not tend to be analytical.

Writing history, especially where it blends into current events, especially where that current event is Vietnam, is a treacherous exercise. We could not go into the minds of the decision-makers, we were not present at the decisions, and we often could not tell whether something happened because someone decided it, decided against it, or most likely because it unfolded from the situation. History, to me, has been expressed by a passage from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* where he writes: "This is a world of chance, free will, and necessity—all interweavingly working together as one; chance by turn rules either and has the last featuring blow at events." Our studies have tried to reflect this thought; inevitably in the organizing and writing process, they appear to assign more and less to men and free will than was the case.

LESLIE H. GELB,
Chairman, OSD Task Force.

OSD VIETNAM TASK FORCE
OUTLINE OF STUDIES

INDEX

(Book 1 of 12)

I. *Vietnam and the U.S., 1940–1950*
  A. U.S. Policy, 1940–50
  B. The Character and Power of the Viet Minh
  C. Ho Chi Minh: Asian Tito?

II. *U.S. Involvement in the Franco-Viet Minh War, 1950–1954*
  A. U.S., France and Vietnamese Nationalism
  B. Toward a Negotiated Settlement

III. *The Geneva Accords*
  A. U.S. Military Planning and Diplomatic Maneuver
  B. Role and Obligations of State of Vietnam
  C. Viet Minh Position and Sino-Soviet Strategy
  D. The Intent of the Geneva Accords

IV. *Evolution of the War*
  A. U.S. MAP for Diem: The Eisenhower Commitments, 1954–1960
    1. NATO and SEATO: A Comparison
    2. Aid for France in Indochina, 1950–54
    3. U.S. and France's Withdrawal from Vietnam, 1954–56

(Book 2 of 12)

    4. U.S. Training of Vietnamese National Army, 1954–59
    5. Origins of the Insurgency
  B. Counterinsurgency: The Kennedy Commitments, 1961–1963
    1. The Kennedy Commitments and Programs, 1961

(Book 3 of 12)

    2. Strategic Hamlet Program, 1961–63
    3. The Advisory Build-up, 1961–67
    4. Phased Withdrawal of U.S. Forces in Vietnam, 1962–64
    5. The Overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem, May–Nov. 1963
  C. Direct Action: The Johnson Commitments, 1964–1968
    1. U.S. Programs in South Vietnam, November 1963–April 1965: NSAM 273—NSAM 288—Honolulu
    2. Military Pressures Against NVN
      a. February–June 1964

(Book 4 of 12)

      b. July–October 1964
      c. November–December 1964
    3. ROLLING THUNDER Program Begins: January–June 1965
    4. Marine Combat Units Go to DaNang, March 1965
    5. Phase I in the Build-Up of U.S. Forces: March–July 1965

(Book 5 of 12)

    6. U.S. Ground Strategy and Force Deployments: 1965–1967
      a. Volume I: Phase II, Program 3, Program 4
      b. Volume II: Program 5
      c. Volume III: Program 6

(Book 6 of 12)

7. Air War in the North: 1965–1968
   a. Volume I
   b. Volume II
8. Re-emphasis on Pacification: 1965–1967

(Book 7 of 12)

9. U.S.–GVN Relations
   a. Volume 1: December 1963–June 1965
   b. Volume 2: July 1965–December 1967
10. Statistical Survey of the War, North and South: 1965–1967

V. *Justification of the War*

A. Public Statements

Volume I: A—The Truman Administration
B—The Eisenhower Administration
C—The Kennedy Administration

Volume II: D—The Johnson Administration

B. Internal Documents

1. The Roosevelt Administration

(Book 8 of 12)

2. The Truman Administration
   a. Volume I: 1945–1949
   b. Volume II: 1950–1952

(Book 9 of 12)

3. The Eisenhower Administration
   a. Volume I: 1953
   b. Volume II: 1954—Geneva

(Book 10 of 12)

   c. Volume III: Geneva Accords—15 March 1956
   d. Volume IV: 1956 French Withdrawal—1960

(Book 11 of 12)

4. The Kennedy Administration
   Book I

(Book 12 of 12)

Book II

VI. *Settlement of the Conflict*

A. Negotiations, 1965–67: The Public Record
B. Negotiations, 1965–67: Announced Position Statements
C. Histories of Contacts (This material not printed.)
   1. 1965–1966 (This material not printed.)
   2. Polish Track (This material not printed.)
   3. Moscow-London Track (This material not printed.)
   4. 1967–1968 (This material not printed.)

LESLIE H. GELB,
Chairman, OSD Task Force.

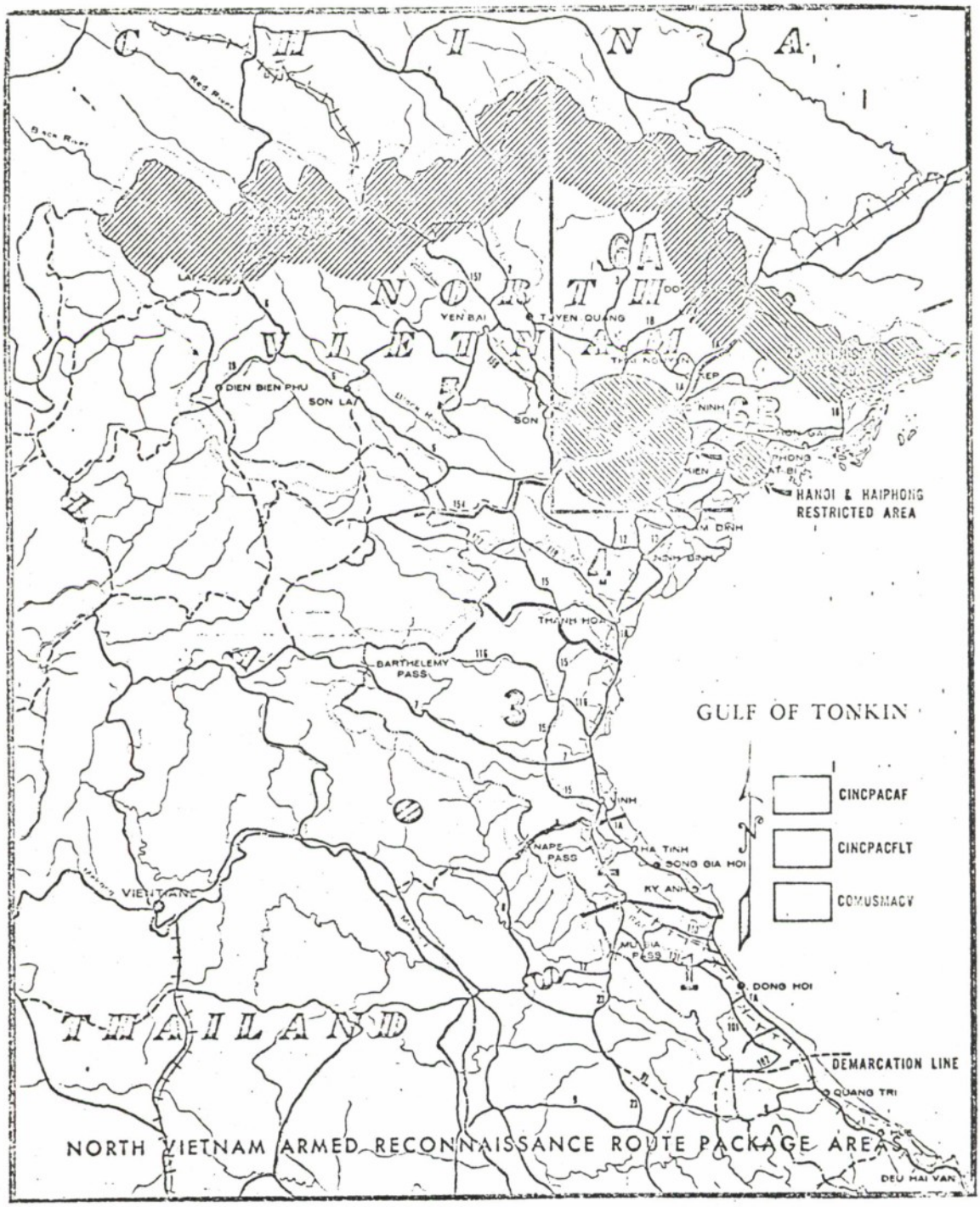
UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

1945 - 1967

IV. C. 7.(a)

Volume I

THE AIR WAR IN NORTH VIETNAM


CHINA
NORTH VIETNAM
THAILAND
HANOI & HAIPHONG RESTRICTED AREA
GULF OF TONKIN
CINCPACAF
CINCPACFLT
COMUSMACV
DEMARCATION LINE
NORTH VIETNAM ARMED RECONNAISSANCE ROUTE PACKAGE AREAS
DIEN BIEN PHU
SON LA
YEN BAI
YEN QUANG
BARTHELEMY PASS
NAPE PASS
MU GIA PASS
VIENTIANE
DONG HOI
QUANG TRI
DEU HAI VAN
1
2
3
4
5
6

CHRONOLOGY

1 Jul 65	Under SecState George Ball memo to the President	Ball argues for "cutting our losses" in Vietnam and negotiating an end to the war. A massive US intervention would likely require complete achievement of our objectives or humiliation, both at terrible costs.
	Rusk memo to the President	US had to defend South Vietnam from aggression even with US troops to validate the reliability of the US commitment.
	McNamara DPM (revised 20 Jul)	The gravity of the military situation required raising 3rd country troops in SVN from 16 to 44 battalions and intensifying the air war through the mining of Haiphong and other ports, destruction of rail and road bridges from China, and destruction of MIG airfields and SAM sites.
2 Jul 65	JCSM 515-65	The JCS advocate virtually the same air war program as the DPM adding only attacks on "war-making" supplies and facilities. Sorties should increase from 2,000 to 5,000.
13 Jul 65	McNaughton draft memo	Negotiations are unlikely, but even 200,000-400,000 men may only give us a 50-50 chance of a win by 1968; infiltration routes should be hit hard to put a "ceiling" on infiltration.
14-21 Jul 65	McNamara trip to Vietnam	After a week in Vietnam, McNamara returned with a softened version of the DPM.

20 Jul 65	McNamara memo to the President	Backing away from his 1 July views, McNamara recommended mining the harbors only as a "severe reprisal." Sorties should be raised to 4,000. Political improvement a must in SVN; low-key diplomacy to lay the groundwork for a settlement.
30 Jul 65	McNamara memo for the President	Future bombing policy should emphasize the threat, minimize DRV loss of face, optimize interdiction over political costs, be coordinated with other pressures on the DRV, and avoid undue risks of escalation.
4-6 Aug 65	McNamara before Senate Armed Services and Appropriation Comte and HASC.	McNamara justifies the Administration's bombing restraint, pointing to the risk of escalation in attacks on POL, airfields or Hanoi-Haiphong areas.
2 Sep 65	JCSM-670-65	The JCS recommend air strikes against "lucrative" NVN targets -- POL, power plants, etc.
15 Sep 65	McNamara memo to CJCS	JCSM 670 is rejected as a dangerous escalatory step.
12 Oct 65	Amb. Thompson memo to McNamara	Thompson, discussing the possibility of a pause, notes need to tell Hanoi we'd resume if the effort failed.
3 Nov 65	McNamara memo to the President	McNamara urges the approval of the bombing "pause" he had first suggested in his 20 Jul memo to test NVN's intentions.
9 Nov 65	State Dept. memo to the President	A State memo to the President, written by U. Alexis Johnson with Rusk's endorsement, opposes a pause at a time when Hanoi has given no sign of willingness to talk. It would waste an important card and give them a chance to blackmail us about resumption.

10 Nov 65	JCSM-810-65	The Chiefs propose a systematic air attack on the NVN POL storage and distribution network.
17 Nov 65	DIA memo to McNamara	General Carroll (Dir. DIA) gives an appraisal of the bombing with few bright spots.
28-29 Nov 65	McNamara-Wheeler trip to Vietnam	McNamara and General Wheeler make a hurried trip to Vietnam to consider force increases.
30 Nov 65	McNamara report to the President	Among other parts of the report, McNamara urges a pause in the bombing to prepare the American public for future escalations and to give Hanoi a last chance to save face.
1 Dec 65	W. Bundy draft memo to the President	Bundy summarizes the pros and cons with respect to a pause and concludes against it.
3 Dec 65	McNaughton memo	McNaughton favors a "hard-line" pause with resumption unless the DRV stopped infiltration and direction of the war, withdrew infiltrators, made the VC stop attacks and stopped interfering with the GVN's exercise of its functions.
6 Dec 65	State Dept. memo to the President	Rusk having apparently been convinced, this new draft by Bundy and Johnson recommends a pause.
8 Dec 65	McNamara memo to the President	McNamara states that he is giving consideration to the JCS proposal for attacking the NVN POL system.
24 Dec 65	State msg 1786 to Lodge	The bombing pause begins. It lasts for 37 days until the 31st of January.

26 Dec 65	CINCPAC msg 262159Z Dec 65	CINCPAC, dissenting from the pause from the outset, argues for the resumption of the bombing promptly.
27 Dec 65	MACV msg 45265	Westmoreland argues that "immediate resumption is essential."
28 Dec 65	Helms memo to DepSecDef Vance	Estimates that neither the Soviets nor Chinese will actively intervene in the war if the POL system is attacked.
12 Jan 66	CINCPAC msg 120205Z Jan 66	Admiral Sharp urges that the bombing be resumed at substantially higher levels immediately.
15 Jan 66	Bundy "Scenario for Possible Resumption"	Bundy urges that the resumption be at a low level building up again gradually before major new targets like POL are struck.
18 Jan 66	JCSM-41-66	"...offensive air operations against NVN should be resumed now with a sharp blow and thereafter maintained with uninterrupted, increasing pressure." Specifically, the Chiefs called for immediate mining of the ports.
	McNaughton draft, "Some Observations about Bombing..."	Purposes of the bombing are (1) to interdict infiltration; (2) to bring about negotiation; (3) to provide a bargaining counter; and (4) to sustain GVN morale.
24 Jan 66	McNamara memo to the President	McNamara, drawing on the language of McNaughton's earlier memo, recommends resumption with sorties to rise gradually to 4,000 per month and stabilize. Promises are all cautious.

25 Jan 66	Ball memo to the President	Ball warns that resumption will pose a grave danger of starting a war with China. He points to the self-generating pressure of the bombing for escalation, shows its ineffectiveness and warns of specific potential targets such as mining the harbors.
31 Jan 66	Bombing resumes	After 37 days the bombing is resumed but with no spectacular targets.
4 Feb 66	SNIE 10-1-66	This special estimate states that increasing the scope and intensity of bombing, including attacks on POL, would not prevent DRV support of higher levels of operations in 1966.
19 Feb 66	JCSM 113-66	The Chiefs urge a sharp escalation of the air war with maximum shock effect.
1 Mar 66	JCSM 130-66	Focusing their recommendations on POL, the Chiefs call it "highest priority action not yet approved." It would have a direct effect in cutting infiltration.
10 Mar 66	JCSM 153-66	Again attacks on POL are urged.
late Mar 66	McNamara memo to the President	This memo to the President contained McNamara's bombing recommendations for April which included hitting 7 of 9 JCS recommended POL storage sites.
28 Mar 66	White House Tuesday Lunch	McNamara's POL recommendation is deferred by the President because of political turmoil in SVN.

9 Apr 66	White House Review	A general policy review at the White House includes most of the second-level members of the Administration. Meetings and paper drafting continued until the political crisis in SVN abated in mid-April.
14 Apr 66	JCSM 238-66	The JCS forwarded a voluminous study of the bombing that recommends a much expanded campaign to hit the Haiphong POL, mine the harbors, hit the airfields.
16 Apr 66	Policy debate continues	The high-level policy review continues. Bundy, McNaughton, Carver & Unger draft position papers on the alternatives if the GVN collapses.
26 Apr 66	JCS msg 9326	CINCPAC is informed that RT50 will not include the POL.
27 Apr 66	Taylor memo to the President	General Taylor in a major memo to the President discusses the problem of negotiations describing the bombing and other US military actions as "blue chips" to be bargained away at the negotiation table not given away as a precondition beforehand.
4 May 66	W. Bundy memo to Rusk	Bundy, commenting on Taylor's "blue chip" memo takes a harder position on what we should get for a bombing halt -- i.e. both an end of infiltration and a cessation of VC/NVA military activity in the South.
6 May 66	W. W. Rostow memo to Rusk and McNamara	Rostow urges the attack on POL based on the results such attacks produced against Germany in W.W. II.

10 May 66	CINCPAC msg 100730Z May 66	Admiral Sharp again urges the authorization of POL attacks.
22 May 66	MACV msg 17603	General Westmoreland supports CINCPAC's request for strikes on the POL system.
3 Jun 66	UK PM Wilson opposes POL State Dept msg 48 to Oslo.	The President, having decided sometime at the end of May to approve the POL attacks, informs UK PM Wilson. Wilson urges the President to reconsider.
7 Jun 66	Brussels msg 87	Rusk, travelling in Europe, urges the President to defer the POL decision because of the forthcoming visit of Canadian Ambassador Ronning to Hanoi and the possibility of some peace feeler.
8 Jun 66	CIA SC No. 08440/66	"It is estimated that the neutralization of the bulk petroleum storage facilities in NVN will not in itself preclude Hanoi's continued support of essential war activities."
14 Jun 66	CINCPAC msg 140659Z Jun 66	Having been informed of high level consideration of the POL strikes by McNamara, CINCPAC assures they will cause under 50 civilian casualties.
14-18 Jun 66	Ronning Mission	Canadian Ambassador Ronning goes to Hanoi and confers with top DRV leaders. He returns with no message or indication of DRV interest in talks.
22 Jun 66	JCS msg 5003	CINCPAC is ordered to strike the POL at first light on 24 June.
24 Jun 66	POL deferred	Bad weather forces rescheduling of the strikes for 25 June.
25 Jun 66	JCS msg 5311	The POL execute order is rescinded because of a press leak.

28 Jun 66	JCS msg 5414	The POL order is reinstated for 29 June.
29 Jun 66	POL attacks	At long last the POL facilities are struck with initially highly positive damage reports.
8 Jul 66	ROLLING THUNDER Conference in Honolulu	After having been briefed by CINCPAC on the effects of the POL strikes to date, McNamara informs Admiral Sharp that the President wants first priority given to strangulation of the NVN POL system.
	CINCPAC msg 080730Z Jul 66	RT 51 specifies a program for intensive attacks on POL as 1st priority.
24 Jul 66	CINCPAC msg 242069Z Jul 66	As a part of a comprehensive attack on POL storage, Sharp recommends attacks on Kep and Phuc Yen airfields.
1 Aug 66	DIA Special Intelligence	70% of NVN's large bulk POL storage capacity has been destroyed along with 7% of its dispersed storage.
4 Aug 66	SNIE 13-66	NVN was using the POL attacks as a lever to extract more aid from the Chinese and the Soviets.
13-14 Aug 66	Westmoreland sees LBJ	General Westmoreland spends two days at the ranch conferring with the President on the progress of the war and new troop requirements
20 Aug 66	CINCPAC msg 202226Z Aug 66	CINCPAC emphatically opposes any standdown, pause or reduction in the air war.
29 Aug 66	JASON studies	IDA's JASON Division submits four reports on the war done by a special study group of top scientists who stress the ineffectiveness of the bombing, including POL, and recommend the construction of an anti-infiltration barrier across northern South Vietnam and Laos.

3 Sep 66	McNamara memo to CJCS	McNamara requests the views of the Chiefs on the proposed barrier.
4 Sep 66	CINCPAC msg 042059Z Sep 66	RT is redirected from a primary POL emphasis to "attrition of men, supplies, equipment...."
8 Sep 66	CM-1732-66	General Wheeler agrees to the creation of a special project for the barrier under General Starbird, but expresses concern that funding of the program not be at the expense of other activities.
12 Sep 66	Joint CIA/DIA Assessment of POL Bombing	The intelligence community turns in an overwhelmingly negative appraisal of the effect of POL attacks. No POL shortages are evident, and in general the bombing has not created insurmountable transportation difficulties, economic dislocations, or weakening of popular morale.
13 Sep 66	CINCPAC msg 130705Z Sep 66	CINCPAC ridicules the idea of a barrier.
15 Sep 66	McNamara memo to Lt Gen Starbird	Starbird is designated as the head of a Joint Task Force for the barrier.
7 Oct 66	JCSM 646-66	In a report on the US worldwide force posture the Chiefs express grave concern at the thinness with which manpower is stretched. They recommend mobilization of the reserves.
10-13 Oct 66	McNamara trip to Vietnam	McNamara, Katzenbach, Wheeler, Komer, McNaughton and others spend three days in Vietnam on a Presidential fact-finder.

14 Oct 66	McNamara memo to the President	With Katzenbach's concurrence, McNamara recommended only 40,000 more troops and the stabilization of the air war. Noting the inability of the bombing to interdict infiltration, he recommended the barrier to the President. To improve the negotiating climate he proposed either a bombing pause or shifting it away from the northern cities.
	JCSM 672-66	The Chiefs disagree with virtually every McNamara recommendation. In addition they urge an escalatory "sharp knock" against NVN.
15 Oct 66	George Carver memo for Dir., CIA	Carver concurs in McNamara's assessment of the bombing and agrees with its stabilization at about 12,000 sorties per month but urges the closing of Haiphong port.
23-25 Oct 66	Manila Conference	The President meets with the heads of government of all the troop contributing nations and agreed positions on the war and the framework of its settlement are worked out. In a private conference, Westmoreland opposes any curtailment of the bombing and urges its expansion. He seemed to have reluctantly accepted the barrier concept.
4 Nov 66	JCSM 702-66	The Chiefs in forwarding the CINCPAC force proposals add a rationale of their own for the bombing: to "make it as difficult and costly as possible" for NVN to continue the war, thereby giving it an incentive to end it.
8 Nov 66	Off-Year Election	In an off-year election, the peace candidates in both parties are all resoundingly defeated.

11 Nov 66	McNamara memo to CJCS	The President approved only the modest McNamara force increases and ordered a stabilization of the air war.
17 Nov 66	McNamara DPM on Supplemental Appropriations	McNamara describes for the President the failure of the bombing to reduce infiltration below the essential minimum to sustain current levels of combat in SVN. He argues for the barrier as an alternative.
22 Nov 66	JCSM-727-66	The Chiefs once again oppose holiday standdowns for Christmas, New Year's and Tet citing the massive advantage of them taken by the DRV during the 37-day pause.
13-14 Dec 66	Hanoi attacks hit civilian areas	A series of air attacks on targets in Hanoi in early Dec. culminated in heavy strikes on Dec. 13-14. In the immediate aftermath, the DRV and other communist countries claimed extensive damage in civilian areas. The attacks came at a time when contacts with the DRV through the Poles apparently had appeared promising.
23 Dec 66	10-mile Hanoi prohibited area established	In response to the worldwide criticism for the attacks on civilian areas, a 10-n.m. prohibited area around Hanoi was established with a similar zone for Haiphong. Henceforth attacks within it could only be by specific Presidential authorization.
24 Dec. 66	48-hour truce	A 48-hour truce and bombing pause is observed.
31 Dec 66	New Year's truce	A second 48-hour truce is observed. Heavy communist resupply efforts are observed during the standdown.

2 Jan 67	MACV msg 00163	Westmoreland opposes the Tet truce based on VC violations of the two truces just completed.
4 Jan 67	CINCPAC msg 040403Z Jan 67	CINCPAC endorses Westmoreland's opposition to the Tet truce.
4 Jan 67	JCSM-6-67	The Chiefs note the heavy DRV resupply during the two truces and oppose the proposed 96-hour Tet truce.
18 Jan 67	JCSM-25-67	The Chiefs renew their opposition to the Tet truce.
	CINCPAC msg 182210Z Jan 67	Admiral Sharp recommends six priority targets for RT in 1967: (1) electric power, (2) the industrial plant, (3) the transportation system in depth, (4) military complexes, (5) POL, (6) Haiphong and the other ports.
25 Jan 67	CINCPAC msg 252126Z Jan 67	Sharp again urges the attack of Haiphong and an intensified overall campaign.
28 Jan 67	RT 53	No new target categories are approved.
1 Feb 67	CINCPAC msg 012005Z Feb 67	Keeping up his barrage of cables, Sharp urges the closing of the NVN ports by aerial mining.
2 Feb 67	Marks (Dir., USIA) memo to Rusk	Marks proposes extending the Tet truce for 12 to 24 hours in an effort to get negotiations started.
	JCSM 59-67	The Chiefs propose the mining of selected inland waterways and selected coastal areas to inhibit internal sea transportation in NVN.
3 Feb 67	McNaughton "Scenario"	A handwritten "Scenario" for the pause by McNaughton which notes McNamara's approval calls for extension of the Tet truce to 7 days to get negotiations started

8 Feb 67	President's letter to Ho Chi Minh	The President invites Ho to indicate what reciprocity he might expect from a bombing halt. The letter is transmitted in Moscow Feb. 8.
8-14 Feb 67	Tet truce	While this truce was in effect frantic efforts were undertaken by UK PM Wilson and Premier Kosygin in London to get peace talks started. In the end these failed because the enormous DRV resupply effort forces the President to resume the bombing after having first extended the pause.
15 Feb 67	Ho Chi Minh letter to President	Replying to the President's letter, Ho rejects the US conditions and reiterates that unconditional cessation of the bombing must precede any talks.
19 Feb 67	Moscow msg 3568	Amb. Thompson indicates the Soviets would react extremely adversely to the mining of Haiphong.
21 Feb 67	Vance memo to Katzenbach	Vance sends Katzenbach a package of proposals for the President's night reading. Eight categories of new targets are analyzed; none can seriously undercut the flow of supplies South.
21 Feb 67	W. Bundy memo	Bundy notes that mining of the waterways and coastal areas of the DRV panhandle could be approved without the mining of Haiphong.
	Maxwell Taylor memo to the President	Taylor again considers the question of ceasefire, political settlement and sequencing of agreements. No direct bearing on the situation.

22 Feb. 67	Mining waterways approved	The President approved the aerial mining of the waterways and the attack on the Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel works.
27 Feb 67	1st aerial mining	The first aerial mining of the waterways begins.
10 Mar 67	Thai Nguyen plant struck	The Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel complex is hit for the first time.
	Bundy gives Thieu assurances	Bundy in Saigon sees Thieu with Lodge and assures him the President believes that more pressure must be applied in the North before Ho will change his position.
20-21 Mar 67	Guam Conference	The President leads a full delegation to a conference with Thieu and Ky. Questions of constitutional progress and war progress in the South dominate the discussions. During the conference Ho releases the exchange of letters during Tet. A decision to base B-52s in Thailand is also taken.
8 Apr 67	RT 55	RT 55 includes the Kep airfield, Hanoi power transformer and other industrial sites.
20 Apr 67	JCSM 218-67	The Chiefs endorse Westmoreland's request for 100,000 more troops and 3 more tactical fighter squadrons to keep up the pressure on the North.
	Haiphong power plants struck	After numerous weather aborts, the two Haiphong power plants are struck for the 1st time.
24 Apr 67	Airfields attacked	Two MIG fields come under first-time attack shortly after their authorization.

24 Apr 67	R. W. Komer memo	Komer leaves behind some views on the war as he leaves for Vietnam. Negotiations are now unlikely, but bombing won't make Hanoi give in, hence the "critical variable is in the South."
	Moscow msg 4566	Amb. Thompson reports the bad effect of the recent Haiphong attacks on Soviet attitudes.
27 Apr 67	Westmoreland sees the President	Back in the US to speak to LBJ about his troop request and address Congress, Westy tells Johnson, "I am frankly dismayed at even the thought of stopping the bombing...."
1 May 67	W. Bundy memo to Katzenbach	As a part of the policy review in progress since 24 April, Bundy writes a strategy paper opposing more bombing (among other things) because of the likely adverse international effects.
4 May 67	SNIE 11-11-67	Soviets will likely increase aid to the DRV but not help get the conflict to the negotiating table.
	McGeorge Bundy letter to the President	Bundy argues for a ceiling on the US effort in Vietnam and no further escalation of the air war, particularly the mining of Haiphong harbor.
5 May 67	CM-3218-67	General Wheeler takes sharp exception to Bundy's views. Haiphong is the single most valuable and vulnerable NVN target yet unstruck. Also explains the rationale for the attack on the NVN power grid.

5 May 67	McNaughton DPM	As a part of the policy review, McNaughton drafts a proposal for cutting the bombing back to 20°. The action was to enhance military effectiveness not improve negotiation prospects, which were dim.
6 May 67	W. W. Rostow memo	After considering three options: closing Haiphong, heavier attacks in the Hanoi-Haiphong area and restriction of bombing to the panhandle only, Rostow recommended concentrating on the panhandle while holding open the option to up the ante farther north if we desired later.
8 May 67	W. Bundy memo	Bundy considers five different bombing packages and finally favors levelling off at current levels with no new targets and more concentration on the panhandle.
12 May 67	CIA Memo Nos. 0642/67 and 0643/67	The bombing has not eroded NVN morale, materially degraded NVN ability to support the war, nor significantly eroded the industrial-military base.
16 May 67	Hanoi power plant authorized	As the debate continues, the President approves the Hanoi power plant.
19 May 67	Hanoi power plant bombed	The power plant, 1 mile from the center of Hanoi, is hit for the first time.
	McNamara DPM (given to the President)	McNamara considered two courses: approval of the military recommendations for escalation in both North and South; de-escalation in the North (20°) and only 30,000 troops in the South. In spite of unfavorable negotiations climate, the second course is recommended because costs and risks of the 1st course were too great.

20 May 67	JCSM 286-67	The Chiefs rebut the DPM and call for expansion of the air war "...to include attacks on all airfields, all port complexes, all land and sea lines of communication in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, and mining of coastal harbors and coastal waters."
20 May 67	McNamara memo	McNamara asks CJCS, Dir. CIA, SecNav, and SecAF to analyze (a) cutting back bombing to 20°; and (b) intensifying attacks on LOCs in route packages 6A and 6B but terminating them against industrial targets.
23 May 67	CIA memo 0649/67	CIA opposes the mining of the harbors as too provocative for the Soviets.
26 May 67	CIA memo	With the recent attacks on NVN's power grid 87% of national capacity had been destroyed.
1 Jun 67	JCSM 307-67	The Chiefs take strong exception to the DPM noting its inconsistency with NSAM 288 and the jeopardy into which it would place national objectives in SEA because of the radical and conceptually unsound military methods it proposed, including any curtailment of the bombing.
	Helms letter to McNamara	Responding to McNamara's May 20 request for analysis of two bombing options, Helms states neither will cut down the flow of men and supplies enough "to decrease Hanoi's determination to persist in the war."
2 Jun 67	W. Bundy memo	Bundy, like the Chiefs, rejected the reformulation of objectives in the May 19 DPM. He leaves aside the question of the courses of action to be followed.

2 Jun 67	JCSM-312-67	The Chiefs, replying to McNamara's May 20 request, again reject all suggestions for a cutback in the bombing.
	SecNav memo to McNamara	The Secretary of the Navy concluded, in reply to the May 20 request, that the cutback to the panhandle would be marginally more productive than the current campaign.
3 Jun 67	SecAF memo to McNamara	Harold Brown favored the expanded campaign against LOCs in northern NVN in his reply to McNamara's May 20 request.
8 Jun 67	Katzenbach memo to McNamara	Katzenbach favors concentrating the bombing against LOCs throughout the country and abandoning attacks on "strategic" targets.
11 Jun 67	Kep Airfield struck	The Kep airfield comes under attack for the 1st time and ten MIGs are destroyed.
12 Jun 67	McNamara DPM	Three bombing programs are offered: (a) intensified attack on Hanoi-Haiphong logistical base; (b) emphasis south of 20°; (c) extension of the current program. McNamara, Vance & SecNav favor B; JCS favor A; SecAF favors C.
15 Jun 67	INR memo to Rusk	Hanoi was possibly reconsidering the desirability of negotiations.
17 Jun 67	Saigon msg 28293	Bunker doubts the effectiveness of bombing at interdiction and therefore urges the rapid completion of the barrier.
21 Jun 67	CINCPAC msg 210430Z Jun 67	Sharp argues that results of the bombing in recent months demonstrate its effectiveness and are a powerful argument for its expansion.

23-25 Jun 67	Glassboro Conference	President Johnson meets Soviet Premier Kosygin at Glassboro, N.J. No breakthrough on the war.
3 Jul 67	SecAF memo to McNamara	In a lengthy analytical memo Brown argues for option C, a general expansion of the bombing.
5 Jul 67	JCSM 382-67	The Chiefs reject a Canadian proposal to exchange a bombing halt for re-demilitarization of the DMZ.
7-11 Jul 67	McNamara trip to Vietnam	During McNamara's five day trip, CINCPAC argues against any further limitation of the bombing.
18 Jul 67	JCS msg 1859	RT 57 will be only a limited extension of previous targets. No cutback is planned.
9 Aug 67	Addendum to RT 57	Sixteen JCS fixed targets are added to RT 57 including six within the 10-mile Hanoi zone.
9-25 Aug 67	Stennis Hearings	The Senate Preparedness Subcommittee hears two weeks of testimony on the air war from Wheeler, Sharp, McConnell and finally McNamara. The committee's report condemns the Administration's failure to follow military advice.
11-12 Aug 67	Hanoi struck	Several of the newly authorized Hanoi targets, including the Paul Doumer Bridge are struck.
19 Aug 67	Attacks on Hanoi suspended	CINCPAC is ordered to suspend attacks on Hanoi's 10-mile zone from 24 Aug to 4 Sep.
20 Aug 67	Largest attack of the war	209 sorties are flown, the highest number in the war to date.

21 Aug 67	US aircraft lost over China	Two US planes are shot down over China after having strayed off course.
1 Sep 67	President's press conference	The President denies any policy rift within the Administration on the bombing.
7 Sep 67	Hanoi prohibition extended	The prohibition of attack in the 10-mile Hanoi zone is extended indefinitely.
10 Sep 67	Campha port struck	For the first time the port of Campha is struck including its docks.
20 Sep 67	CINCPAC msg 202352Z Sep 67	CINCPAC recommends hitting the MIGs at Phuc Yen air field and air defense controls at Bac Mai.
21 Sep 67	CINCPAC msg 210028Z Sep 67	Sharp urges lifting the 10-mile prohibition around Hanoi.
22 Sep 67	CM-2660-67	General Johnson (Acting CJCS) agrees with CINCPAC: hit Phuc Yen and Bac Mai and lift the 10-mile restriction.
29 Sep 67	San Antonio Formula	The President offers a new basis for stopping the bombing in a San Antonio speech: assurance of productive discussions and that no advantage will be taken of the cessation.
6 Oct 67	CM-2679-67	Specific authority to hit the Hanoi power plant is requested.
8 Oct 67	CINCPAC msg 080762Z Oct 67	Sharp again requests authority to strike Phuc Yen.
17 Oct 67	JCSM 555-67	Reviewing the objectives and limitations of the bombing policy for the President, the Chiefs recommended ten new measures against NVN including mining the ports and removal of all current restrictions on the bombing.

20 Oct 67	San Antonio Formula rejected	In an interview with a western communist journalist, NVN's Foreign Minister rejects the San Antonio formula.
21 Oct 67	Pentagon anti-war demonstration	A massive demonstration in Washington against the war ends with a 50,000-man march on the Pentagon.
23 Oct 67	JCSM 567-67	The Chiefs oppose any holiday standdowns or pauses at year's end.
23 Oct 67	JCS msg 9674	Phuc Yen authorized for attack.
25 Oct 67	Phuc Yen struck	Phuc Yen is hit for the 1st time.
27 Oct 67	CM-2707-67	Wheeler proposes reducing the Hanoi-Haiphong prohibited areas to 3 and 1.5 n.m. respectively.
9 Nov 67	Reduction of Hanoi-Haiphong zones refused.	The White House lunch rejects the proposal to reduce the Hanoi-Haiphong prohibited zones.
16 Nov 67	Haiphong bombed	Haiphong's #2 shipyard is hit for the 1st time.
17 Nov 67	Bac Mai hit	Bac Mai airfield near the center of Hanoi is struck for the 1st time.
22 Nov 67	SEACABIN Study	A joint ISA/JS study of the likely DRV reaction to a bombing halt lays stress on the risks to the US.
27 Nov 67	JCSM-663-67	The Chiefs present a plan for the next four months that calls for mining the harbors and lifting all restrictions on Hanoi-Haiphong, except in a 3 and 1.5 n.m. zone respectively In all, 24 new targets are recommended.

28 Nov 67	McNamara's resignation	McNamara's resignation leaks to the press.
14-15 Dec 67	Hanoi RR Bridge struck	The Paul Doumer island highway bridge in Hanoi is struck again.
16 Dec 67	Rusk-McNamara agreement on new targets	The two secretaries reach agreement on ten of the 24 new targets proposed by the Chiefs in late Nov.
	IDA JASON Study	IDA's JASON Division again produces a study of the bombing that emphatically rejects it as a tool of policy.
	JCSM 698-67	Noting that the SEACABIN study did not necessarily reflect JCS views, the Chiefs advise against any bombing halt.
22 Dec 67	Pope asks bombing halt	The Pope calls on both sides to show restraint and on the US to halt the bombing in an effort to start negotiations. The President visits him the next day to reject the idea.
24 Dec 67	Christmas truce	A 24-hour Christmas truce is observed.
31 Dec 67	New Year's truce	Another 24-hour truce.
1 Jan 67	CINCPAC msg 010156Z Jan 68	CINCPAC's year end wrapup asserts RT was successful because of materiel destroyed, and manpower diverted to military tasks.
2 Jan 68	COMUSMACV msg 02891	Westmoreland describes the bombing as "indispensable" in cutting the flow of supplies and sustaining his men's morale.
3 Jan 68	JCS msg 6402	Bombing is completely prohibited again within 5 n.m. of Hanoi and Haiphong, apparently related to a diplomatic effort.

16 Jan 68	White House meeting	Two new targets are authorized but the 5 n.m. zones are reaffirmed.
25 Jan 68	Clifford testimony	Clark Clifford in his confirmation hearings states that "no advantage" means normal resupply may continue.
29 Jan 68	Tet truce begins	The Tet truce begins but is broken almost immediately by communist attacks.
31 Jan 68	Tet offensive	The VC/NVA attack all major towns and cities, invade the US Embassy and the Presidential Palace. Hue is occupied and held well into Feb.
3 Feb 68	JCSM 78-68	Citing the Tet offensive, the Chiefs ask for reduction of the restricted zones to 3 and 1.5 n.m.
5 Feb 68	Warnke memo to McNamara	Warnke opposes the reduction of the sanctuary because of the danger of civilian casualties. Reduction not approved.
10 Feb 68	Haiphong struck	After a month of restriction, Haiphong is again struck.
23-25 Feb 68	Wheeler visits Vietnam	Gen. Wheeler at the President's direction goes to Vietnam and confers with Westmoreland on required reinforcements.
27 Feb 68	Wheeler Report	Wheeler endorses Westmoreland's request for 200;000 more men.
	CIA memo	Hanoi unlikely to seek negotiations but rather will press the military campaign.
28 Feb 68	Clifford Group	The President asks Clifford to conduct a high-level "A to Z" review of US policy in Vietnam. The Group meets at the Pentagon and work begins. It continues until a DPM is finally agreed on Mar. 4.

29 Feb 68	W. Bundy memo to Warnke, et. al.	Bundy considers several alternative courses including mining the harbors and all-out bombing. Without indicating a preference he indicates no unacceptably adverse Soviet or Chinese reaction to any course except invasion.
29 Feb 68	Taylor memo to the President	Taylor proposes three possible packages of responses to Tet and Westmoreland's request. All three called for removal of the San Antonio formula and no new negotiating initiative.
1 Mar 68	Moscow msg 2983	Thompson gives his assessment of Soviet reactions to various US actions. "...any serious escalation except in South Vietnam would trigger strong Soviet response...."
3 Mar 68	DPM	The 3 Mar. draft memo rejects any bombing escalation, particularly mining the harbors or reducing the Hanoi-Haiphong restriction circles. It also rejects Westmoreland's troop requests.
	Clifford Group meeting	The Clifford Group rejects the DPM's "demographic frontier" tactical concept for SVN and is divided about the bombing. Wheeler is adamant for an escalation.
4 Mar 68	DPM	A new draft is completed and Clifford sends it to the President. It proposes no new peace initiative and includes both the JCS proposal for escalation of the bombing, and the ISA position that it should be stabilized. In transmitting the DPM, Clifford apparently also suggested to the President the idea of halting the bombing north of 20°, an idea discussed in the Clifford Group.

4 Mar 68	SecAF memo to Nitze	Brown presents three alternative air war escalations that might produce better results.
5 Mar 68	Rusk "Draft Statement"	A note to Wheeler for information from Clifford transmits a "draft statement" by Rusk announcing a bombing halt north of 20°. An attached rationale does not foresee negotiations resulting but indicates the time is opportune because of forthcoming bad weather over much of NVN.
11 Mar 68	New Hampshire Primary	President Johnson only narrowly defeats Eugene McCarthy in a great moral victory for anti-Administration doves.
16 Mar 68	Kennedy announces	Robert Kennedy, spurred by the New Hampshire results, announces for the Presidency.
	ISA DPM	An ISA draft memo that never gets SecDef signature proposes the concentration of the bombing south of 20° on the infiltration routes, with only enough sorties northward to prevent relocation of DRV air defenses to the south.
18-19 Mar 68	"Senior Informal Advisory Group"	Nine prestigious former Presidential advisors gather at the White House for briefings on the Vietnam situation. After hearing a report from State, DoD and CIA, they recommended against further escalation in favor of greater efforts to get peace talks started.
22 Mar 68	Westmoreland reassigned	The President announced that Westmoreland would return to become CofS Army in the summer.

25-26 Mar 68	Abrams confers with the President	General Abrams, DepCOMUSMACV, returns unexpectedly to Washington and confers with the President. He is presumably told of his new assignment to replace Westmoreland and of the President's decision for a partial bombing halt.
30 Mar 68	State msg 139431	US Ambassadors to the allied countries are informed of the forthcoming announcement of a partial bombing halt. The likelihood of a DRV response is discounted.
31 Mar 68	The President withdraws	The President announces the partial bombing halt on nationwide TV and ends his speech with the surprise announcement of his own withdrawal as a candidate for re-election.

VOLUME I

THE AIR WAR IN NORTH VIETNAM

TABLE OF CONTENTS AND OUTLINE

Page

I. JULY 1965 TO THE YEAR-END BOMBING PAUSE..... 1

A. Introduction - Where We Stood at Mid-Summer..... 1
B. The July Escalation Debate..... 5
C. Incremental Escalation..... 16
D. The "Pause" -- 24 December 1965 to 31 January 1966.. 20
1. The Pre-Pause Debate..... 20
2. Resumption -- When and At What Level?..... 26
E. Accomplishments by Year's-End..... 50
FOOTNOTES..... 58

II. THE POL DEBATE -- NOVEMBER 1965 - JUNE 1966..... 63

A. Background..... 63
1. JCS Recommendations..... 63
2. The Intelligence Community Demurs..... 68
B. The Issue Focuses..... 73
1. POL and the Pause..... 73
2. February Debate..... 76
3. The CIA Recommends Escalation..... 80
4. McNamara Endorses POL, the President Defers It.. 84
C. April and May -- Delay and Deliberation..... 90
1. Reasons to Wait..... 90
2. The April Policy Review..... 92
3. Exogenous Factors.....108
D. The Decision to Strike.....120
FOOTNOTES.....128

III. McNAMARA'S DISENCHANTMENT -- JULY-DECEMBER 1966.....138

A. Results of the POL Attacks.....138
1. Initial Success.....138
2. ROLLING THUNDER 51.....140
3. POL - Strategic Failure.....142
B. Alternatives -- The Barrier Concept.....145
1. Genesis.....145
2. The JASON Summer Study Reports.....149
3. A Visit to Vietnam and a Memorandum for the President.....162
C. The Year End View.....170
1. Presidential Decisions.....170
2. Stabilization of the Air War.....174
3. 1966 Summary.....177
FOOTNOTES.....181

THE AIR WAR IN NORTH VIETNAM

I. JULY 1965 TO THE YEAR-END BOMBING PAUSE

A. Introduction -- Where We Stood At Mid-Summer

By the summer of 1965, a U.S. campaign of sustained, almost daily air strikes against NVN was well underway, with token GVN participation. Most of the important bombing policy issues had been settled, and the general outlines of the campaign had become clear. Military proposals to seek a quick and decisive solution to the Vietnam War through bombing NVN -- proposals which called for an intensive campaign to apply maximum practicable military pressure in a short time -- had been entertained and rejected. Instead, what was undertaken was a graduated program, nicknamed ROLLING THUNDER, definitely ascending in tempo and posing a potential threat of heavy bombing pressure, but starting low and stretching out over a prolonged period.

U.S. decision-makers apparently accepted the military view that a limited, gradual program would exert less pressure upon NVN than a program of heavy bombing from the outset, and they apparently granted that less pressure was less likely to get NVN to scale down or call off the insurgency, or enter into reasonable negotiations. They felt, however, that all-out bombing would pose far greater risks of widening the war, would transmit a signal strength out of all proportion to the limited objectives and intentions of the U.S. in Southeast Asia, would carry unacceptable political penalties, and would perhaps foreclose the promise of achieving U.S. goals at a relatively low level of violence.

The decision-makers accordingly elected to proceed with the bombing in a slow, steady, deliberate manner, beginning with a few infiltration-associated targets in southern NVN and gradually moving northward with progressively more severe attacks on a wider variety of targets. The pattern adopted was designed to preserve the options to proceed or not, escalate or not, or quicken the pace or not, depending on NVN's reactions. The carrot of stopping the bombing was deemed as important as the stick of continuing it, and bombing pauses were provided for. It was hoped that this track of major military escalation of the war could be accompanied by a parallel diplomatic track to bring the war to an end, and that both tracks could be coordinated.

By the summer of 1965, bombing NVN had also been relegated to a secondary role in U.S. military strategy for dealing with the war. Earlier expectations that bombing and other pressures on NVN would

constitute the primary means for the U.S. to turn the tide of the war had been overtaken by the President's decision to send in substantial U.S. ground forces for combat in SVN. With this decision the main hope had shifted from inflicting pain in the North to proving, in the South, that NVN could not win a military victory there. ROLLING THUNDER was counted as useful and necessary, but in the prevailing view it was a supplement and not a substitute for efforts within SVN. From the first, strike requirements in SVN had first call on U.S. air assets in Southeast Asia.

Nonetheless, ROLLING THUNDER was a comparatively risky and politically sensitive component of U.S. strategy, and national authorities kept it under strict and careful policy control. The strikes were carried out only by fighter-bombers, in low-altitude precision-bombing modes, and populated areas were scrupulously avoided. Final target determinations were made in Washington, with due attention to the nature of the target, its geographical location, the weight of attack, the risk of collateral damage, and the like. Armed reconnaissance was authorized against targets of opportunity not individually picked in Washington, but Washington did define the types of targets which could be hit, set a sortie ceiling on the number of such missions, and prescribed the areas within which they could be flown.

National authorities also closely regulated the rate of escalation by discouraging the preparation of extended campaign plans which might permit any great latitude in the field. They accepted bombing proposals only in weekly target packages. Each target package, moreover, had to pass through a chain of approvals which included senior levels of OSD, the Department of State, and the White House, up to and including the principals themselves.

Within this framework of action the ROLLING THUNDER program had been permitted to grow in intensity. By mid-1965 the number of strikes against targets in the JCS master list of major targets had increased from one or two per week to ten or twelve per week. The geographic coverage of the strikes had been extended in stages, first across the 19th parallel, from there to the 20th, and then up to 20°30' North. The assortment of targets had been widened, from military barracks, ammunition depots, and radar sites at first, to bridges, airfields, naval bases, radio facilities, railroad yards, oil storage sites, and even power plants. The targets authorized for strike by armed reconnaissance aircraft were also expanded from vehicles, locomotives, and railroad cars to ferries, lighters, barges, road repair equipment, and bivouac and maintenance areas; and aircraft on these missions were authorized to interdict LOCs by cratering, restriking, and seeding chokepoints as necessary. The number of attack sorties -- strike and flak suppression -- had risen to more than 500 per week, and the total sorties flown to about 900 per week, four or five times what they had been at the outset.

This early ROLLING THUNDER program had already scored some immediate political and psychological gains. Prior to the bombing, U.S. authorities were coping with what Presidential Assistant McGeorge Bundy called a "widespread belief" that the U.S. lacked the will and determination to do what was necessary in Southeast Asia. The initiation of ROLLING THUNDER, followed by a series of military actions which in effect made the U.S. a full co-belligerent in the war, did much to correct that belief. The South Vietnamese were given an important boost in morale, both by the show of greater U.S. support and by the inauguration of joint retaliation against their enemy in the North. Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia, which had been watching SVN slide rapidly downhill while the U.S. seemed to be debating what to do, no doubt received the same kind of lift as well.

The bombing had also served several unilateral U.S. interests. It gave a clear signal to NVN -- and indirectly to China -- that the U.S. did not intend to suffer the takeover of SVN without a fight. It served notice that if pressed the U.S. would not necessarily recognize privileged sanctuaries. And it provided the U.S. with a new bargaining chip, something which it could offer to give up in return for a reduction or cessation of NVN's effort in the South.

Despite such gains, the overall effect of initiating ROLLING THUNDER was somewhat disappointing. The hopes in some quarters that merely posing a credible threat of substantial damage to come might be sufficient "pressure" to bring Hanoi around had been frustrated. U.S. negotiation overtures had been rejected, and Hanoi's position had if anything hardened. Infiltration South had continued and intensified. The signs indicated that Hanoi was determined to ride out the bombing, at least at the levels sustained up to mid-1965, while continuing to prosecute the war vigorously in the South. It was evident that the U.S. faced a long-haul effort of uncertain duration.

Although the real target of the early ROLLING THUNDER program was the will of NVN to continue the aggression in the South, the public rationale for the bombing had been expressed in terms of NVN's capability to continue that aggression. The public was told that NVN was being bombed because it was infiltrating men and supplies into SVN; the targets of the bombing were directly or indirectly related to that infiltration; and the purpose of attacking them was to reduce the flow and/or to increase the costs of that infiltration. Such a rationale was consistent with the overall position which morally justified U.S. intervention in the war in terms of NVN's own intervention; and it specifically put the bombing in a politically acceptable military idiom of interdiction.

This public rationale for the bombing had increasingly become the most acceptable internal rationale as well, as decision-makers sought to prevent runaway escalation and to hold down the bombing in what they thought should be a secondary role in the war. As a venture in "strategic persuasion" the bombing had not worked. The most obvious reason was that it was too light, gave too subdued and uncertain a signal, and exerted too little pain. Hardly any of the targets most valued by Hanoi -- the "lucrative" targets of the JCS master list -- had been hit. If the main purpose of ROLLING THUNDER was to impose strong pressure on Hanoi's will, the "lucrative" targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area, not those in the barren southern Panhandle, were the ones to go after, and to hit hard. Aerial bombardment could then perform in its proven strategic role, and even if the risks of such a course were greater it was precisely because the potential payoff was greater.

If, however, the emphasis could be shifted toward interdiction, it would be easier to confine targets to those of direct military relevance to the VC/NVA campaign in the South, and it would be easier to contain the pressures to escalate the bombing rapidly into the northern heart of NVN's population and industry. A continuing emphasis on the Panhandle LOCs could be defended more easily, if the main purpose was to actually handicap NVN's efforts to support and strengthen VC/NVA forces in the South, and it was less likely to generate adverse political repercussions.

The interdiction rationale had come to the fore by mid-1965, both within the government and before the public. There were still internal and external pressures to proceed faster and farther, of course, because interdiction effects had not been impressive either. Official spokesmen conceded that complete interdiction was impossible: the flow of men and supplies from the North, however vital to the enemy effort in the South, was quite small and could hardly be cut off by bombing alone. They explained that the bombing had "disrupted" the flow, "slowed" it down, and made it "more difficult" and "costly." They showed dramatic aerial photos of bridges destroyed, and implied that the enemy was being forced "off the rails onto the highways and off the highways onto their feet." They could not, however, point to any specific evidence that bombing the North had as yet had any impact on the war in the South. Almost inevitably, therefore, even within the interdiction rationale, the conclusion was that the bombing had been too restrained. It was argued that the predictably gradual pace had allowed NVN to easily adjust to, circumvent, or otherwise overcome the effects of the disruptions and other difficulties caused by the bombing, and that only an expanded bombing program could produce significant material results.

Thus, the outlook in mid-1965 was for some further escalation of the bombing, with a certain amount of tension between pressures to speed it up and counter-pressures to keep it in check. With the debate increasingly forced into the interdiction context, the prospect was for gradual rather than sudden escalation, and strong resistance to going all the way if necessary to break Hanoi's will could be predicted. There was still a gap between those who thought of the bombing as a primarily political instrument and those who sought genuine military objectives, and this would continue to confuse the debate about how fast and far to go, but the main lines of the debate were set.

Still unresolved in mid-1965 was the problem of the diplomatic track. Could the U.S. continue to escalate the bombing, maintaining a credible threat of further action, while at the same time seeking to negotiate? Could the U.S. orchestrate communications with Hanoi with an intensifying bombing campaign? As of mid-1965 this was an open question.

B. The July Escalation Debate

The full U.S. entry into the Vietnam War in the spring of 1965 -- with the launching of air strikes against NVN, the release of U.S. jet aircraft for close support of ARVN troops in SVN, and the deployment to SVN of major U.S. ground forces for combat -- did not bring an immediate turnabout in the security situation in SVN. The VC/NVA may have been surprised and stunned at first by the U.S. actions, but by the summer of 1965 they had again seized the initiative they held in late 1964 and early 1965 and were again mounting large-scale attacks, hurting ARVN forces badly. In mid-July Assistant Secretary McNaughton described the situation in ominous terms:

> The situation is worse than a year ago (when it was worse than a year before that)....A hard VC push is on....The US air strikes against the North and US combat-troop deployments have erased any South Vietnamese fears that the US will forsake them; but the government is able to provide security to fewer and fewer people, in less and less territory, fewer roads and railroads are usable, the economy is deteriorating, and the government in Saigon continues to turn over. Pacification even in the Hop Tac area is making no progress. The government-to-VC ratio overall is now only 3-to-1, and in combat battalions only 1-to-1; government desertions are at a high rate, and the Vietnamese force build-up is stalled; the VC reportedly are trying to double their combat strength. There are no signs that the VC have been throttled by US/GVN interdiction efforts; indeed, there is evidence of further PAVN build-up in the I and II Corps areas. The DRV/VC

seem to believe that SVN is near collapse and show no signs of being interested in settling for less than a complete take-over. 1/

Faced with this gloomy situation, the leading question on the U.S. agenda for Vietnam was a further major escalation of troop commitments, together with a call-up of reserves, extension of military tours, and a general expansion of the armed forces.

The question of intensifying the air war against the North was a subsidiary issue, but it was related to the troop question in several ways. The military view, as reflected in JCS proposals and proposals from the field, was that the war should be intensified on all fronts, in the North no less than in the South. There was political merit in this view as well, since it was difficult to publicly justify sending in masses of troops to slug it out on the ground without at least trying to see whether stronger pressures against NVN would help. On the other hand, there was continued high-level interest in preventing a crisis atmosphere from developing, and in avoiding any over-reaction by NVN and its allies, so that a simultaneous escalation in both the North and the South needed to be handled with care. The bombing of the North, coupled with the deployment of substantial forces should not look like an effort to soften up NVN for an invasion.

During the last days of June with U.S. air operations against North Vietnam well into their fifth month, with U.S. forces in South Vietnam embarking for the first time upon major ground combat operations, and with the President near a decision that would increase American troop strength in Vietnam from 70,000 to over 200,000, Under-Secretary of State George Ball sent to his colleagues among the small group of Vietnam "principals" in Washington a memorandum warning that the United States was poised on the brink of a military and political disaster. 2/ Neither through expanded bombing of the North nor through a substantial increase in U.S. forces in the South would the United States be likely to achieve its objectives, Ball argued. Instead of escalation, he urged, "we should undertake either to extricate ourselves or to reduce our defense perimeters in South Viet-Nam to accord with the capabilities of a limited US deployment."

"This is our last clear chance to make this decision," the Under-Secretary asserted. And in a separate memorandum to the President, he explained why:

The decision you face now, therefore, is crucial. Once large numbers of US troops are committed to direct combat they will begin to take heavy casualties in a

war they are ill-equipped to fight in a non-cooperative if not downright hostile countryside.

> Once we suffer large casualties we will have started a well-nigh irreversible process. Our involvement will be so great that we cannot -- without national humiliation -- stop short of achieving our complete objectives. Of the two possibilities I think humiliation would be more likely than the achievement of our objectives -- even after we have paid terrible costs. 3/

"Humiliation" was much on the minds of those involved in the making of American policy for Vietnam during the spring and summer of 1965. The word, or phrases meaning the same thing, appears in countless memoranda. No one put it as starkly as Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton, who in late March assigned relative weights to various American objectives in Vietnam. In McNaughton's view the principal U.S. aim was "to avoid a humiliating US defeat (to our reputation as a guarantor)." To this he assigned the weight of 70%. Second, but far less important at only 20% was "to keep SVN (and then adjacent) territory from Chinese hands." And a minor third, at but 10%, was "to permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life." 4/

Where Ball differed from all the others was in his willingness to incur "humiliation" that was certain -- but also limited and short-term -- by withdrawing American forces in order to avoid the uncertain but not unlikely prospect of a military defeat at a higher level of involvement. Thus he entitled his memorandum "Cutting Our Losses in South Viet-Nam." In it and in his companion memorandum to the President ("A Compromise Solution for South Viet-Nam") he went on to outline a program, first, of placing a ceiling on U.S. deployments at present authorized levels (72,000 men) and sharply restricting their combat roles, and, second, of beginning negotiations with Hanoi for a cessation of hostilities and the formation in Saigon of a "government of National Union" that would include representatives of the National Liberation Front. Ball's argument was based upon his sense of relative priorities. As he told his colleagues:

> The position taken in this memorandum does not suggest that the United States should abdicate leadership in the cold war. But any prudent military commander carefully selects the terrain on which to stand and fight, and no great captain has ever been blamed for a successful tactical withdrawal.
>
> From our point of view, the terrain in South Viet-Nam could not be worse. Jungles and rice paddies are not designed for modern arms and, from a military point

of view, this is clearly what General de Gaulle described to me as a "rotten country."

Politically, South Viet-Nam is a lost cause. The country is bled white from twenty years of war and the people are sick of it. The Viet Cong -- as is shown by the Rand Corporation Motivation and Morale Study -- are deeply committed.

Hanoi has a Government and a purpose and a discipline. The "government" in Saigon is a travesty. In a very real sense, South Viet-Nam is a country with an army and no government.

In my view, a deep commitment of United States forces in a land war in South Viet-Nam would be a catastrophic error. If ever there was an occasion for a tactical withdrawal, this is it. 5/

Ball's argument was perhaps most antithetic to one being put forward at the same time by Secretary of State Rusk. In a memorandum he wrote on 1 July, Rusk stated bluntly: "The central objective of the United States in South Viet-Nam must be to insure that North Viet-Nam not succeed in taking over or determining the future of South Viet-Nam by force. We must accomplish this objective without a general war if possible." 6/ Here was a statement that the American commitment to the Vietnam war was, in effect, absolute, even to the point of risking general war. The Secretary went on to explain why he felt that an absolute commitment was necessary:

The integrity of the U.S. commitment is the principal pillar of peace throughout the world. If that commitment becomes unreliable, the communist world would draw conclusions that would lead to our ruin and almost certainly to a catastrophic war. So long as the South Vietnamese are prepared to fight for themselves, we cannot abandon them without disaster to peace and to our interests throughout the world.

In short, if "the U.S. commitment" were once seen to be unreliable, the risk of the outbreak of general war would vastly increase. Therefore, prudence would dictate risking general war, if necessary, in order to demonstrate that the United States would meet its commitments. In either case, some risk would be involved, but in the latter case the risk would be lower. The task of the statesman is to choose among unpalatable alternatives. For the Under-Secretary of State, this meant an early withdrawal from Vietnam. For the Secretary, it meant an open-ended commitment.

Ball was, of course, alone among the Vietnam principals in arguing for de-escalation and political "compromise." At the same time that he and Rusk wrote these papers, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy and Secretary of Defense McNamara also went on record with recommendations for the conduct of the war. Bundy's paper, "A 'Middle Way' Course of Action in South Vietnam," argued for a delay in further U.S. troop commitments and in escalation of the bombing campaign against North Vietnam, but a delay only in order to allow the American public time to digest the fact that the United States was engaged in a land war on the Asian mainland, and for U.S. commanders to make certain that their men were, in fact, capable of fighting effectively in conditions of counter-insurgency warfare without either arousing the hostility of the local population or causing the Vietnamese government and army simply to ease up and allow the Americans to "take over" their war. 7/

For McNamara, however, the military situation in South Vietnam was too serious to allow the luxury of delay. In a memorandum to the President drafted on 1 July and then revised on 20 July, immediately following his return from a week-long visit to Vietnam, he recommended an immediate decision to increase the U.S.-Third Country presence from the current 16 maneuver battalions (15 U.S., one Australian) to 44 (34 U.S., nine Korean, one Australian), and a change in the mission of these forces from one of providing support and reinforcement for the ARVN to one which soon became known as "search and destroy" -- as McNamara put it, they were "by aggressive exploitation of superior military forces...to gain and hold the initiative...pressing the fight against VC/DRV main force units in South Vietnam to run them to ground and destroy them." 8/

At the same time, McNamara argued for a substantial intensification of the air war. The 1 July version of his memorandum recommended a total quarantine of the movement of war supplies into North Vietnam, by sea, rail, and road, through the mining of Haiphong and all other harbors and the destruction of rail and road bridges leading from China to Hanoi; the Secretary also urged the destruction of fighter airfields and SAM sites "as necessary" to accomplish these objectives. 9/

On 2 July the JCS, supporting the views in the DPM, reiterated a recommendation for immediate implementation of an intensified bombing program against NVN, to accompany the additional deployments which were under consideration. 10/ The recommendation was for a sharp escalation of the bombing, with the emphasis on interdiction of supplies into as well as out of NVN. Like the DPM, it called for interdicting the movement of "war supplies" into NVN by mining the major ports and cutting the rail and highway bridges on the LOCs from China to Hanoi; mounting intensive armed reconnaissance against all LOCs and LOC facilities

within NVN; destroying the "war-making" supplies and facilities of NVN, especially POL; and destroying airfields and SAM sites as necessary to accomplish the other tasks. The JCS estimated that an increase from the then 2000 to about 5000 attack sorties per month would be required to carry out the program.

The elements of greater risk in the JCS proposals were obvious. The recommendation to mine ports and to strike airfields and SAM sites had already been rejected as having special Soviet or Chinese escalatory implications, and even air strikes against LOCs from China were considered dangerous. U.S. intelligence agencies believed that if such strikes occurred the Chinese might deliberately engage U.S. aircraft over NVN from bases in China. CIA thought the chances were "about even" that this would occur; DIA and the Service intelligence agencies thought the chances of this would increase but considered it still unlikely; and State thought the chances "better than even." 11/

Apart from this element of greater risk, however, intelligence agencies held out some hope that an intensified bombing program like that proposed by the JCS (less mining the ports, which they were not asked to consider) would badly hurt the NVN economy, damage NVN's ability to support the effort in SVN, and even lead Hanoi to consider negotiations. An SNIE of 23 July estimated that the extension of air attacks only to military targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area was not likely to "significantly injure the Viet Cong ability to persevere" or to "persuade the Hanoi government that the price of persisting was unacceptably high." Sustained interdiction of the LOCs from China, in addition, would make the delivery of Soviet and Chinese aid more difficult and costly and would have a serious impact on the NVN economy, but it would still not have a "critical impact" on "the Communist determination to persevere" and would not seriously impair Viet Cong capabilities in SVN, "at least for the short term." However:

> If, in addition, POL targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area were destroyed by air attacks, the DRV's capability 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 /which the SNIE said was "almost certain" to happen/ this would substantially increase the amount of supplies needed in the South. The Viet Cong 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 certainly inhibit and

might even prevent an increase in large-scale Viet Cong military activity, though they would probably not force any significant reduction in Viet Cong terrorist tactics of harassment and sabotage. These strains, particularly if they produced a serious check in the development of Viet Cong capabilities for large-scale (multi-battalion) operations might lead the Viet Cong to consider negotiations. 11a/

There were certain reservations with respect to the above estimate. The State and Army intelligence representatives on USIB registered a dissent, stating that even under heavier attack the LOC capacities in NVN and Laos were sufficient to support the war in SVN at the scale envisaged in the estimate. They also pointed out that it was impossible to do irreparable damage to the LOCs, that the Communists had demonstrated considerable logistic resourcefulness and considerable ability to move large amounts of war material long distances over difficult terrain by primitive means, and that in addition it was difficult to detect, let alone stop, sea infiltration. On balance, however, the SNIE came close to predicting that intensified interdiction attacks would have a beneficial effect on the war in the South.

Facing a decision with these kinds of implications, the President wanted more information and asked McNamara to go on another fact-gathering trip to Vietnam before submitting his final recommendations on a course of action. In anticipation of the trip, McNaughton prepared a memo summarizing his assessment of the problem. McNaughton wrote that "meaningful negotiations" were unlikely until the situation began to look gloomier for the VC, and that even with 200,000-400,000 U.S. troops in SVN the chances of a "win" by 1968 (i.e., in the next 2½ years) were only 50-50. But he recommended that the infiltration routes be hit hard, "at least to put a 'ceiling' on what can be infiltrated;" and he recommended that the limit on targets be "just short" of population targets, the China border, and special targets like SAM sites which might trigger Soviet or Chinese reactions. 12/

McNamara left for Vietnam on July 14 and returned a week later with a revised version of his July 1st DPM ready to be sent to the President as a final recommendation. The impact of the visit was to soften considerably the position he had apparently earlier taken. His 20 July memorandum backed off from the 1 July recommendations -- perhaps, although it is impossible to tell from the available materials -- because of intimations that such drastic escalation would be unacceptable to the President. Instead of mining North Vietnam's harbors as a quarantine measure, the Secretary recommended it as a possible "severe reprisal should the VC or DRV commit a particularly damaging or horrendous act" such as "interdiction of the Saigon river." But he recommended a gradual

increase in the number of strike sorties against North Vietnam from the existing 2,500 per month to 4,000 "or more," still "avoiding striking population and industrial targets not closely related to the DRV's supply of war material to the VC."

The urgency which infused McNamara's recommendations stemmed from his estimate that "the situation in South Vietnam is worse than a year ago (when it was worse than a year before that)." The VC had launched a drive "to dismember the nation and maul the army"; since 1 June the GVN had been forced to abandon six district capitals and had only retaken one. Transport and communications lines throughout the country were being cut, isolating the towns and cities and causing sharp deterioration of the already shaky domestic economy. Air Marshal Ky presided over a government of generals which had little prospect of being able to unite or energize the country. In such a situation, U.S. air and ground actions thus far had put to rest Vietnamese fears that they might be abandoned, but they had not decisively affected the course of the war. Therefore, McNamara recommended escalation. His specific recommendations, he noted, were concurred in by General Wheeler and Ambassador-designate Lodge, who accompanied him on his trip to Vietnam, and by Ambassador Taylor, Ambassador Johnson, Admiral Sharp, and General Westmoreland, with whom he conferred there. The rationale for his decisions was supplied by the CIA, whose assessment he quoted with approval in concluding the 1 July version of his memorandum. It stated:

> Over the longer term we doubt if the Communists are likely to change their basic strategy in Vietnam (i.e., aggressive and steadily mounting insurgency) unless and until two conditions prevail: (1) they are forced to accept a situation in the war in the South which offers them no prospect of an early victory and no grounds for hope that they can simply outlast the US and (2) North Vietnam itself is under continuing and increasingly damaging punitive attack. So long as the Communists think they scent the possibility of an early victory (which is probably now the case), we believe that they will persevere and accept extremely severe damage to the North. Conversely, if North Vietnam itself is not hurting, Hanoi's doctrinaire leaders will probably be ready to carry on the Southern struggle almost indefinitely. If, however, both of the conditions outlined above should be brought to pass, we believe Hanoi probably would, at least for a period of time, alter its basic strategy and course of action in South Vietnam.

McNamara's memorandum of 20 July did not include this quotation, although many of these points were made elsewhere in the paper. Instead, it concluded with an optimistic forecast:

> The overall evaluation is that the course of action recommended in this memorandum -- if the military and political moves are properly integrated and executed with continuing vigor and visible determination -- stands a good chance of achieving an acceptable outcome within a reasonable time in Vietnam.

Never again while he was Secretary of Defense would McNamara make so optimistic a statement about Vietnam -- except in public.

This concluding paragraph of McNamara's memorandum spoke of political, as well as military, "vigor" and "determination." Earlier in the paper, under the heading "Expanded political moves," he had elaborated on this point, writing:

> Together with the above military moves, we should take political initiatives in order to lay a groundwork for a favorable political settlement by clarifying our objectives and establishing channels of communications. At the same time as we are taking steps to turn the tide in South Vietnam, we would make quiet moves through diplomatic channels (a) to open a dialogue with Moscow and Hanoi, and perhaps the VC, looking first toward disabusing them of any misconceptions as to our goals and second toward laying the groundwork for a settlement when the time is ripe; (b) to keep the Soviet Union from deepening its military in the world until the time when settlement can be achieved; and (c) to cement support for US policy by the US public, allies and friends, and to keep international opposition at a manageable level. Our efforts may be unproductive until the tide begins to turn, but nevertheless they should be made.

Here was scarcely a program for drastic political action. McNamara's essentially procedural (as opposed to substantive) recommendations amounted to little more than saying that the United States should provide channels for the enemy's discrete and relatively face-saving surrender when he decided that the game had grown too costly. This was, in fact, what official Washington (again with the exception of Ball) meant in mid-1965 when it spoke of a "political settlement." (As McNamara noted in a footnote, even this went too far for Ambassador-designate Lodge, whose view was that "'any further initiative by us now [before we are strong] would simply harden the Communist resolve not to stop fighting.'" In this view Ambassadors Taylor and Johnson concurred, except that they would maintain "discreet contacts with the Soviets.") 13/

McNamara's concluding paragraph spoke of "an acceptable outcome." Previously in his paper he had listed "nine fundamental elements" of a favorable outcome. These were:

(a) VC stop attacks and drastically reduce incidents of terror and sabotage.

(b) DRV reduces infiltration to a trickle, with some reasonably reliable method of our obtaining confirmation of this fact.

(c) US/GVN stop bombing of North Vietnam.

(d) GVN stays independent (hopefully pro-US, but possibly genuinely neutral).

(e) GVN exercises governmental functions over substantially all of South Vietnam.

(f) Communists remain quiescent in Laos and Thailand.

(g) DRV withdraws PAVN forces and other North Vietnamese infiltrators (not regroupees) from South Vietnam.

(h) VC/NLF transform from a military to a purely political organization.

(i) US combat forces (not advisors or AID) withdraw.

These "fundamental elements," McNamara said, could evolve with or without express agreement and, indeed, except for what might be negotiated incidental to a cease-fire they were more likely to evolve without an explicit agreement than with one. So far as the difference between a "favorable" and an "acceptable" outcome was concerned, he continued, there was no need for the present to address the question of whether the United States should "ultimately settle for something less than the nine fundamentals," because the force deployments recommended in the memorandum would be prerequisite to the achievement of any acceptable settlement; "a decision can be made later, when bargaining becomes a reality, whether to compromise in any particular."

In summary, then, McNamara's program consisted of first substantially increasing the pressure on the enemy by every means short of those, such as the bombing of population centers in the North, that would run sizeable risks of precipitating Soviet or Chinese direct intervention in the war, and then seeking a de facto political settlement essentially on US/GVN terms.

The July 20 memo to the President was followed up by two others on specific aspects of the problem before the end of July. On July 28, he replied to a series of eighteen points made by Senator Mansfield with respect to the Vietnam war. In so doing, Secretary McNamara informed the President of his doubts that even a "greatly expanded program" could be expected to produce significant NVN interest in a negotiated settlement "until they have been disappointed in their hopes for a quick military success in the South." Meanwhile he favored "strikes at infiltration routes" to impose a ceiling on what NVN could pour into SVN, "thereby putting a ceiling on the size of war that the enemy can wage there." He warned that a greatly increased program would create even more serious risks of "confrontations" with the Soviet Union and China. 14/

McNamara stated that the current bombing program was on the way to accomplishing its purposes and should be continued. The future program, he said, should:

> a. Emphasize the threat. It should be structured to capitalize on fear of future attacks. At any time, 'pressure' on the DRV depends not upon the current level of bombing but rather upon the credible threat of future destruction which can be avoided by agreeing to negotiate or agreeing to some settlement in negotiations.
>
> b. Minimize the loss of DRV 'face.' The program should be designed to make it politically easy for the DRV to enter negotiations and to make concessions during negotiations. It may be politically easier for North Vietnam to accept negotiations and/or to make concessions at a time when bombing of their territory is not currently taking place.
>
> c. Optimize interdiction vs. political costs. Interdiction should be carried out so as to maximize effectiveness and to minimize the political repercussions from the methods used. Physically, it makes no difference whether a rifle is interdicted on its way into North Vietnam, on its way out of North Vietnam, in Laos or in South Vietnam. But different amounts of effort and different political prices may be paid depending on how and where it is done. The critical variables in this regard are (1) the type of targets struck, (e.g., port facilities involving civilian casualties vs. isolated bridges), (2) types of aircraft (e.g., B-52s vs. F-105s), (3) kinds of weapons (e.g., napalm vs. ordinary bombs), (4) location of target (e.g., in Hanoi vs. Laotian border area), and (5) the accompanying declaratory policy (e.g., unlimited vs. a defined interdiction zone).

d. Coordinate with other influences on the DRV. So long as full victory in the South appears likely, the effect of the bombing program in promoting negotiations or a settlement will probably be small. The bombing program now and later should be designed for its influence on the DRV at that unknown time when the DRV becomes more optimistic about what they can achieve in a settlement acceptable to us than about what they can achieve by continuation of the war.

e. Avoid undue risks and costs. The program should avoid bombing which runs a high risk of escalation into war with the Soviets or China and which is likely to appall allies and friends. 15/

C. Incremental Escalation

Secretary McNamara's 5 principles prevailed. The bombing continued to expand and intensify, but there was no abrupt switch in bombing policy and no sudden escalation. The high-value targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area were kept off limits, so as not to "kill the hostage." Interdiction remained the chief criterion for target selection, and caution continued to be exercised with respect to sensitive targets. The idea of a possible bombing pause, longer than the last, was kept alive. 16/ The Secretary refused to approve an overall JCS concept for fighting the Vietnam War which included much heavier ROLLING THUNDER strikes against key military and economic targets coordinated with a blockade and mining attack on NVN ports, 17/ and he also continued to veto JCS proposals for dramatic attacks on major POL depots, power plants, airfields, and other "lucrative" targets. 18/

The expansion of ROLLING THUNDER during the rest of 1965 followed the previous pattern of step-by-step progression. The approval cycle shifted from one-week to two-week target packages. New fixed targets from the JCS list of major targets, which grew from 94 to 236 by the end of the year, continued to be selected in Washington. The number of these new targets was kept down to a few per week, most of them LOC-related. Few strikes were authorized in the vital northeast quadrant, north of 21° N. and east of 106° E., which contained the Hanoi/Haiphong urban complexes, the major port facilities, and the main LOCs to China. In addition, de facto sanctuaries were maintained in the areas within 30 nautical miles from the center of Hanoi, 10 from the center of Haiphong, 30 from the Chinese border in the northwest (to 106° E.), and 25 from the Chinese border in the northeast. 19/

The scope of armed reconnaissance missions was also enlarged but kept within limits. The boundary for such missions was shifted to the north and west of Hanoi up to the Chinese buffer zone, but it was kept back from the northeast quadrant, where only individually approved

fixed target strikes were authorized. The operational latitude for armed reconnaissance missions was also widened. They were authorized to strike small pre-briefed fixed military targets not on the JCS list (e.g., minor troop staging areas, warehouses, or depots) in the course of executing their LOC attacks, and to restrike previously authorized JCS targets in order to make and keep them inoperable. An armed reconnaissance sortie ceiling continued in effect. It was lifted to 600 per week by October, but then held there until the end of the year. 20/

By the end of 1965 total ROLLING THUNDER attack sorties had levelled off to about 750 per week and total sorties to a little over 1500 per week. All told, some 55,000 sorties had been flown during the year, nearly half of them on attack (strike and flak suppression) missions, and three-fourths of them as armed reconnaissance rather than JCS-directed fixed target strikes. Altogether, ROLLING THUNDER represented only 30 percent of the U.S. air effort in Southeast Asia during the year, in keeping with the rough priorities set by decision-makers at the outset. 21/

Although bombing NVN had done much to generate, as Secretary McNamara put it, "a new school of criticism among liberals and 'peace' groups," whose activities were reflected in a wave of teach-ins and other demonstrations during 1965, 22/ the bombing also drew abundant criticism from more hawkish elements because of its limited nature. As a result, the Secretary and other officials were frequently obliged to defend the bombing restrictions before Congress and the press.

Most of the hawkish criticism of the bombing stemmed from basic disagreement with an air campaign centered upon a tactical interdiction rationale rather than a punitive rationale more in keeping with strategic uses of air power, a campaign in which the apparent target was the infiltration system rather than the economy as a whole, and in which, as one CIA report put it,

> ...almost 80 percent of North Vietnam's limited modern industrial economy, 75 percent of the nation's population, and the most lucrative military supply and LOC targets have been effectively insulated from air attack. 23/

This kind of criticism of the bombing concentrated on the most conspicuous aspect of the program, the strikes against fixed targets, and it faulted the program for failing to focus on the kinds of targets which strategic bombing had made familiar in World War II -- power plants, oil depots, harbor facilities, and factories.

Such "strategic" targets had not been entirely exempted from attack, of course, but they had been exempted from attack where they counted most, in the sanctuary areas. This occasioned some embarrassment in the Administration because any attack on such targets seemed inconsistent with a purely interdiction rationale, while failure to attack the most important of them did not satisfy a strategic bombing rationale. Secretary McNamara was pressed hard on these points when he appeared before the Congressional armed services and appropriations committees in August 1965 with a major supplemental budget request for the Vietnam War. Senator Cannon asked:

> I know that our policy was to not attack power stations and certain oil depots and so on earlier. But within the past two weeks we have noticed that you have attacked at least one or more power stations. I am wondering if your policy has actually changed now in regard to the targets. In other words, are we stepping up the desirability of certain targets?

Secretary McNamara replied:

> I would say we are holding primarily to these targets I have outlined. This week's program, for example, includes primarily, I would say, 95 percent of the sorties against fixed targets are against supply depots, ammo depots, barracks...but only one or two percent of the sorties directed against [one power plant].
>
> I don't want to mislead you. We are not bombing in the Hanoi...or the Haiphong area. There is a very good reason for that. In Haiphong there is a substantial petroleum dump [for example]. First, there is question whether destruction of that dump would influence the level of supply into South Vietnam. Secondly, General Westmoreland believes that an attack on that would lead to an attack on the petroleum dumps outside of Saigon that contain eighty percent of the petroleum storage for SVN. Thirdly, there is the real possibility that an attack on the Haiphong petroleum would substantially increase the risk of Chinese participation....for all those reasons it seems unwise at this time...to attack that petroleum dump....

In defending the policy of not attacking the powerplants and POL sites concentrated in the Hanoi/Haiphong area, the Secretary did not stress the interdiction purposes of the bombing but rather the risks of widening the war. He explained that an attack on the powerplants and POL sites would require also attacking Phuc Yen airfield and the surrounding SAM sites:

I had better not describe how we would handle it but it would be one whale of a big attack....this might well trigger, in the view of some, would trigger Chinese intervention on the ground....This is what we wish to avoid. 24/

Before the House Committee on Armed Services two days later, Secretary McNamara stressed both the irrelevance of targets like the POL facilities at Haiphong to infiltration into the South and the risks of Chinese intervention:

At present our bombing program against the North is directed primarily against the military targets that are associated with the infiltration of men and equipment into the South, ammo depots, supply depots, barracks areas, the particular lines of communication over which these move into the South. For that reason, we have not struck in the Hanoi area because the targets are not as directly related to the infiltration of men and equipment as those outside the area....As to the Haiphong POL....if we strike that there will be greater pressure on Communist China to undertake military action in support of the North Vietnamese....We want to avoid that if we possibly can. 25/

On other occasions the Secretary put such stress on the limited interdiction purposes of the bombing that it seemed to virtually rule out altogether industrial and other "strategic" targets:

...we are seeking by our bombing in North Vietnam to reduce and make more costly the movement of men and supplies from North Vietnam into South Vietnam for the support of the Viet Cong operations in South Vietnam. That's our primary military objective, and that requires that we bomb the lines of communication primarily and secondarily, the ammunition and supply depots....The great bulk of our bombing...is directed against traffic moving on roads and railroads, and the other portion...is directed against specific targets associated with the lines of communication, primarily supply depots and...bridges....We think our bombing policy is quite properly associated with the effort to stop the insurgency in South Vietnam. We've said time after time: It is not our objective to destroy the Government of North Vietnam. We're not seeking to widen the war. We do have a limited objective, and that's why our targeting is limited as it is.

When asked whether the U.S. refrained from bombing NVN's more vital installations because it would escalate the war, the Secretary added:

> Well, I'm saying that the other installations you're speaking of are not directly related to insurgency in the South, and that's what we're fighting. And that our targeting should be associated with that insurgency....our objective is to show them they can't win in the South. Until we do show that to them it's unlikely the insurgency in the South will stop. 26/

The Secretary's arguments had difficult sledding, however. As 1965 ended, the bombing restrictions were still under attack. The U.S. was heavily engaged in the ground war in the South, and a limited bombing campaign in the North did not make much sense to those who wanted to win it. The hawks were very much alive, and there was mounting pressure to put more lightning and thunder into the air war. At that point, in not very propitious circumstances, the Administration halted the bombing entirely, and for 37 days, from 24 December 1965 to 31 January 1966, pursued a vigorous diplomatic offensive to get negotiations started to end the war.

D. The "Pause" -- 24 December 1965 to 31 January 1966

1. The Pre-Pause Debate

An important element of the program developed by McNamara and his Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, John McNaughton in July 1965 was a pause in the bombing of North Vietnam. There had been a five-day pause in May, from the 13th through the 18th, apparently inspired by the President himself in an effort to see if the North Vietnamese government -- which had previously indicated that any progress towards a settlement would be impossible so long as its territory was being bombed -- would respond with de-escalatory measures of its own. Yet the President also saw a pause as a means of clearing the way for an increase in the tempo of the air war in the absence of a satisfactory response from Hanoi. The May pause had been hastily arranged -- almost, so the record makes it seem, as if on the spur of the moment -- and advance knowledge of it was so closely held, not only within the international community but also within the U.S. government, that no adequate diplomatic preparation could be made. Its most serious shortcoming as an effective instrument of policy, however, lay in its very brief duration. To have expected a meaningful response in so short a time, given the complexity of the political relationships not only within the North Vietnamese government and party, but also between Hanoi and the NLF in the South, and between Hanoi and its separate (and quarrelling) supporters within the Communist world, was to expect the impossible. 27/ Therefore, in his 20 July memorandum to the President,

Secretary McNamara wrote: "After the 44 US/third-country battalions have been deployed and after some strong action has been taken in the program of bombing the North (e.g., after the key railroad bridges north of Hanoi have been dropped), we could, as part of a diplomatic initiative, consider introducing a 6-8 week pause in the program of bombing the North."

The pause which eventually occurred -- for 37 days, from December 1965 until 31 January 1966 -- was somewhat shorter than the six-to-eight weeks McNamara suggested, but it was clearly long enough to allow the North Vietnamese fully to assess the options before them. They were not very attractive options, at least in the way they were seen in Washington. McNamara summarized them in a memorandum to the President on 30 November:

> It is my belief that there should be a three- or four-week pause [note that McNamara himself no longer held to the six-to-eight week duration] in the program of bombing the North before we either greatly increase our troop deployments to Vietnam or intensify our strikes against the North. The reasons for this belief are, first, that we must lay a foundation in the mind of the American public and in world opinion for such an enlarged phase of the war and, second, we should give North Vietnam a face-saving chance to stop the aggression. 28/

In other words, Hanoi should be given the implicit (although, naturally, not explicitly stated) choice of either giving up "its side of the war," as Secretary Rusk often put it, or facing a greater level of punishment from the United States. In an earlier memorandum, dated 3 November, and given to the President on the 7th, McNamara had remarked that "a serious effort would be made to avoid advertising [a pause] as an ultimatum to the DRV," 29/ yet Hanoi could scarcely have seen it as anything else. John McNaughton had perfectly encapsulated the Washington establishment's view of a bombing pause the previous July, when he had noted in pencil in the margin of a draft memorandum the words "RT [i.e., ROLLING THUNDER] (incl. Pause), ratchet." 30/ The image of a ratchet, such as the device which raises the net on a tennis court, backing off tension between each phase of increasing it, was precisely what McNaughton and McNamara, William Bundy and Alexis Johnson at State, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had in mind when they thought of a pause. The only danger was, as McNamara put it in his memorandum of 3 November, "being trapped in a status-quo cease-fire or in negotiations which, though unaccompanied by real concessions by the VC, made it politically costly for us to terminate the Pause."

McNamara and McNaughton were optimistic that, by skillful diplomacy, this pitfall could be avoided. Rusk, Bundy and Johnson, who had to perform the required diplomatic task, and the Chiefs, who were professionally distrustful of the diplomatic art and of the ability of the political decision-makers in Washington to resist the pressures from the "peace movement" in the United States, were not so sure. The Chiefs (echoing General Westmoreland and Admiral Sharp) were also opposed to any measures which would, even momentarily, reduce the pressure on North Vietnam. The arguments for and against a pause were summarized in a State Department memorandum to the President on 9 November:

> The purposes of -- and Secretary McNamara's arguments for -- such a pause are four:
>
> (a) It would offer Hanoi and the Viet Cong a chance to move toward a solution if they should be so inclined, removing the psychological barrier of continued bombing and permitting the Soviets and others to bring moderating arguments to bear;
>
> (b) It would demonstrate to domestic and international critics that we had indeed made every effort for a peaceful settlement before proceeding to intensified actions, notably the latter stages of the extrapolated Rolling Thunder program;
>
> (c) It would probably tend to reduce the dangers of escalation after we had resumed the bombing, at least insofar as the Soviets were concerned;
>
> (d) It would set the stage for another pause, perhaps in late 1966, which might produce a settlement.
>
> Against these propositions, there are the following considerations arguing against a pause:
>
> (a) In the absence of any indication from Hanoi as to what reciprocal action it might take, we could well find ourselves in the position of having played this very important card without receiving anything substantial in return. There are no indications that Hanoi is yet in a mood to agree to a settlement acceptable to us. The chance is, therefore, very slight that a pause at this time could lead to an acceptable settlement.
>
> (b) A unilateral pause at this time would offer an excellent opportunity for Hanoi to interpose obstacles to our resumption of bombing and to demoralize South Vietnam

by indefinitely dangling before us (and the world) the prospect of negotiations with no intent of reaching an acceptable settlement. It might also tempt the Soviet Union to make threats that would render very difficult a decision to resume bombing.

(c) In Saigon, obtaining South Vietnamese acquiescence to a pause would be difficult. It could adversely affect the Government's solidity. Any major falling out between the Government and the United States or any overturn in the Government's political structure could set us back very severly (sic).

(d) An additional factor is that undertaking the second course of action following a pause /i.e., "extrapolation" of ROLLING THUNDER/ would give this course a much more dramatic character, both internationally and domestically, and would, in particular, present the Soviets with those difficult choices that we have heretofore been successful in avoiding.

After this summary of the competing arguments, the State paper -- speaking for Secretary Rusk -- came down against a bombing pause. The paper continued:

On balance, the arguments against the pause are convincing to the Secretary of State, who recommends that it not be undertaken at the present time. The Secretary of State believes that a pause should be undertaken only when and if the chances were significantly greater than they now appear that Hanoi would respond by reciprocal actions leading in the direction of a peaceful settlement. He further believes that, from the standpoint of international and domestic opinion, a pause might become an overriding requirement only if we were about to reach the advanced stages of an extrapolated Rolling Thunder program involving extensive air operations in the Hanoi/Haiphong area. Since the Secretary of State believes that such advanced stages are not in themselves desirable until the tide in the South is more favorable, he does not feel that, even accepting the point of view of the Secretary of Defense, there is now any international requirement to consider a "Pause." 31/

Basic to Rusk's position, as John McNaughton pointed out in a memorandum to Secretary McNamara the same day, was the assumption that a bombing pause was a "card" which could be "played" only once. In fact, McNaughton wrote, "it is more reasonable to think that it could be played any number of times, with the arguments against it,

but not those for it, becoming less valid each time." 32/ It was this argument of McNaughton's which lay behind the Defense position that one of the chief reasons for a pause was that even if it were to produce no response from Hanoi, it might set the stage for another pause, perhaps late in 1966, which might be "productive."

The available materials do not reveal the President's response to these arguments, but it is clear from the continuing flow of papers that he delayed positively committing himself either for or against a pause until very shortly before the actual pause began. Most of these papers retraced old ground, repeating the arguments which we have already examined. A State memorandum by William Bundy on 1 December, however, added some new ones. 33/ In summary, they were:

FOR a bombing pause (in addition to those we have already seen):

--Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin had "recently urged a 'pause' on McGeorge Bundy and had pretty clearly indicated the Soviets would make a real effort if we undertook one; however, he was equally plain in stating that he could give no assurance of any clear result."

--"American casualties are mounting and further involvement appears likely. A pause can demonstrate that the President has taken every possible means to find a peaceful solution and obtain domestic support for the further actions that we will have to take."

--"There are already signs of dissension between Moscow, Peking, Hanoi and the Viet Cong. The pause is certain to stimulate further dissension on the other side and add to the strains in the Communist camp as they argue about how to deal with it." Moreover, it would decrease the ability of Hanoi or Peking to bring pressure on Moscow to escalate Soviet support.

--"Judging by experience during the last war, the resumption of bombing after a pause would be even more painful to the population of North Vietnam than a fairly steady rate of bombing."

--"The resumption of bombing after a pause, combined with increased United States deployments in the South, would remove any doubts the other side may have about U.S. determination to stay the course and finish the job."

AGAINST a bombing pause, fewer new arguments were adduced. Those which we have seen, however, were restated with greater force. Thus it was noted that while Hanoi had said it could never "negotiate" so long as the bombing continued, it had given no sign whatsoever that even with a complete cessation (this, the paper pointed out, and not a "pause," was what the DRV really insisted upon) it would be led to "meaningful" negotiations or to de-escalatory actions. It might, for example, offer to enter into negotiations on condition that the bombing not be resumed and/or that the NLF be seated at the conference on a basis of full equality with the GVN. Both of these conditions would be clearly unacceptable to the U.S., which would run the danger of having to resume bombing in the face of what major sectors of domestic and international opinion would regard as a "reasonable" Hanoi offer: "In other words, instead of improving our present peace-seeking posture, we could actually end up by damaging it severely." And in doing so, the U.S. would "lose the one card that we have which offers any hope of a settlement that does more than reflect the balance of forces on the ground in the South." (Here, it may be noted, was the ultimate claim that could be made for the bombing program in the face of criticism that it had failed to achieve its objective of interdicting the flow of men and materials to the South.)

To these arguments, essentially restatements of ones we have previously seen, were added:

--"There is a danger that, in spite of any steps we may take to offset it, Hanoi may misread a pause at this time as indicating that we are giving way to international pressures to stop the bombing of North Vietnam and that our resolve with respect to South Vietnam is thus weakening." This danger had recently increased, the paper noted, because of peace demonstrations in the United States and the first heavy American casualties in South Vietnam.

--Just as a pause would make it more difficult to cope with the domestic "doves," so it would the "hawks" as well: "Pressure from the Rivers/Nixon sector to hit Hanoi and Haiphong hard might also increase very sharply...."

--"If a 'pause' were in fact to lead to negotiations (with or without resumed bombing), we would then have continuing serious problems in maintaining South Vietnamese stability. We must also recognize that, although we ourselves have some fairly good initial ideas of the positions we would take, we have not been able to go over the ground with the GVN or to get beyond general propositions on some of which we and they might well disagree."

These statements amounted, then, to the contention that just as the United States could not afford to initiate a bombing pause that might fail to produce negotiations and a de-escalation, neither could it afford to initiate one that succeeded.

Bundy's memorandum of 1 December contained no recommendations. It was a draft, sent out for comment to Under-Secretary Ball, Ambassadors Thompson and Johnson, John McNaughton, and McGeorge Bundy. Presumably, although there is no indication of it, copies also went to Secretaries Rusk and McNamara. By 6 December, William Bundy and Alexis Johnson were able to prepare another version, repeating the same arguments in briefer compass, and this time making an agreed recommendation. It stated: "After balancing these opposing considerations, we unanimously recommend that you [i.e., the President] approve a pause as soon as possible this month. The decision would, of course, be subject to consultation and joint action with the GVN." 34/ Thus, at some point between 9 November and 6 December (the available documents do not reveal when), Secretary Rusk evidently dropped his objection to a pause.

Getting the agreement of the Ky government to a pause was no easy task. Ambassador Lodge reported that he himself opposed the notion of a pause because of the unsettling effects it would have on the South Vietnam political situation. Only by making very firm commitments for large increases in American force levels during the coming year, Lodge warned, could Washington obtain even Saigon's grudging acquiescence in a pause. This is not the place to describe the process by which the GVN's consent was obtained; it is sufficient to note that nowhere in Saigon, neither within the government nor within the American Embassy and Military Assistance Command, was the prospect of any relaxation of pressure on the North -- for any reason -- greeted with any enthusiasm.

2. Resumption -- When and At What Level?

Implicit in the very notion of "pause," of course, is the eventual resumption of the activity being discontinued. Among the principals in Washington concerned with Vietnam, consideration of the circumstances and conditions in which the bombing of North Vietnam would be resumed went hand-in-hand with consideration of its interruption. Relatively early in this process, in his Presidential memorandum of 3 November, Secretary McNamara distinguished between what he termed a "hard-line" and a "soft-line" pause. "Under a 'hard-line' Pause," he wrote, "we would be firmly resolved to resume bombing unless the Communists were clearly moving toward meeting our declared terms....Under a 'soft-line' Pause, we would be willing to feel our way with respect to termination of the Pause, with less insistence on concrete concessions by the Communists." 35/

McNamara himself came down on the side of a "hard-line" pause -- a "soft-line" pause would make sense, he noted, only if the U.S. sought a "compromise" outcome. The words "hard-line" and "soft-line" became terms of art, employed by all of the principals in their papers dealing with the question of a pause. Throughout this discussion, it was taken for granted that bombing would be resumed. The only point at issue was how. On 3 December, John McNaughton wrote an "eyes only" memorandum (whose eyes was not specified, but presumably they included those of the Secretary of Defense) entitled, "Hard-Line Pause Packaged to Minimize Political Cost of Resuming Bombing." He specified four conditions, all of which would have to be met by the enemy in order to forestall the resumption of bombing:

> "a. The DRV stops infiltration and direction of the war.
>
> b. The DRV moves convincingly toward withdrawal of infiltrators.
>
> c. The VC stop attacks, terror and sabotage.
>
> d. The VC stop significant interference with the GVN's exercise of governmental functions over substantially all of South Vietnam." 36/

Clearly it was unlikely that the enemy would even begin to meet any of these conditions, but Hanoi, at least (if not the NLF), might move towards some sort of negotiations. In that event, the resumption of bombing when "peace moves" were afoot would incur a heavy political price for the United States. In order to maintain the political freedom to resume bombing without substantial costs, the U.S. government would have to make clear from the outset that it intended only a pause, certainly not a permanent cessation of the bombing, and that its continuation would depend upon definite actions by the enemy. Yet there was a problem, as McNaughton saw it, as to which definite actions to specify. He recognized that the United States could not easily list the conditions he had put forward earlier in his memorandum. McNaughton expressed his dilemma in the following terms:

> Inconsistent objectives. A Pause has two objectives--(a) To influence the DRV to back out of the war and (b) to create a public impression of US willingness "to try everything" before further increases in military action. To maximize the chance that the DRV would decide to back out would require presenting them with an explicit proposal, in a form where some clearly defined conduct on their part would assure them of no more bombings. The truth of the matter, however, is that the hard-line objective is, in effect, capitulation

by a Communist force which is far from beaten, has unlimited (if unattractive) reserves available in China, and is confident that it is fighting for a just principle. To spell out such "capitulation" in explicit terms is more likely to subject us to ridicule than to produce a favorable public reaction. It follows that the hard-line objectives should be blurred somewhat in order to maximize favorable public reaction, even though such blurring would reduce the chances of DRV acceptance of the terms.

If McNaughton was reluctant to spell out U.S. "hard-line" objectives, he was nevertheless anxious not to allow a situation to develop where the enemy could make its mere participation in negotiations a sufficient quid pro quo for a continuation of the pause. Regarding negotiations, McNaughton suggested, the American position should be: "We are willing to negotiate no matter what military actions are going on." Moreover, when bombing was resumed, the ending of the pause should be tied to Hanoi's failure to take de-escalatory actions. "People might criticize our Pause for not having been generous," McNaughton wrote, "but they will be unlikely to attack the US for having failed to live up to the deal we offered with the Pause." 37/

McNaughton recommended that the first strikes after a resumption should be "identified as militarily required interdiction," in order to minimize political criticism. "Later strikes could then be escalated to other kinds of targets and to present or higher levels." (At the time McNaughton wrote, the pause had not yet gone into effect.) Similar advice came from William Bundy, writing on 15 January during the pause:

> Resumed bombing should not begin with a dramatic strike that was even at the margin of past practice (such as the power plant in December). For a period of two-three weeks at least, while the world is digesting and assessing the pause, we should do as little as possible to lend fuel to the charge -- which will doubtless be the main theme of Communist propaganda -- that the pause was intended all along merely as a prelude to more drastic action.
>
> Moreover, from a military standpoint alone, the most immediate need would surely be to deal with the communications lines and barracks areas south of the 20th parallel. A week or two of this would perhaps make sense from both military and political standpoints. After that we could move against the northeast rail and road lines again, but the very act of gradualness should reduce any chance that the Chicoms /the

Chinese Communists/ will react to some new or dramatic way when we do so. Extensions of past practice, such as Haiphong POL /petroleum, oil, and lubricants/, should be a third stage. 38/

McNaughton and Bundy were in essential agreement: the bombing should be resumed; it should be resumed on a low key at first; but after a decent interval it should be escalated at least to the extent of striking at the Haiphong POL storage facilities, and perhaps other high-priority targets as well. In their own eyes the two Assistant Secretaries were cautious, prudent men. Their recommendations were in marked contrast to those of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who (as this paper shows in greater detail later) pressed throughout the autumn and winter of 1965-66 for permission to expand the bombing virtually into a program of strategic bombing aimed at all industrial and economic resources as well as at all interdiction targets. The Chiefs did so, it may be added, despite the steady stream of memoranda from the intelligence community consistently expressing skepticism that bombing of any conceivable sort (that is, any except bombing aimed primarily at the destruction of North Vietnam's population) could either persuade Hanoi to negotiate a settlement on US/GVN terms or effectively limit Hanoi's ability to infiltrate men and supplies into the South.

These arguments of the Chiefs were essentially an extension and amplification of arguments for large-scale resumption received from the field throughout the pause. Apparently, neither Lodge, Westmoreland, nor Sharp received advance intimation that the suspension might continue not for a few days, as in the preceding May, but for several weeks. When notified that full-scale ground operations could recommence, following the Christmas cease-fire, as soon as there was "confirmed evidence of significant renewed Viet Cong violence," they were simply told that air operations against North Vietnam would not immediately resume. They were assured, however,

> We will stand ready to order immediate renewal of ROLLING THUNDER...at any time based on your reports and recommendations. 39/

None of the three hesitated long relaying such recommendations. "Although I am not aware of all the considerations leading to the continuation of the standdown in ROLLING THUNDER," General Westmoreland cabled on December 27, "I consider that their immediate resumption is essential." He continued,

> "...our only hope of a major impact on the ability of the DRV to support the war in Vietnam is continuous air attack over the entire length of their LOC's from the Chinese border to South Vietnam....Notwithstanding the heavy pressure on their transportation system in the

past 9 months, they have demonstrated an ability to deploy forces into South Vietnam at a greater rate than we are deploying U.S. forces....Considering the course of the war in South Vietnam and the capability which has been built up here by the PAVN/VC forces -- the full impact of which we have not yet felt -- the curtailment of operations in North Vietnam is unsound from a military standpoint. Indeed, we should no[w] step up our effort to higher levels. 40/

Ambassador Lodge seconded this recommendation, and Admiral Sharp filed his own pleas not only that ROLLING THUNDER be resumed "at once" but that his previous recommendations for enlarging it be adopted. The aim should be to "drastically reduce the flow of military supplies reaching the DRV and hence the VC," he argued, adding "the armed forces of the United States should not be required to fight this war with one arm tied behind their backs." 41/

One reason for ignorance in Saigon and Honolulu of the bombing suspension's possible continuation was that the President had apparently never fully committed himself to the timetable proposed by McNamara. Replying to Lodge on December 28, Rusk cabled a summary of the President's thinking. As of that moment, said the Secretary of State, the President contemplated extending the pause only "for several more days, possibly into middle of next week," i.e., until January 5 or 6. His aim in stretching out the pause was only in small part to seek negotiations.

We do not, quite frankly, anticipate that Hanoi will respond in any significant way.... There is only the slimmest of chances that suspension of bombing will be occasion for basic change of objective by other side but communist propaganda on this subject should be tested and exposed.

The key reasons for extending the pause, Lodge was told, were diplomatic and domestic. Some hope existed of using the interval to "drive [a] rift between Communist powers and between Hanoi and NLF." Even more hopeful were indications that the government's act of self-abnegation would draw support at home. The latest Harris poll, Lodge was informed, showed 73% favoring a new effort for a cease-fire, 59% in favor of a bombing pause, and 61% in favor of stepping up bombing if the pause produced no result.

The prospect of large-scale reinforcement in men and defense budget increases of some twenty billions for the next eighteen month period requires solid preparation of the American public. A crucial element will be clear demonstration that we have explored fully every alternative but that aggressor has left us no choice. 42/

This message went to Lodge as "EYES ONLY" for himself and Ambassador Porter. To what extent its contents were shared with General Westmoreland or other military or naval personnel, available documents do not indicate. In any case, the Embassy in Saigon had received from the very highest authority the same kind of intimation that opponents of the pause had been given in Washington. If the period of inaction would prepare American and world opinion for more severe measures, it followed that the next stage would see such measures put into effect.

As the pause continued beyond the deadline mentioned to Lodge, military planners in Saigon, Honolulu, and Washington worked at defining what these severe measures ought to be. On January 12, Admiral Sharp sent the Joint Chiefs a long cable, summarizing the conclusions of intensive planning by his staff and that of COMUSMACV.

> We began R/olling/ T/hunder/ with very limited objectives, at a time when PAVN infiltration was of less significance than it is now,

CINCPAC commented,

> ....When RT began, there was considerable hope of causing Hanoi to cease aggression through an increasing pressure brought to bear through carefully timed destruction of selected resources, accompanied by threat of greater losses...But...the nature of the war has changed since the air campaign began. RT has not forced Hanoi to the decision which we sought. There is now every indication that Ho Chi Minh intends to continue support of the VC until he is denied the capability to do so....We must do all that we can to make it as difficult and costly as possible for Hanoi to continue direction and support of aggression. In good conscience, we should not long delay resumption of a RT program designed to meet the changed nature of the war.

Specifically, Admiral Sharp recommended:

1. "....interdiction of land LOC's from China and closing of the ports..../the/ northeast quadrant....must be opened up for armed recce with authority to attack LOC targets as necessary."

2. "Destruction of resources within NVN should begin with POL. Every known POL facility and distribution activity should be destroyed and harassed until the war is concluded. Denial of electric power facilities should begin at an early date and continue until all

plants are out of action....All large military facilities should be destroyed in Northern NVN....

3. We should mount an intensified armed reconnsaissance program without sortie restriction, to harass, disrupt and attrit/e/ the dispersed and hidden military facilities and activities south of 20 deg/rees/....

These three tasks well done will bring the enemy to the conference table or cause the insurgency to wither from lack of support. The alternative appears to be a long and costly counterinsurgency -- costly in U.S. and GVN lives and material resources. 43/

Writing the Secretary of Defense on January 18, the Joint Chiefs offered an equally bold definition of a post-pause bombing campaign. The Chiefs argued that the piecemeal nature of previous attacks had permitted the DRV to adapt itself to the bombing, replenish and disperse its stocks, diversify its transportation system and improve its defenses. Complaining about the geographic and numerical restrictions on the bombing, the Chiefs recommended that "offensive air operations against NVN should be resumed now with a sharp blow and thereafter maintained with uninterrupted, increasing pressure. 44/ The Chiefs further argued that,

These operations should be conducted in such a manner and be of sufficient magnitude to: deny the DRV large-scale external assistance; destroy those resources already in NVN which contribute most to the support of aggression; destroy or deny use of military facilities; and harass, disrupt and impede the movement of men and materials into SVN. 45/

The shutting off of external assistance would require,

...closing of the ports as well as sustained interdiction of land LOCs from China....Military considerations would dictate that mining be conducted now; however, the Joint Chiefs...appreciate the sensitivity of such a measure and recognize that precise timing must take into account political factors. 46/

In addition to endorsing the full-scale attacks on POL, electric power plants, large military facilities in northern NVN, and LOC centers and choke points with intensified armed reconnaissance,

unhampered by the existing restrictions on sortie number, that CINCPAC has recommended, the Chiefs urged the reduction of the size of the sanctuaries around Hanoi, Haiphong and the China border. More importantly, the Chiefs requested authorization to eliminate the airfields if required and permission for operational commanders "to deal with the SAM threat, as required to prevent interference with planned air operations." 47/

The Chiefs acknowledged the likely adverse response to this sharp escalation in the international community, but urged the necessity of the proposed actions. In dealing with the anxieties about Chinese communist entry into the war, they neatly turned the usual argument that China would enter the war in response to escalatory provocation on its head by arguing that a greater likelihood was Chinese entry through miscalculation.

> The Joint Chiefs...believe that continued US restraint may serve to increase rather than decrease the likelihood of such intervention /Chinese/ by encouraging gradual responses on the part of the Chinese Communists. This is in addition to the probable interpretation of such restraint as US vacillation by both the Communist and Free World leadership. 48/

The Chiefs spelled out their specific proposals in their concluding recommendations:

> a. The authorized area for offensive air operations be expanded to include all of NVN less the area encompassed by a ten-mile radius around Hanoi/Phuc Yen Airfield, a four-mile radius around Haiphong, and a twenty-mile China buffer zone. Exceptions to permit selected strikes within these restricted areas, in accordance with the air campaign described herein, will be conducted only as authorized by the Joint Chiefs....
>
> b. Numerical sortie limitations on armed reconnaissance in NVN be removed.
>
> c. No tactical restrictions or limitations be imposed upon the execution of the specific air strikes.
>
> d. The Joint Chiefs...be authorized to direct CINCPAC to conduct the air campaign against the DRV as described herein. 49/

On the same day as the Chiefs' Memorandum, and perhaps in reaction to it, John McNaughton set down what he termed "Some Observations about Bombing North Vietnam." 50/ It is not clear to whom the

paper was addressed, or who saw it. But it comprises perhaps the most effective political case that could have been made for the bombing program in early 1966, by a writer who was intimately involved with every detail of the program and who was fully aware of all its limitations. As such its most important sections are worth extensive quotation here. They were the following:

3. Purposes of the program of bombing the North. The purposes of the bombing are mainly:

a. To interdict infiltration.

b. To bring about negotiations (by indirect third-party pressure flowing from fear of escalation and by direct pressure on Hanoi).

c. To provide a bargaining counter in negotiations (or in a tacit "minuet").

d. To sustain GVN and US morale.

Short of drastic action against the North Vietnamese population (and query even then), the program probably cannot be expected directly or indirectly to persuade Hanoi to come to the table or to settle either (1) while Le Duan and other militants are in ascendance in the politburo or (2) while the North thinks it can win in the South. The only questions are two: (3) Can the program be expected to reduce (not just increase the cost of) DRV aid to the South below what it would otherwise be -- and hopefully to put a ceiling on it -- so that we can achieve a military victory or, short of that, so that their failure in the South will cause them to lose confidence in victory there? (Our World War II experience indicates that only at that time can the squeeze on the North be expected to be a bargaining counter). And (4) is the political situation (vis a vis the "hard-liners" at home, in the GVN and elsewhere) such that the bombing must be carried on for morale reasons? (The negative morale effect of now stopping bombing North Vietnam could be substantial, but it need not be considered unless the interdiction reason fails.)

4. Analysis of past interdiction efforts. The program so far has not successfully interdicted infiltration of men and materiel into South Vietnam (although it may have caused the North to concentrate its logistic resources on the trail, to the advantage of our efforts in support of Souvanna). Despite our armed reconnaissance efforts and strikes on railroads, bridges, storage centers, training bases and other key

links in their lines of communications, it is estimated that they are capable of generating in the North and infiltrating to the South 4500 men a month and between 50 and 300 (an average of 200) tons a day depending on the season. The insufficiency of the interdiction effort is obvious when one realizes that the 110 battalions of PAVN (27) and VC (83) forces in Vietnam need only 20 or so tons a day from North Vietnam to sustain "1964" levels of activity and only approximately 80 tons a day to sustain "light combat" (1/5th of the force in contact once every 7 days using 1/3d of their basic load). The expansion of enemy forces is expected to involve the infiltration of 9 new PAVN and the generation of 7 new VC combat battalions a month, resulting (after attrition) in a leveled-off force of 155 battalions at end-1966. The requirements from the North at that time -- assuming that the enemy refuses, as it can, to permit the level of combat to exceed "light" -- should approximate 140 tons a day, less than half the dry-season infiltration capability and less than three-quarters the average infiltration capability.

5. The effective interdiction program. The flow of propaganda and military communications cannot be physically interdicted. But it is possible that the flow of men and materiel to the crucial areas of South Vietnam can be. The interdiction can be en route into North Vietnam from the outside world, inside North Vietnam, en route from the North by sea or through Laos or Cambodia to South Vietnam, and inside South Vietnam. It can be by destruction or by slow down. The effectiveness can be prolonged by exhausting the North's repair capability, and can be enhanced by complicating their communications and control machinery. The ingredients of an effective interdiction program in North Vietnam must be these:

a. Intensive around-the-clock armed reconnaissance throughout NVN.

b. Destruction of the LOC targets heretofore tar targeted.

c. Destruction of POL.

d. Destruction of thermal power plants.

e. Closing of the ports.

....It has been estimated (without convincing back-up) that an intensive program could reduce Hanoi's capability to supply

forces in the South to 50 tons a day -- too little for flexibility and for frequent offensive actions, perhaps too little to defend themselves against aggressive US/GVN forces, and too little to permit Hanoi to continue to deploy forces with confidence that they could be supplied.

6. Possible further efforts against the North. Not included in the above interdiction program are these actions against the North:

f. Destruction of industrial targets.

g. Destruction of locks and dams.

h. Attacks on population targets (per se).

The judgment is that, because North Vietnam's economy and organization is predominantly rural and not highly interdependent, attacks on industrial targets are not likely to contribute either to interdiction or to persuasion of the regime. Strikes at population targets (per se) are likely not only to create a counterproductive wave of revulsion abroad and at home, but greatly to increase the risk of enlarging the war with China and the Soviet Union. Destruction of locks and dams, however -- if handled right -- might (perhaps after the next Pause) offer promise. It should be studied. Such destruction does not kill or drown people. By shallow-flooding the rice, it leads after time to widespread starvation (more than a million?) unless food is provided -- which we could offer to do "at the conference table."

7. Nature of resumed program against the North. The new ROLLING THUNDER program could be:

a. None, on grounds that net contribution to success is negative.

b. Resume where we left off, with a "flat-line" extrapolation.

c. Resume where we left off, but with slow continued escalation.

d. Resume where we left off, but with fast escalation.

On the judgment that it will not "flash" the Soviet Union or China -- we should follow Course d (fast escalation). Failure to resume would serve none of our purposes and make us appear irresolute. A "flat line" program would reduce infiltration (but not below PAVN/VC needs) and would placate GVN and domestic pressures. But this is not good enough. A fast (as compared with a slow) escalation serves a double purpose -- (1) it promises quickly to interdict effectively, i.e., to cut the DRV level of infiltration to a point below the VC/PAVN requirements, and (2) it promises to move events fast enough so that the Chinese "take-over" of North Vietnam resulting from our program will be a visible phenomenon, one which the DRV may choose to reject. There is some indication that China is "smothering North Vietnam with a loving embrace." North Vietnam probably does not like this but, since it is being done by "salami slices" in reaction to our "salami-slice" bombing program, North Vietnam is not inspired to do anything about it. This condition, if no other, argues for escalating the war against North Vietnam more rapidly -- so that the issue of Chinese encroachment will have to be faced by Hanoi in bigger bites, and so that the DRV may elect for a settlement rather than for greater Chinese infringement of North Vietnam's independence. The objections to the "fast" escalation are (1) that it runs serious risks of "flashing" the Chinese and Soviets and (2) that it gets the bombing program against the North "out of phase" with progress in the South. With respect to the first objection, there are disagreements as to the likelihood of such a "flash"; as for the second one, there is no reason why the two programs should be "in phase" if, as is the case, the main objective is to interdict infiltration, not to "persuade the unpersuadable."

....

9. Criticisms of the program. There are a number of criticisms of the program of bombing North Vietnam:

a. Cost in men and materiel. The program of bombing the North through 1965 cost 100(?) airmen (killed and missing or prisoner) and 178 US or South Vietnamese aircraft (costing about $250 (?) million) in addition to the ammunition and other operating costs. The losses and costs in 1966 are expected to be 200(?) airmen and 300(?) aircraft.

b. Damage to peaceful image of the US. A price paid for because of our program of bombing the North has been damage to our image as a country which eschews armed attacks on other nations. The hue and cry correlates with the kind of weapons (e.g., bombs vs. napalm), the kind of targets (e.g., bridges vs. people), the location of targets (e.g., south vs. north), and not least the extent to which the critic feels threatened by Asian communism (e.g., Thailand vs. the UK). Furthermore, for a given level of bombing, the hue and cry is less now than it was earlier, perhaps to some extent helped by Communist intransigence toward discussions. The objection to our "warlike" image and the approval of our fulfilling our commitments competes in the minds of many nations (and individuals) in the world, producing a schizophrenia....

c. Impact on US-Soviet detente. The bombing program -- because it appears to reject the policy of "peaceful co-existence," because it involves an attack on a "fellow socialist country," because the Soviet people have vivid horrible memories of air bombing, because it challenges the USSR as she competes with China for leadership of the Communist world, and because US and Soviet arms are now striking each other in North Vietnam -- has seriously strained the US-Soviet detente, making constructive arms-control and other cooperative programs more difficult....At the same time, the bombing program offers the Soviet Union an opportunity to play a role in bringing peace to Vietnam, by gaining credit for persuading us to terminate the program. There is a chance that the scenario could spin out this way; if so, the effect of the entire experience on the US-Soviet detente could be a net plus.

d. Impact on Chicom role in DRV. So long as the program continues, the role of China in North Vietnam will increase. Increased Chinese aid will be required to protect against and to repair destruction. Also, the strikes against North Vietnamese "sovereign territories," by involving their "honor" more than would otherwise be the case, increases the risk that the DRV would accept a substantially increased Chinese role, however unattractive that may be, in order to avoid a "national defeat" (failure of the war of liberation in the South).

e. Risk of escalation. The bombing program -- especially as strikes move toward Hanoi and toward China and as encounters with Soviet/Chinese SAMs/MIGs/vessels-at-sea occur -- increases the risk of escalation into a

broader war. The most risky actions are mining of the ports, bombing of cities (or possibly dams), and landings in North Vietnam.

10. Requirements of a program designed to "persuade" (not interdict). A bombing program focused on the objective of "persuasion" would have these characteristics:

a. Emphasize the threat. The program should be structured to capitalize on fear of the future. At a given time, "pressure" on the DRV depends not upon the current level of bombing but rather upon the credible threat of future destruction (or other painful consequence, such as an unwanted increased Chinese role) which can be avoided by agreeing to negotiate or agreeing to some settlement in negotiations. Further, it is likely that North Vietnam would be more influenced by a threatened resumption of a given level of destruction -- the "hot-cold" treatment -- than by a threat to maintain the same level of destruction; getting "irregularity" into our pattern is important.

b. Minimize the loss of DRV "face." The program should be designed to make it politically easy for the DRV to enter negotiations and to make concessions during negotiations. It is politically easier for North Vietnam to accept negotiations and/or to make concessions at a time when bombing of their territory is not currently taking place. Thus we shall have to contemplate a succession of Pauses.

....

e. Maintain a "military" cover. To avoid the allegation that we are practicing "pure blackmail," the targets should be military targets and the declaratory policy should not be that our objective is to squeeze the DRV to the talking table, but should be that our objective is only to destroy military targets.

Thus, for purposes of the objective or promoting a settlement, three guidelines emerge: (1) Do not practice "strategic" bombing; (2) do not abandon the program; and (3) carry out strikes only as frequently as is required to keep alive fear of the future. Because DRV "face" plays a role and because we can never tell at what time in the future the DRV might be willing to talk settlement, a program with fairly long gaps between truly painful strikes at "military" targets would be optimum; it would balance the need to maintain the threat with the need to be in an extended pause when the DRV mood changed. Unfortunately, so long as full VC victory

in the South appears likely, the effect of the bombing program in promoting negotiations or a settlement will probably be small. Thus, because of the present balance in the South, the date of such a favorable DRV change of mood is not likely to be in the near future....

11. Elements of a compromise program. There is a conflict between the objective of "persuading Hanoi," which would dictate a program of painful surgical strikes separated by fairly long gaps, and the objective of interdiction, which would benefit from continuous heavy bombings. No program can be designed which optimizes the chances of achieving both objectives at the same time. The kind of program which should be carried out in the future therefore depends on the relative importance and relative likelihood of success of the objectives at any given time. In this connection, the following questions are critical:

a. How likely is it that the Communists will start talking? The more likely this is, the more emphasis should be put on the "pressure/bargaining counter" program (para 10 above). The judgment is that the Communists are not likely to be interested in talking at least for the next few months.

b. How important to the military campaign is infiltration and how efficiently can we frustrate the flow? The more important that preventable infiltration is, the more emphasis should be put on the interdiction program (para 5 above). Unfortunately, the data are not clear on these points....

12. Reconciliation. The actions which these considerations seem now to imply are these, bearing in mind that our principal objective is to promote an acceptable outcome:

a. Spare non-interdiction targets. Do not bomb any non-interdiction targets in North Vietnam, since such strikes are not consistent with either of the two objectives. Such painful non-interdiction raids should be carried out only occasionally, pursuant to the rationale explained in para 10 above.

b. Interdict. Continue an interdiction program in the immediate future, as described in para 5 above, since the Communists are not likely to be willing to talk very soon and since it is possible that the interdiction program will be critical in keeping the Communist effort in South Vietnam within manageable proportions.

c. Study politically cheaper methods. Conduct a study to see whether most of the benefits of the interdiction campaign can be achieved by a Laos-SVN barrier or by a bombing program which is limited to the Laos-SVN border areas of North Vietnam, to Laos and/or to South Vietnam (and, if so, transition the interdiction program in that direction). The objective here is to find a way to maintain a ceiling on potential communist military activity in the South with the least political cost and with the least interference with North Vietnam willingness to negotiate.

McNaughton prepared a second memorandum complementing and partially modifying the one on bombing. It concerned the context for the decision. Opening with a paragraph which warned, "We...have in Vietnam the ingredients of an enormous miscalculation," it sketched the dark outlines of the Vietnamese scene:

> ...the ARVN is tired, passive and accommodation-prone....The PAVN/VC are effectively matching our deployments....The bombing of the North...may or may not be able effectively to interdict infiltration (partly because the PAVN/VC can simply refuse to do battle if supplies are short)....Pacification is stalled despite efforts and hopes. The GVN political infrastructure is moribund and weaker than the VC infrastructure among most of the rural population....South Vietnam is near the edge of serious inflation and economic chaos. 51/

The situation might alter for the better, McNaughton conceded. "Attrition -- save Chinese intervention -- may push the DRV 'against the stops' by the end of 1966." Recent RAND motivation and morale studies showed VC spirit flagging and their grip on the peasantry growing looser. "The Ky government is coming along, not delivering its promised 'revolution' but making progress slowly and gaining experience and stature each week." Though McNaughton termed it "doubtful that a meaningful ceiling can be put on infiltration," he said "there is no doubt that the cost of infiltration can...be made very high and that the flow of supplies can be reduced substantially below what it would otherwise be." Possibly bombing, combined with other pressures, could bring the DRV to consider terms after "a period of months, not of days or even weeks."

The central point of McNaughton's memorandum, following from its opening warning, was that the United States, too, should consider coming to terms. He wrote:

c. The present US objective in Vietnam is to avoid humiliation. The reasons why we went into Vietnam to the present depth are varied; but they are now largely academic. Why we have not withdrawn from Vietnam is, by all odds, one reason: (1) To preserve our reputation as a guarantor, and thus to preserve our effectiveness in the rest of the world. We have not hung on (2) to save a friend, or (3) to deny the Communists the added acres and heads (because the dominoes don't fall for that reason in this case), or even (4) to prove that "wars of national liberation" won't work (except as our reputation is involved). At each decision point we have gambled; at each point, to avoid the damage to our effectiveness of defaulting on our commitment, we have upped the ante. We have not defaulted, and the ante (and commitment) is now very high. It is important that we behave so as to protect our reputation. At the same time, since it is our reputation that is at stake, it is important that we not construe our obligation to be more than do the countries whose opinions of us are our reputation.

d. We are in an escalating military stalemate. There is an honest difference of judgment as to the success of the present military efforts in the South. There is no question that the US deployments thwarted the VC hope to achieve a quick victory in 1965. But there is a serious question whether we are now defeating the VC/PAVN main forces and whether planned US deployments will more than hold our position in the country. Population and area control has not changed significantly in the past year; and the best judgment is that, even with the Phase IIA deployments, we will probably be faced in early 1967 with a continued stalemate at a higher level of forces and casualties.

2. US commitment to SVN. Some will say that we have defaulted if we end up, at any point in the relevant future, with anything less than a Western-oriented, non-Communist, independent government, exercising effective sovereignty over all of South Vietnam. This is not so. As stated above, the US end is solely to preserve our reputation as a guarantor. It follows that the "softest" credible formulation of the US commitment is the following:

a. DRV does not take over South Vietnam by force. This does not necessarily rule out:

b. A coalition government including Communists.

c. A free decision by the South to succumb to the VC or to the North.

d. A neutral (or even anti-US) government in SVN.

e. A live-and-let-live "reversion to 1959."

Furthermore, we must recognize that even if we fail in achieving this "soft" formulation, we could over time come out with minimum damage:

f. If the reason was GVN gross wrongheadedness or apathy.

g. If victorious North Vietnam "went Titoist."

h. If the Communist take-over was fuzzy and very slow.

Current decisions, McNaughton argued, should reflect awareness that the U.S. commitment could be fulfilled with something considerably short of victory. "It takes time to make hard decisions," he wrote, "It took us almost a year to take the decision to bomb North Vietnam; it took us weeks to decide on a pause; it could take us months (and could involve lopping some white as well as brown heads) to get us in position to go for a compromise. We should not expect the enemy's molasses to pour any faster than ours. And we should 'tip the pitchers' now if we want them to 'pour' a year from now."

But the strategy following from this analysis more or less corresponded over the short term to that recommended by the Saigon mission and the military commands: More effort for pacification, more push behind the Ky government, more battalions for MACV, and intensive interdiction bombing roughly as proposed by CINCPAC. The one change introduced in this memorandum, prepared only one day after the other, concerned North Vietnamese ports. Now McNaughton advised that the ports not be closed. Why he did so is not apparent. The intelligence community had concurred a month earlier that such action would create "a particularly unwelcome dilemma" for the USSR, but would provoke nothing more than vigorous protest. 52/ Perhaps, however, someone had given McNaughton a warning sometime on January 18 or 19 that graver consequences could be involved. In any case, McNaughton introduced this one modification.

The argument which coupled McNaughton's political analysis with his strategic recommendations appeared at the end of the second memorandum:

The dilemma. We are in a dilemma. It is that the situation may be "polar." That is, it may be that while going for victory we have the strength for compromise, but if we go for compromise we have the strength only for defeat -- this because a revealed lowering of sights from victory to compromise (a) will unhinge the GVN and (b) will give the DRV the "smell of blood." The situation therefore requires a thoroughly loyal and disciplined US team in Washington and Saigon and great care in what is said and done. It also requires a willingness to escalate the war if the enemy miscalculates, misinterpreting our willingness to compromise as implying we are on the run. The risk is that it may be that the "coin must come up heads or tails, not on edge." 53/

Much of McNaughton's cautious language about the lack of success -- past or predicted -- of the interdiction efforts appeared six days later, 24 January, in a memorandum from McNamara for the President. 54/ The memorandum recommended (and its tone makes clear that approval was taken for granted) an increase in the number of attack sorties against North Vietnam from a level of roughly 3,000 per month -- the rate for the last half of 1965 -- to a level of at least 4,000 per month to be reached gradually and then maintained throughout 1966. The sortie rate against targets in Laos, which had risen from 511 per month in June 1965 to 3,047 in December, would rise to a steady 4,500, and those against targets in South Vietnam, having risen from 7,234 in June to 13,114 in December, would drop back to 12,000 in June 1966, but then climb to 15,000 in December. By any standards, this was a large bombing program, yet McNamara could promise the President only that "the increased program probably will not put a tight ceiling on the enemy's activities in South Vietnam," but might cause him to hurt at the margins, with perhaps enough pressure to "condition /him/ toward negotiations and an acceptable /to the US/GVN, that is/ end to the war -- and will maintain the morale of our South Vietnamese allies."

Most of McNamara's memorandum dealt with the planned expansion of American ground forces, however. Here it indicated that the President had decided in favor of recommendations the Secretary had brought back from his trip to Vietnam on 28 and 29 November, and had incorporated in memoranda for the President on 30 November and 7 December. 55/ These were to increase the number of US combat battalions from 34 at the end of 1965 to 74 a year later, instead of to 62 as previously planned, with comparable increases for the Korean and Australian contingents (from nine battalions to 21, and from one to two, respectively). Such an increase in US combat strength would raise total US personnel in Vietnam from 220,000 to over 400,000. At the same time, McNamara noted in his memorandum of 7 December, the Department of Defense would come before the Congress in January to ask for a

supplemental appropriation of $11 billion of new obligational authority to cover increased Vietnam costs.

The Secretary recommended these measures, he said, because of "dramatic recent changes in the situation...on the military side." Infiltration from the North, mainly on greatly improved routes through Laos, had increased from three battalion equivalents per month in late 1964 to a recent high of a dozen per month. With his augmented forces, the enemy was showing an increased willingness to stand and fight in large scale engagements, such as the Ia Drang River campaign in November. To meet this growing challenge the previously planned US force levels would be insufficient. Identical descriptions of the increased enemy capability appeared in both McNamara's 30 November and 7 December memoranda. In the former, but not the latter, the following paragraph also appeared:

> We have but two options, it seems to me. One is to go now for a compromise solution (something substantially less than the "favorable outcome" I described in my memorandum of November 3), and hold further deployments to a minimum. The other is to stick with our stated objectives and with the war, and provide what it takes in men and materiel. If it is decided not to move now toward a compromise, I recommend that the United States both send a substantial number of additional troops and very gradually intensify the bombing of North Vietnam. Ambassador Lodge, General Wheeler, Admiral Sharp and General Westmoreland concur in this two-pronged course of action, although General Wheeler and Admiral Sharp would intensify the bombing of the North more quickly.

McNamara did not commit himself -- in any of these papers, at least -- on the question of whether or not the President should now opt instead for a "compromise" outcome. The President, of course, decided against it. He did so, it should be noted, in the face of a "prognosis" from McNamara that was scarcely optimistic. There were changes in this prognosis as it went through the Secretary's successive Presidential memoranda on 30 November, 7 December and 24 January. The first of these stated simply:

> We should be aware that deployments of the kind I have recommended will not guarantee success. US killed-in-action can be expected to reach 1000 a month, and the odds are even that we will be faced in early 1967 with a "no decision" at an even higher level. My overall evaluation, nevertheless, is that the best chance of achieving our stated objectives lies in a pause followed, if it fails, by the deployments mentioned above.

In the latter two memoranda, McNamara elaborated on this prognosis, and made it even less optimistic. The versions of 7 December and 24 January

were similar, but there were important differences. They are set forward here with deletions from the 7 December version in brackets, and additions in the 24 January version underlined:

> [Deployments of the kind we have recommended will not guarantee success.] Our intelligence estimate is that the present Communist policy is to continue to prosecute the war vigorously in the South. They continue to believe that the war will be a long one, that time is their ally, and that their own staying power is superior to ours. They recognize that the US reinforcements of 1965 signify a determination to avoid defeat, and that more US troops can be expected. Even though the Communists will continue to suffer heavily from GVN and US ground and air action, we expect them, upon learning of any US intentions to augment its forces, to boost their own commitment and to test US capabilities and will to persevere at a higher level of conflict and casualties (US killed-in-action with the recommended deployments can be expected to reach 1000 a month).
>
> If the US were willing to commit enough forces -- perhaps 600,000 men or more -- we could probably ultimately prevent the DRV/VC from sustaining the conflict at a significant level. When this point was reached, however, the question of Chinese intervention would become critical. (We are generally agreed that the Chinese Communists will intervene with combat forces to prevent destruction of the Communist regime in North Vietnam; it is less clear that they would intervene to prevent a DRV/VC defeat in the South.) 56/ The intelligence estimate is that the chances are a little better than even that, at this stage, Hanoi and Peiping would choose to reduce their effort in the South and try to salvage their resources for another day. [; but there is an almost equal chance that they would enlarge the war and bring in large numbers of Chinese forces (they have made certain preparations which could point in this direction).]
>
> It follows, therefore, that the odds are about even that, even with the recommended deployments, we will be faced in early 1967 with a military stand-off at a much higher level, with pacification [still stalled, and with any prospect of military success marred by the chances of an active Chinese intervention] hardly underway and with the requirement for the deployment of still more US forces. 57/

On 25 January 1966, before the bombing had yet been resumed, George Ball sent to the President a long memorandum on the matter. Its first page warned:

> I recognize the difficulty and complexity of the problem and I do not wish to add to your burdens. But before a final decision is made on this critical issue, I feel an obligation to amplify and document my strong conviction: that sustained bombing of North Viet-Nam will more than likely lead us into war with Red China -- probably in six to nine months. And it may well involve at least a limited war with the Soviet Union. 58/

There were, Ball said, "forces at work on both sides of the conflict that will operate in combination to bring about this result."

The Under-Secretary dealt with the U.S. side of the conflict first. The bombing, he wrote, would inevitably escalate; the passage of time, he contended, had demonstrated "that a sustained bombing program acquires a life and dynamism of its own." For this there were several reasons. First was that the U.S. "philosophy of bombing requires gradual escalation." Ball explained:

> Admittedly, we have never had a generally agreed rationale for bombing North Viet-Nam. But the inarticulate major premise has always been that bombing will somehow, some day, and in some manner, create pressure on Hanoi to stop the war. This is accepted as an article of faith, not only by the military who have planning and operational responsibilities but by most civilian advocates of bombing in the Administration.
>
> Yet it is also widely accepted that for bombing to have this desired political effect, we must gradually extend our attack to increasingly vital targets. In this way -- it is contended -- we will constantly threaten Hanoi that if it continues its aggression it will face mounting costs -- with the destruction of its economic life at the end of the road.

On an attached chart, Ball demonstrated that in the eleven months of bombing target selection had gradually spread northward to a point where it was nearing the Chinese border and closing in on the Hanoi-Haiphong area, "steadily constricting the geographical scope of immunity."

Just as the geographical extent of the bombing would inexorably increase, Ball argued, so would the value of the targets struck. "Unless we achieve dramatic successes in the South -- which no one expects [Ball wrote] -- we will be led by frustration to hit increasingly more sensitive targets." He listed four categories of likely operations: (1) the mining of Haiphong harbor, and the destruction of (2) North Vietnam's POL supplies, (3) its system of power stations, and (4) its airfields. Each of these targets had already been recommended to the President by one of his principal military or civilian advisors in Washington or Saigon, Ball noted, and each had "a special significance for the major Communist capitals." The mining of Haiphong harbor would "impose a major decision" on the Soviet Union. "Could it again submit to a blockade, as at the time of the Cuban missile crisis," Ball asked, "or should it retaliate by sending increased aid or even volunteers to North Viet-Nam or by squeezing the United States at some other vital point, such as Berlin?" Would Hanoi feel compelled to launch some kind of attack on crowded Saigon harbor or on U.S. fleet units -- perhaps using surface-to-surface missiles provided by the Soviet Union? Similarly, the bombing of North Vietnam's POL supplies might bring in response an attack on the exposed POL in Saigon harbor. Then there were the airfields. Ball wrote:

> The bombing of the airfields would very likely lead the DRV to request the use of Chinese air bases north of the border for the basing of North Vietnamese planes, or even to request the intervention of Chinese air. This would pose the most agonizing dilemma for us. Consistent with our decision to bomb the North, we could hardly permit the creation of a sanctuary from which our own planes could be harassed. Yet there is general agreement that for us to bomb China would very likely lead to a direct war with Peiping and would -- in principle at least -- trigger the Sino-Soviet Defense Pact, which has been in force for fifteen years.

The same process of action-reaction, Ball noted, would also apply to surface-to-air missile sites (SAMs) within North Vietnam. The wider the bombing the greater the number of SAM sites -- manned substantially by Soviet and Chinese technicians -- the North Vietnamese would install. "As more SAMs are installed, we will be compelled to take them out in order to safeguard our aircraft. This will mean killing more Russians and Chinese and putting greater pressure on those two nations for increased effort." Ball summarized this process in general terms: "Each extension of our bombing to more sensitive areas will increase the risk to our aircraft and compel a further extension of bombing to protect the expanded bombing activities we have staked out."

These risks would be run, Ball observed, for the sake of a bombing program that would nevertheless be ineffective in producing the political results being asked of it. Ten days before sending his memorandum to the President, Ball had asked the CIA's Office of National Estimates to prepare an estimate of likely reactions to various extensions of the bombing, and also an assessment of the effects they would be likely to have on North Vietnam's military effort in the south. 59/ He cited the estimate's conclusions in his Presidential memorandum. None of the types of attacks he had specified -- on Haiphong harbor, on the POL, or on power stations -- "would in itself, have a critical impact on the combat activity of the Communist forces in South Viet-Nam." This was, of course, scarcely a new conclusion. In various formulations it had figured in intelligence estimates for the preceding six months. From it Ball was led to the premises which motivated him to write his vigorously dissenting paper: "if the war is to be won -- it must be won in the South," and "the bombing of the North cannot win the war, only enlarge it."

Ball's paper was at its most general (and perhaps least persuasive) in its discussion of "enlargement" of the war. He started from a historical example -- the catastrophic misreading of Chinese intentions by the United States during the Korean war -- and a logical premise:

> Quite clearly there is a threshold which we cannot pass over without precipitating a major Chinese involvement. We do not know -- even within wide margins of error -- where that threshold is. Unhappily we will not find out until after the catastrophe.

In positing his own notions of possible thresholds, Ball could only reiterate points he had already made: that forcing the North Vietnamese air force to use Chinese bases, by bombing their own airfields, would be likely to escalate into armed conflict between the U.S. and China, and that the destruction of North Vietnam's industry would call in increased Chinese assistance to a point "sooner or later, we will almost certainly collide with Chinese interests in such a way as to bring about a Chinese involvement."

There were, strikingly enough, no recommendations in Ball's memorandum. Given his assumption that "sustained bombing" would acquire "a life of its own," and invariably escalate, the only consistent recommendation would have been that the U.S. should not resume bombing the North, but should instead confine the war to the South. There were no compromise positions. To a President who placed the avoidance of war with China (not to mention with the U.S.S.R.) very high on his list of objectives, and yet who felt -- for military and political reasons -- that he was unable not to resume bombing North Vietnam, but that, once

resumed, the bombing must be carefully controlled, Ball offered disturbing analysis but little in the way of helpful practical advice.

The week including the Tet holidays (January 23-29) saw some final debate at the White House on the question of whether to resume at all in which Ball's memo surely figured. The outcome was a Presidential decision that ROLLING THUNDER should recommence on January 31. The President declined for the time being, however, to approve any extension of air operations, despite the strong recommendations of the military and the milder proposals of the Secretary of Defense for such action.

E. Accomplishments by Year's-End

After 10 months of ROLLING THUNDER, months longer than U.S. officials had hoped it would require to bring NVN to terms, it was clear that NVN had neither called off the insurgency in the South nor been obliged to slow it down. Still, decision-makers did not consider bombing the North a failure. While willing to entertain the idea of a temporary pause to focus the spotlight on the diplomatic track they were pursuing, they were far from ready to give up the bombing out of hand. Why not? What did they think the bombing was accomplishing, and what did they think these accomplishments were worth? What did they hope to achieve by continuing it?

As already noted, certain political gains from the bombing were evident from the start. Morale in SVN was lifted, and a certain degree of stability had emerged in the GVN. NVN and other countries were shown that the U.S. was willing to back up strong words with hard deeds. These were transient gains, however. After the bombing of the North was begun, other U.S. actions -- unleashing U.S. jet aircraft for air strikes in the South, and sending U.S. ground troops into battle there -- had as great or even greater claim as manifestations of U.S. will and determination. Similarly, breaking through the sanctuary barrier had been accomplished, and once the message was clear to all concerned it did not require daily and hourly reinforcement. The acquisition of an important bargaining chip was a gain of uncertain value as yet, since it might have to be weighed against the role of the bombing as an obstacle to getting negotiations underway in the first place. As one high-level group stated in the fall of 1965:

> ...it would be difficult for any government, but especially an oriental one, to agree to negotiate while under sustained bombing attacks. 60/

If this particular chip had to be given up in order to establish what the group called "the political and psychological framework for initiating negotiations," the gain in leverage might be small.

Public opinion about the bombing was mixed. On the hawk side, as Secretary McNamara summed it up for the President:

> Some critics, who advocated bombing, were silenced; others are now as vocal or more vocal because the program has been too limited for their taste. 61/

People who believed that the U.S. was justified in intervening in the war and who identified Hanoi as the real enemy naturally tended to approve of the bombing. People who questioned the depth of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia and who feared that the U.S. was on a collision course with China seemed to be more appalled by the bombing than by any other aspect of the war. The peace fringe attacked it as utterly reckless and immoral. Abroad, in many countries, the U.S. was portrayed as a bully and NVN as a victim. Even U.S. allies who had no illusions about Hanoi's complicity in the South were unhappy with the bombing. As McNamara viewed it:

> The price paid for improving our image as a guarantor has been damage to our image as a country which eschews armed attacks on other nations....The objection to our 'warlike' image and the approval of our fulfilling our commitments competes in the minds of many nations (and individuals) in the world, producing a schizophrenia. Within such allied countries as UK and Japan, popular antagonism to the bombings per se, fear of escalation, and belief that the bombings are the main obstacle to negotiation, have created political problems for the governments in support of US policy. 62/

Bombing NVN, the Secretary added, had also complicated US-Soviet relations, mostly for the worse though conceivably -- barely so -- for the better:

> The bombing program -- because it appears to reject the policy of 'peaceful coexistence,' because the Soviet people have vivid horrible memories of air bombing, because it challenges the USSR as she competes with China for leadership of the Communist world, and because US and Soviet arms are now striking each other in North Vietnam -- has strained the US-Soviet detente, making constructive arms control and other cooperative programs difficult. How serious this effect will be and whether the detente can be revived depend on how far we

carry our military actions against the North and how long the campaign continues. At the same time, the bombing program offers the Soviet Union an opportunity to play a role in bringing peace to Vietnam, by gaining credit for persuading us to terminate the program. There is a chance that the scenario could spin out this way: if so, the effect of the entire experience on the US-Soviet detente could be a net plus. 63/

In addition, the Secretary continued, more countries than before were "more interested in taking steps to bring the war to an end." The net effect of this, however, was generally to increase the international pressures on the U.S. to seek an accommodation, not Hanoi, so that it was hardly an unmixed blessing.

Immediate gains and losses in the domestic and international political arenas were less important, however, than the overall influence of the bombing on the course of the war itself. Short-term political penalties were not hard to bear, at home or abroad, if the bombing could materially improve the prospects for a favorable outcome. This did not necessarily mean that the bombing had to contribute to a military victory. ROLLING THUNDER was begun at a time when the war was being lost and even the minimum task of preventing an outright defeat was far from assured. Almost any military contribution from the bombing could be viewed as a boon.

It was not easy to assess the contribution of ROLLING THUNDER to the war as a whole. Decision-makers like Secretary McNamara received regular monthly reports of measurable physical damage inflicted by the strikes, together with a verbal description of less readily quantifiable economic, military and political effects within NVN, but it was difficult to assess the significance of the results as reported or to relate them to the progress of the war in the South. Reports of this kind left it largely to the judgment or the imagination to decide what the bombing was contributing to the achievement of overall U.S. objectives.

CIA and DIA, in a joint monthly "Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam" which had been requested by the SecDef in August, attempted to keep a running tabulation of the theoretical cost of repairing or reconstructing damaged or destroyed facilities and equipment in NVN. According to this, the first year of ROLLING THUNDER inflicted $63 million worth of measurable damage, $36 million to "economic" targets like bridges and transport equipment, and $27 million to "military" targets like barracks and ammunition depots. 64/ In addition to this measurable damage, the bombing was reported to have "disrupted" the production and distribution of goods; created "severe" problems and "reduced capacity" in all forms of transportation; created more "severe problems" in managing the economy; reduced production; caused "shortages" and "hardships";

forced the diversion of "skilled manpower and scarce resources" from productive uses to the restoration of damaged facilities and/or their dispersal and relocation; and so on.

In terms of specific target categories, the appraisals reported results like the following:

Power plants. 6 small plants struck, only 2 of them in the main power grid. Loss resulted in local power shortages and reduction in power available for irrigation but did not reduce the power supply for the Hanoi/Haiphong area.

POL storage. 4 installations destroyed, about 17 percent of NVN's total bulk storage capacity. Economic effect not significant, since neither industry nor agriculture is large user and makeshift storage and distribution procedures will do.

Manufacturing. 2 facilities hit, 1 explosive plant and 1 textile plant, the latter by mistake. Loss of explosives plant of little consequence since China furnished virtually all the explosives required. Damage to textile plant not extensive.

Bridges. 30 highway and 6 railroad bridges on JCS list destroyed or damaged, plus several hundred lesser bridges hit on armed reconnaissance missions. NVN has generally not made a major reconstruction effort, usually putting fords, ferries, and pontoon bridges into service instead. Damage has neither stopped nor curtailed movement of military supplies.

Railroad yards. 3 hit, containing about 10 percent of NVN's total railroad cargo-handling capacity. Has not significantly hampered the operations of the major portions of the rail network.

Ports. 2 small maritime ports hit, at Vinh and Thanh Hoa in the south, with only 5 percent of the country's maritime cargo-handling capacity. Impact on economy minor.

Locks. Of 91 known locks and dams in NVN, only 8 targeted as significant to inland waterways, flood control, or irrigation. Only 1 hit, heavily damaged.

Transport equipment. Destroyed or damaged 12 locomotives, 819 freight cars, 805 trucks, 109 ferries, 750

barges, and 354 other water craft. No evidence of serious problems due to shortages of equipment. 65/

What did all of this amount to? The direct losses, in the language of one of the monthly appraisals,

> ...still remain small compared to total economic activity, because the country is predominantly agricultural and the major industrial facilities have not been attacked. 66/

The "cumulative strains" resulting from the bombing had "reduced industrial performance," but "the primarily rural nature of the area permits continued functioning of the subsistence economy." The "economic deterioration so far has not affected the capabilities of North Vietnam's armed forces, which place little direct reliance on the domestic economy for material." The bombing had "still" not reduced NVN capabilities to defend itself from attack and to support existing NVA/VC forces in Laos and SVN, but it had "limited" "freedom of movement" in the southern provinces, and it had "substantially curtailed" NVA capabilities to mount "a major offensive action" in Southeast Asia. Altogether, however, "the air strikes do not appear to have altered Hanoi's determination to continue supporting the war in South Vietnam." 67/

An evaluation which had to be couched in such inexact and impressionistic language was of little help in coming to grips with the most important questions about the bombing: (1) How much "pressure" was being applied to NVN to scale down or give up the insurgency, and how well was it working? (2) In what ways and to what degree was the bombing affecting NVN's capacity to wage war in the South? Whether the bombing program was viewed primarily as a strategic-punitive campaign against Hanoi's will or a tactical-interdiction campaign against NVN's military capabilities in the South -- or, as some would have it, both -- these were the questions to address, not the quantity of the damage and the quality of the dislocations.

In dealing with the above questions, it had to be recognized that NVN was an extremely poor target for air attack. The theory of either strategic or interdiction bombing assumed highly developed industrial nations producing large quantities of military goods to sustain mass armies engaged in intensive warfare. NVN, as U.S. intelligence agencies knew, was an agricultural country with a rudimentary transportation system and little industry of any kind. Nearly all of the people were rice farmers who worked the land with water buffaloes and hand tools, and whose well-being at a subsistence level was almost entirely dependent on what they grew or made themselves. What intelligence agencies liked to call the "modern industrial sector" of the economy was tiny even by Asian standards, producing only about 12 percent of a GNP of $1.6 billion

in 1965. There were only a handful of "major industrial facilities." When NVN was first targeted the JCS found only 8 industrial installations worth listing on a par with airfields, military supply dumps, barracks complexes, port facilities, bridges, and oil tanks. Even by the end of 1965, after the JCS had lowered the standards and more than doubled the number of important targets, the list included only 24 industrial installations, 18 of them power plants which were as important for such humble uses as lighting streets and pumping water as for operating any real factories. 68/

Apart from one explosives plant (which had already been demolished), NVN's limited industry made little contribution to its military capabilities. NVN forces, in intelligence terminology, placed "little direct reliance on the domestic economy for material." NVN in fact produced only limited quantities of simple military items, such as mortars, grenades, mines, small arms, and bullets, and those were produced in small workshops rather than large arsenals. The great bulk of its military equipment, and all of the heavier and more sophisticated items, had to be imported. This was no particular problem, since both the USSR and China were apparently more than glad to help.

The NVN transportation system was austere and superficially looked very vulnerable to air attack, but it was inherently flexible and its capacity greatly exceeded the demands placed upon it. The rail system, with single-track lines radiating from Hanoi, provided the main link-up to China and, via the port of Haiphong, to the rest of the world; it was more important for relatively long-haul international shipments than for domestic freight. The latter was carried mostly over crude roads and simple waterways, on which the most common vehicles were oxcarts and sampans, not trucks or steamers. The system was quite primitive, but immensely durable.

Supporting the war in the South was hardly a great strain on NVN's economy. The NVA/VC forces there did not constitute a large army. They did not fight as conventional divisions or field armies, with tanks and airplanes and heavy artillery; they did not need to be supplied by huge convoys of trucks, trains, or ships. They fought and moved on foot, supplying themselves locally, in the main, and simply avoiding combat when supplies were low. What they received from NVN was undoubtedly critical to their military operations, but it amounted to only a few tons per day for the entire force -- an amount that could be carried by a handful of trucks or sampans, or several hundred coolies. This small amount did not have to be carried conspicuously over exposed routes, and it was extremely difficult to interdict, by bombing or any other means.

In sum, then, NVN did not seem to be a very rewarding target for air attack. Its industry was limited, meaningful targets were few, and

they did not appear critical to either the viability of the economy, the defense of the nation, or the prosecution of the war in the South. The idea that destroying, or threatening to destroy, NVN's industry would pressure Hanoi into calling it quits seems, in retrospect, a colossal misjudgment. The idea was based, however, on a plausible assumption about the rationality of NVN's leaders, which the U.S. intelligence community as a whole seemed to share. 69/ This was that the value of what little industrial plant NVN possessed was disproportionately great. That plant was purchased by an extremely poor nation at the price of considerable sacrifice over many years. Even though it did not amount to much, it no doubt symbolized the regime's hopes and desires for national status, power, and wealth, and was probably a source of considerable pride. It did not seem unreasonable to believe that NVN leaders would not wish to risk the destruction of such assets, especially when that risk seemed (to us) easily avoidable by cutting down the insurgency and deferring the takeover of SVN until another day and perhaps in another manner -- which Ho Chi Minh had apparently decided to do once before, in 1954. After all, an ample supply of oriental patience is precisely what an old oriental revolutionary like Ho Chi Minh was supposed to have.

For 1965, at least, these assumptions about Hanoi's leaders were not borne out. The regime's public stance remained one of strong defiance, determined to endure the worst and still see the U.S. defeated. The leadership directed a shift of strategy in the South, from an attempt at a decisive military victory to a strategy of protracted conflict designed to wear out the opposition and prepare the ground for an eventual political settlement, but this decision was undoubtedly forced upon it by U.S. intervention in the South. There was no sign that bombing the North, either alone or in combination with other U.S. actions, had brought about any greater readiness to settle except on their terms.

In the North, the regime battened down and prepared to ride out the storm. With Soviet and Chinese help, it greatly strengthened its air defenses, multiplying the number of AAA guns and radars, expanding the number of jet fighter airfields and the jet fighter force, and introducing an extensive SAM system. Economic development plans were laid aside. Imports were increased to offset production losses. Bombed facilities were in most cases simply abandoned. The large and vulnerable barracks and storage depots were replaced by dispersed and concealed ones. Several hundred thousand workers were mobilized to keep the transportation system operating. Miles of by-pass roads were built around choke-points to make the system redundant. Knocked-out bridges were replaced by fords, ferries, or alternate structures, and methods were adopted to protect them from attack. Traffic shifted to night time, poor weather, and camouflage. Shuttling and transhipment practices were instituted. Construction material, equipment, and workers were prepositioned along key

routes in order to effect quick repairs. Imports of railroad cars and trucks were increased to offset equipment losses.

In short, NVN leaders mounted a major effort to withstand the bombing pressure. They had to change their plans and go on a war footing. They had to take drastic measures to shelter the population and cope with the bomb damage. They had to force the people to work harder and find new ways to keep the economy operating. They had to greatly increase imports and their dependence on the USSR and China. There were undoubtedly many difficulties and hardships involved. Yet, NVN had survived. Its economy had continued to function. The regime had not collapsed, and it had not given in. And it still sent men and supplies into SVN.

II. THE POL DEBATE -- NOVEMBER 1965 - JUNE 1966

A. Background

When the 37-day bombing pause was terminated at the end of January 1966, the principal issue before decision-makers was not whether to intensify the bombing but whether the intensification should be gradual as before or be sharply accelerated.

Some kind of escalation if the bombing pause failed, i.e., if the North Vietnamese did not give "concrete evidence of a willingness to come to terms," was foreshadowed by the October paper from State recommending the pause:

> We would have to convey our intent to reinstitute the bombing if the North Vietnamese refused to negotiate or if their willingness to negotiate is not accompanied by a manifest reduction of VC aggression in the South. If it is necessary to reinstitute bombing, we should be prepared to consider increasing the pressure, e.g. through striking industrial targets, to make clear our continuing, firm resolve. 1/

According to this thinking, failure of the pause would indicate that the bombing had not exerted enough pressure; greater effort was needed to convince Hanoi that the U.S. intended not only to continue the bombing but to do so on an increasing scale. Moreover, the pause had improved the political atmosphere for escalation. U.S. willingness to negotiate and NVN's unreasonableness had been amply and dramatically displayed for all the world to see. If the U.S. now decided to intensify the bombing, the decision could at least be presented as one that was made reluctantly after trying to find a more peaceful alternative.

The debate over the form of escalation in early 1966 was a continuation of the debate over bombing policy which had surfaced again in the fall of 1965, and which had mixed into the debate over the long pause. Regardless of any pause, it was clear by November that even the gradual rate of escalation of 1965 was approaching a point at which any further increase would be possible only by attacking the sensitive targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong sanctuaries and the China buffer zone. As of the end of October, 126 of the 240 existing JCS targets had been struck; and of the remaining 114, two thirds (75) were in the off-limits areas, and 29 of the other 39 remaining were in the touchy northeast quadrant. 2/ As the debate gathered momentum in the winter of 1965 without a clear decision to begin attacking "the hostage," the bombing actually levelled off. During November and December only 8 more JCS targets were struck and armed reconnaissance missions were held to a sortie ceiling of 1200 per two-week period. 3/

Apart from general cautiousness about the next obvious escalatory step, one of the reasons for the Administration's hesitancy was apparently the fear that the timing might not be right. As the bombing drew closer to Hanoi and Haiphong, some officials felt forcing the pace might oblige NVN to confront the issue of negotiations versus greater Chinese and/or Soviet involvement prematurely, i.e., before NVN was sufficiently convinced that it could not outlast the U.S. and win in the South. The theory was that so long as Hanoi was hopeful there was a greater risk that it would opt for escalation rather than a compromise settlement. As the October paper from State put it:

> We may be able to recognize the optimum time for exerting further pressure by increasing the level of our bombing, but an increase in our bombing of the North at the present time may bring matters to a head too soon. 4/

In addition, of course, there was good reason to hold off any escalation until a substantial bombing pause was undertaken, both to test Hanoi's intentions and to disarm critics on the dovish side who felt that the Administration had not gone far enough to meet Hanoi halfway.

1. JCS Recommendations

Dissatisfied with the measured pace of the bombing program from the start, they again began advocating a sharp intensification of the bombing in early November. Diplomatic and political considerations were secondary. Their position was that ROLLING THUNDER had succeeded in making it "substantially" more costly and difficult for NVN to support the insurgents in Laos and SVN, and had "substantially" degraded NVN's capability to conduct a conventional invasion of the South, but they agreed that the campaign had not materially reduced NVN's other military capabilities, damaged its economy, deterred it from supporting the war in the South, or brought it closer to the conference table. It was not because of any difficulty in applying pressure on Hanoi by bombing or in interdicting support South that the program had not been more successful, however; it was because numerous "self-imposed restraints" had limited the potential effectiveness of the program:

> ...we shall continue to achieve only limited success in air operations in DRV/Laos if required to operate within the constraints presently imposed. The establishment and observance of de facto sanctuaries within the DRV, coupled with a denial of operations against the most important military and war supporting targets, precludes attainment of the objectives of the air campaign....Thus far, the DRV has been able and willing to absorb damage and destruction at the slow rate. Now required is an immediate and sharply accelerated

program which will leave no doubt that the US intends to win and achieve a level of destruction which they will not be able to overcome. Following such a sudden attack, a follow-on program of increasing pressures is necessary, but at a rate of increase significantly higher than the present rate. 5/

The JCS accordingly recommended an immediate acceleration in the scale, scope, and intensity of the bombing, beginning with heavy strikes against POL targets and power plants in the Hanoi/Haiphong area and continuing with aerial mining of NVN ports and air strikes against the remaining "military and war-supporting" targets. Specifically, the JCS proposed an immediate sharp blow against the remaining 9 of the original 13 major POL tank farms, most of them in the Hanoi/Haiphong area, and against 5 key power plants, 2 in Hanoi and others at Uong Bi, Thai Nguyen, and Hon Gai, in order to "materially reduce enemy military capabilities." These strikes would be followed by an accelerated program of fixed target and armed reconnaissance strikes to cut down NVN's ability to direct and support the war in the South. The follow-on program would attack first the major airfields in the Hanoi/Haiphong area; then the rail, road, and waterway LOCs throughout NVN, including the major LOC targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area, "at a rate of destruction that would exceed the recuperability rate"; then the ports at Haiphong, Hon Gai, and Cam Pha; and finally military installations and other targets of military significance, such as the Ministry of Defense, the Radio Transmitter Station, and the Machine Tool Plant in Hanoi; the Ammunition Depot at Haiphong; and the Iron-Steel Combine and Army Supply Depot at Thai Nugyen. SAM installations and other antiaircraft defenses would be attacked in order to keep friendly losses down. According to the proposal, most of the significant fixed targets in NVN would be destroyed within three or four months. Thereafter, the effort would concentrate on keeping the targets inoperative and maintaining the pressure on LOCs. 6/

The JCS proposal to escalate all aspects of the bombing was largely oriented toward greatly increasing the pressure on Hanoi's will. On the same day, however, in a separate memorandum, the JCS made a strong pitch for an immediate attack on the NVN POL system as an interdiction measure:

> Attack of this system would be more damaging to the DRV capability to move war-supporting resources within country and along the infiltration routes to SVN than an attack against any other single target system. 7/

It is not surprising that the JCS singled out the POL target system for special attention. NVN had no oil fields or refineries, and had to import all of its petroleum products, in refined form. During 1965, it imported about 170,000 metric tons, valued at about $4.8 million. Nearly all of it came from the Black Sea area of the USSR and arrived by sea at

Haiphong, the only port capable of conveniently receiving and handling bulk POL brought in by large tankers. From large tank farms at Haiphong with a capacity of about one-fourth of the annual imports, the POL was transported by road, rail, and water to other large storage sites at Hanoi and elsewhere in the country. Ninety-seven percent of the NVN POL storage capacity was concentrated in 13 sites, 4 of which had already been hit. The other 9 were still off limits. They were, of course, highly vulnerable to air attack. 8/

In making the recommendation, the JCS emphasized the interdiction effects. They pointed out that the strikes would not hurt the industrial base or the civilian economy very much. They would directly affect the military establishment, which consumed some 60 percent of all POL, and the "government transportation system," which consumed nearly all the rest. Supplying the armed forces in NVN as well as in Laos and SVN depended heavily on POL-powered vehicles, and this dependence had if anything increased as a result of air attacks on the railroads:

> The flow of supplies to all communist military forces, both in and through the country to SVN and Laos, would be greatly impeded since POL-fueled carriers are the principal vehicles for this transport. Further, the interdiction of rail lines and destruction of railroad rolling stock has resulted in the need to move increased tonnages by alternate means, primarily trucks and motor driven water craft. Thus, the most effective way to compound the current interdiction of DRV LOCs, and to offset the introduction and use of substitute modes and routes, is to reduce drastically the available supply of POL. 9/

The JCS also suggested that POL in NVN was becoming increasingly important to the effort in the South. There were now 5 confirmed and 2 suspected NVA regiments in SVN, increasing the load on the supply lines through Laos, and the roads there were being improved, indicating that NVN planned to rely more heavily on trucks to handle the load. Significantly, the importation of trucks was increasing, and despite losses inflicted by ROLLING THUNDER strikes, the size of the truck fleet was growing.

The JCS recommended hitting the most important target, Haiphong POL storage, first, followed closely by attack on the remaining 8 targets. The weight of effort required was 336 strike and 80 flak suppression aircraft, with not more than 10 losses predicted. All POL targets could be destroyed with only light damage to surrounding areas and few civilian casualties (less than 50).

According to the JCS, the destruction of the Haiphong target "would drastically reduce the capability to receive and distribute the major portions of DRV bulk POL imports." Destruction of the others would "force reliance upon dispersed POL storages and improvised distribution methods." Recovery would be difficult and time-consuming. As stated in an annex to the JCSM:

> Recuperability of the DRV POL system from the effects of an attack is very poor. Loss of the receiving and and distribution point at Haiphong would present many problems. It would probably require several months for the DRV, with foreign assistance, to establish an alternate method for importing bulk POL, in the quantities required. An alternative to bulk importation would be the packaging of POL at some point for shipment into NVN and subsequent handling and distribution by cumbersome and costly methods over interdicted LOCs. Loss of bulk storage facilities would necessitate the use of small drums and dispersed storage areas and further compound the POL distribution problem. 10/

Any further delay in carrying out the strikes, on the other hand, "will permit further strengthening of DRV active defenses of the POL, as well as the improvement of countermeasures, such as dispersed and underground storages." On the latter point, the appendix to the JCSM added detailed intelligence information that boded ill for any procrastination:

> Current evidence shows that the DRV has in progress an extensive program of installing groups of small POL tanks in somewhat isolated locations and throughout the Hanoi area. Photographs reveal groups of tanks ranging in number of 16 to 120 tanks per group. The facilities are generally set into shallow excavations and are then earth-covered leaving only the vents and filling apparatus exposed. This construction was observed at several places in the Hanoi area in August and appeared to be an around-the-clock activity.... In addition, considerable drum storage has been identified. 11/

It appeared that NVN had already begun a crash program to drastically reduce the vulnerability of its POL storage and handling system. As in other instances, NVN expected further escalation of the bombing, and was preparing for it.

2. The Intelligence Community Demurs

There was no immediate action on the November 1965 JCS recommendations, but they were taken under study. Secretary McNamara asked for intelligence evaluations, and on 27 November and 3 December, respectively, he received special reports from the Board of National Estimates on (a) U.S. air attacks on NVN petroleum storage facilities, and (b) a generally stepped-up effort involving doubling or tripling U.S. troop commitments, bombing military and industrial targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area, and mining NVN harbors. 12/

The Board reported that strikes against POL targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area would represent "a conspicuous change in the ground rules" which the U.S. had hitherto observed, but would not appreciably change the course of the war:

> ...the Communists would unquestionably regard the proposed US attacks as opening a new stage in the war, and as a signal of US intention to escalate the scale of conflict....We do not believe, however, that the attacks in themselves would lead to a major change of policy on the Communist side, either toward negotiations or toward enlarging the war.... 13/

The strikes would cause strains and embarrassment but would not have a major military or economic impact:

> Hanoi would not be greatly surprised by the attacks. Indeed...it has already taken steps to reduce their impact. It has developed some underground storage facilities, and some capacity for dispersed storage in drums....We believe that the DRV is prepared to accept for some time at least the strains and difficulties which loss of the major POL facilities would mean for its military and economic activity. It is unlikely that this loss would cripple the Communist military operations in the South, though it would certainly embarrass them. 14/

NVN might possibly ask the Chinese to intervene with fighter aircraft to help defend the targets but would probably not ask for ground troops. The Chinese would probably decline to intervene in the air and would not volunteer ground forces, though they would urge NVN to continue the war. The Soviets would be "concerned" at the prospect of a further escalation of the bombing:

> The Soviets would find their difficulties and frustrations increased....They are committed to provide defense for North Vietnam, and...their inability to do so effectively

would be dramatized....We believe that they would not change their basic policy of avoiding overt involvement in combat while giving extensive military equipment and economic assistance to NVN. But their relations with the US would almost certainly deteriorate, for it is the bombing of North Vietnam which is, for Moscow, the most nearly intolerable aspect of /the War-/ 15/

In its estimate of the likely reactions to the wider course of substantially expanding the U.S. effort in the South, together with the bombing and aerial mining of the North, the Board similarly offered little hope that the escalation would produce any marked improvement in the situation. They characterized NVN's will to resist in the North and to persevere in the South as virtually unshakeable in the short run and extremely tough even in the long run:

> Present Communist policy is to continue to prosecute the war vigorously in the South. The Communists recognize that the US reinforcements of 1965 signify a determination to avoid defeat. They expect more US troops and probably anticipate that targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area will come under air attack. Nevertheless, they remain unwilling to damp down the conflict or move toward negotiation. They expect a long war, but they continue to believe that time is their ally and that their own staying power is superior. 16/

Heavier air attacks by themselves would not budge them:

> The DRV would not decide to quit; PAVN infiltration southward would continue. Damage from the strikes would make it considerably more difficult to support the war in the South, but these difficulties would neither be immediate nor insurmountable. 17/

Aerial mining would create serious problems, but NVN would keep supplies moving by resorting to shallow-draft coastal shipping and intensive efforts to keep the rail lines open. As for the South, NVN would accept the challenge:

> Rather than conclude in advance that the tide of battle would turn permanently against them, the Communists would choose to boost their own commitment and to test US capabilities and will to persevere at a higher level of conflict and casualties. Thus the DRV reaction would probably be a larger program of PAVN infiltration. 18/

The Board's picture of Hanoi was one of almost unbelievably strong commitment and dogged determination, by contrast with previous estimates. Thus, if the U.S. committed enough forces in the South to

prevent NVA/VC forces from sustaining the conflict at a significant level -- and the Board would not estimate how many U.S. forces were "enough" --

> ...they might believe it necessary to make a more fundamental choice between resorting to political tactics or enlarging the war. [But] We believe that it would take a prolonged period of military discouragement to convince the DRV and the VC, persuaded as they are of their inherent advantages, that they had reached such a pass. 19/

Even if it found itself in such straits, however, the chances were close to 50-50 that NVN would bring in Chinese forces rather than quit:

> If this point were reached....Prudence would seem to dictate that Hanoi...should choose...to reduce the effort in the South, perhaps negotiate, and salvage their resources for another day. We think that the chances are a little better than even that this is what they would do. But their ideological and emotional commitment, and the high political stakes involved, persuade us that there is an almost equal chance that they would do the opposite, that is, enlarge the war and bring in large numbers of Chinese forces. 20/

The two CIA intelligence estimates of the probable consequences of the proposed escalatory measures were apparently closely held, but the available documentary evidence does not reveal how influential they may have been. Secretary McNamara's response to the JCS was merely that he was considering their recommendations "carefully" in connection with "decisions that must be taken on other related aspects of the conflict in Vietnam." 21/ He was apparently not satisfied with the estimate of reactions to the POL strikes, however, which was largely confined to an estimate of political reactions, and asked CIA for another estimate, this time related to two options: (a) attack on the storage and handling facilities at Haiphong, and (b) attack on the facilities at Haiphong together with the other bulk storage sites.

The new estimate was submitted by Richard Helms, then Acting Director of CIA, on 28 December (with the comment that it had been drafted without reference to any pause in the bombing "such as is now the subject of various speculative press articles." 22/ The estimate spelled out with greater force than before what "strains" the POL strikes might create in the North and how they might "embarrass" NVA/VC military operations in the South, and its tone was much more favorable to carrying out the strikes.

The estimate made little distinction between the two options. Haiphong was by far the most important and most sensitive of the targets and the closest to a major city; the attacks on the others were

of secondary importance. Neither option was likely to bring about a change in NVN policy, either toward negotiations or toward sharply enlarging the war, but either option would substantially increase NVN's economic difficulties in the North and logistics problems in the South.

First, the estimate said, NVN would have to resort to much less efficient methods of receiving, storing and handling POL:

> Destruction of the storage tanks and bulk unloading equipment at Haiphong would substantially increase the Communists' logistic problems and force them to improvise alternate POL import and distribution channels. These could include, subject to the hazards of interdiction, the use of rail or highway tankers and the transport of POL in drums by road, rail, or coastal shipping. The DRV is already increasing its use of drums because this facilitates dispersal and concealment. However, handling POL this way also requires greater expenditures of time and effort, and very large numbers of drums. Resort to these methods would necessitate transhipping through Chinese ports or transport directly across China by rail, which would in turn not only involve physical delays and difficulties but also increase the DRV's political problems in arranging for the the passage of Soviet supplies through China. 23/

This in turn would interfere with the production and distribution of goods in NVN:

> The economy would suffer appreciably from the resultant disruption of transportation. This...would somewhat curtail the output of the DRV's modest industrial establishment and complicate the problems of internal distribution. 24/

And make it more difficult to support the war in the South (although it would not force a reduction in such support):

> The loss of stored POL and the dislocation of the distribution system would add appreciably to the DRV's difficulties in supplying the Communist forces in the South. However, we have estimated that the Communist effort in South Vietnam, at present levels of combat, does not depend on imports of POL into the South and requires only relatively small tonnages of other supplies (say 12 tons per day, on an annual basis). Accordingly, we believe that adequate quantities of supplies would continue to move by one means or another to the Communist forces in South Vietnam, though the supplies would not move as fast and it would hence require more to keep the pipeline filled.... 25/

But was not likely to break Hanoi's will:

> Although there presumably is a point at which one more turn of the screw would crack the enemy resistance to negotiations, past experience indicates that we are unlikely to have clear evidence when that point has been reached.... Though granting that each increase of pressure on the DRV bears with it the possibility that it may be decisive, we do not believe the bombing of the Haiphong facility is likely to have such an effect. 26/

With the exception of State's INR, other intelligence agencies appeared to look with favor upon escalating the bombing. In a SNIE issued on 10 December, they agreed that intensified air attacks, beginning with POL facilities and key power plants and extending to other targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area and mining the harbors, would not bring about any basic change in NVN policy but would in time hamper NVN's operations and set a lid on the war in the South:

> We believe that Hanoi's leaders would not decide to quit and that PAVN infiltration southward would continue. Though damage from the strikes would make it considerably more difficult to support the war in South Vietnam, these difficulties would not be immediate. Over the long run, the sustained damage inflicted upon North Vietnam might impose significant limitations on the numbers of PAVN and VC main force units which could be actively supported in South Vietnam from North Vietnam. 27/

Mining the ports, despite the dilemma created for the Soviets, would probably succeed in blocking all deep-water shipping:

> The difficulty of clearing such mine fields and the ease of resowing would virtually rule out efforts to reopen the ports. The Soviets would protest vigorously and might try for some kind of action in the UN. We do not believe, however, that the Soviets would risk their ships in mined Vietnamese harbors. Peking and Hanoi would try to compensate by keeping supplies moving in shallow-draft coastal shipping and overland. 28/

DIA, NSA, and the 3 Service intelligence agencies even recorded a judgment that the intensified air strikes, combined with the projected build-up of U.S. ground forces in SVN to about 350,000 troops by the fall of 1966, might ultimately result in a change of heart in Hanoi. In a footnote to the SNIE they said they believed

...that as time goes on and as the impact of sustained bombing in NVN merges with the adverse effects of the other courses of action as they begin to unfold, the DRV would become clearly aware of the extent of US determination and thus might reconsider its position and seek a means to achieve a cessation of the hostilities. 29/

INR dissented. Its Director, Thomas L. Hughes, wrote that the escalation would evoke stronger reactions than indicated in the SNIE, "because it would be widely assumed that we were initiating an effort to destroy the DRV's modest industrial establishment":

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.... 30/

B. The Issue Focuses

1. POL and the Pause

Meanwhile, the flow of JCS papers urging POL strikes as the next step continued. Secretary McNamara sent the Chairman, General Wheeler, the 27 November CIA estimate which had suggested that the strikes would not have great impact on the war (they would only "embarrass" operations in the South). General Wheeler commented that the loss of POL storage would do much more:

It would, in fact, have a substantial impact not only on their military operations but also would significantly impede their efforts to support the anticipated build-up of VC/PAVN forces in South Vietnam during the coming months. 31/

General Wheeler also forwarded a Joint Staff-DIA study of the POL target system, with the comment that destruction of the system would force NVN to curtail all but the most vital POL-powered activities and resort to "more extensive use of porters, animal transport, and non-powered water craft." The net result would be to considerably reduce NVN's capability to move large units or quantities of equipment, an important consideration in view of the fact that motorable segments of the Ho Chi Minh trail were being extended. 32/

The Joint Staff-DIA study 33/ showed that NVN's bulk POL storage capacity was greatly in excess of what NVN required to sustain current consumption levels -- 179,000 metric tons available as compared

with 32,000 metric tons needed -- indicating that the strikes would have to be very damaging in order to cause NVN any major difficulties. The study also hinted that an adequate substitute system could be improvised, with lighterage from ocean tankers and dispersed storage, but it nonetheless concluded that the strikes would result in "a reduction of essential transport capabilities for military logistic and infiltration support opeations," i.e., as a result of a deprivation of necessary POL. 34/

As already noted, during the 37-day Pause, the JCS continued to recommend not only the resumption of the bombing but resumption with a dramatic sharp blow on major targets, including POL, followed by uninterrupted, increasing "pressure" bombing. They wished, in short, to turn the limited bombing program into a major strategic assault on NVN. In mid-January 1966 they sent Secretary McNamara a memo reiterating old arguments that the current ROLLING THUNDER program would not cause NVN to stop supporting the war in the South, and that the piecemeal nature of the attacks left NVN free to replenish and disperse its supplies and contend with interdictions. The way to achieve U.S. objectives, the JCS said, was to implement the bombing program they had recommended long ago, in JCSM 982-64 of 23 November 1964, which called for the rapid destruction of the entire NVN target system. In order to get the program started, the JCS recommended extending armed reconnaissance to all areas of NVN except the sanctuaries, which they would shrink (to a 10-mile radius around Hanoi and Phuc Yen airfield, a 4-mile radius around Haiphong, and a strip 20 miles along the Chinese border); lifting the sortie ceiling on armed reconnaissance; and removing "tactical restrictions" on the execution of specific strikes. The strikes would be heavy enough to deny NVN external assistance, destroy in-country resources contributing to the war, destroy in-country resources contributing to the war, destroy all military facilities, and harass, disrupt, and impede movement into SVN. 35/

The idea of resuming the bombing with a large and dramatic bang did not appeal much to decision-makers. Apart from the old problem of triggering an unwanted Chinese reaction, the Administration was interested in giving the lie to NVN and Chinese claims that the Pause was a cynical prelude to escalation. Although it was possible that resuming merely where the bombing left off (following as it would an extended pause and a display of great eagerness for peace) might signal too much irresolution and uncertainty, there was good reason to put off any escalatory acts for a while. As Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy wrote:

> For a period of two-three weeks at least, while the world is digesting and assessing the Pause, we should do as little as possible to lend fuel to the charge -- which will doubtless be the main theme of Communist propaganda -- that the Pause was intended all along merely as a prelude to more drastic action. 36/

Bundy in fact suggested resuming at a lesser level, opening with strikes below the 20th parallel, and only after a few weeks again moving northward. McNaughton wrote:

> No consideration argues for a 'noisy' resumption.... The program at first should be at the level and against the kinds of targets involved prior to the Pause (only two weeks later should the program begin...to escalate). 37/

He also suggested that criticism would be less if the first strikes were clearly identified with the effort to stop the southward flow of men and supplies, which had been greatly increased during the Pause.

The decisions went against ending the Pause with a bang. When the bombing was resumed on 31 January (Saigon time) it was limited "until further notice" to armed reconnaissance. No new major targets were authorized. The former sanctuary restrictions and the sortie ceilings were maintained. 38/

It was also decided to postpone any serious escalation for the time being. Secretary McNamara informed the JCS that their proposals for rapid escalation were being considered, and on 24 January he sent the President a memorandum on the overall Vietnam program which sidestepped the issue. For 1966, the memorandum said, the bombing program against NVN should include 4000 attack sorties per month "at a minimum." It should consist of day and night armed reconnaissance against rail and road targets and POL storage sites. The present sanctuaries should be preserved. There should be more intense bombing of targets in Laos, along the Bassac and Mekong Rivers running into SVN from Cambodia, and better surveillance of the sea approaches. 39/

The use of interdiction rather than pressure terms in the Presidential memorandum, and the emphasis on bombing infiltration routes into SVN, rather than the flow of supplies into or within NVN, indicates that the Secretary was still interested in keeping the objectives of the bombing limited and any escalation in check. The memorandum said that the bombing had already achieved the objective of raising the cost of infiltration, and was reducing the amount of enemy supplies reaching the South. In NVN it had also diverted manpower to air defense and repair work, interfered with mobility, and forced the decentralization of many activities. It could further reduce the flow of supplies to NVA/VC forces in the South, and limit their "flexibility" to defend themselves adequately or undertake frequent offensive action, but it was doubtful that even heavier bombing would put a "tight ceiling" on the NVN effort in the South. 40/

Despite the application of the brake on ROLLING THUNDER operations, the debate over escalation wore on. Further proposals were made and further studies and reviews were requested. DIA was asked to conduct a special analysis of the NVN POL system. The study said that the exceptionally high ratio of storage capacity to consumption allowed the system to "absorb a high degree of degradation," and noted that the dispersed sites in the system were "relatively invulnerable." but concluded nonetheless that (a) the loss of storage at Haiphong would be "critical to the entire bulk distribution system" and would require either a "modification" in the handling of marine imports or a switch to importation by rail or truck through China, and (b) the loss of the other facilities would produce local POL shortages and transportation bottlenecks until substitutes and alternatives could be devised. 41/

2. The February Debate

In February a SNIE was published, estimating how NVN's physical capabilities (not its will) to support the war in the South would be affected by increasing the scope and intensity of ROLLING THUNDER. The enlarged program which the estimate considered included attacks to destroy all known POL facilities, destroy all large military facilities except airfields and SAM sites (unless they seriously interfered with our operations), interdict the land LOCs from China, (a) with or (b) without closing the ports, put and keep electric power plants out of action, and restrict the use of LOCs throughout NVN but especially south of Hanoi. 42/

The SNIE concluded that although the increased bombing might set a limit somewhere on the expansion of NVA/VC forces and their operations in SVN, it would not prevent their support at substantially higher levels than in 1965. The destruction of electric power facilities would practically "paralyze" NVN's industry, but

> ...because so little of what is sent south is produced in the DRV, an industrial shutdown would not very seriously reduce the regime's capability to support the insurgency. 43/

Destruction of POL storage facilities would force NVN to almost complete dependence on current imports, but NVN could manage. Destruction of military facilities would mean the loss of some stockpiled munitions, "although most such storage is now well dispersed and concealed." Closing the ports and interdicting the LOCs from China would reduce the level of imports--leaving the ports open would not--but NVN could continue to bring in enough supplies that were critical to the survival of the regime and essential military tasks, including the "small quantities" necessary for transshipment to SVN.

> Importation of POL would be a key problem, but would be surmountable in a comparatively short time, probably a few weeks, since quantities involved would not be large, even if increased somewhat over previous levels. Soviet POL could be unloaded from tankers at Chan-chiang in South China, moved thence by rail to the DRV border and from there to the Hanoi area by truck. It could also move from the USSR by rail directly across China, or down the coast from Chan-chiang in shallow-draft shipping. 44/

Restricting the LOCs south of the Hanoi region would create logistical problems for NVN military forces in Military Region IV south of the 20th parallel, but would not stop the relatively small amounts of material forwarded to SVN.

The cumulative effect of the proposed bombing program would make life difficult for NVN, therefore, but it would not force it to curtail the war in the South:

> The combined impact of destroying in-country stockpiles, restricting import capabilities, and attacking the southward LOCs would greatly complicate the DRV war effort. The cumulative drain on material resources and human energy would be severe. The postulated bombing and interdiction campaign would harass, disrupt, and impede the movement of men and material into South Vietnam and impose great overall difficulty on the DRV. However, we believe that, with a determined effort, the DRV could still move substantially greater amounts than in 1965. 45/

The bombing program would not prevent NVN from further expanding NVA/VC forces in the South at the projected reinforcement rate of 4500 men per month and from further providing them with heavier weapons, but it might set some limit on their size and their operations:

> ...an attempt by the Communists to increase their strength...to intensify hostilities...or...to meet expanded US/GVN offensive operations...will use up supplies at a higher rate.../This/ might raise supply requirements to a level beyond the practical ceiling imposed on their logistic capabilities by the bombing campaign....There are, however, too many uncertainties to permit estimating at just what level the limit on expansion would be. 46/

Also in February, Secretary McNamara asked the JCS to develop an optimum air interdiction program "to reduce to the maximum extent the support in men and materiel being provided by North Vietnam to the Viet Cong and PAVN forces in South Vietnam." 47/ The study, forwarded to the Secretary on 14 April, managed to frame an interdiction program which embraced virtually everything the JCS had been recommending. It pointed out that less than half of the JCS targets, "the most critical to North Vietnam's support of the insurgency, military capabilities, and industrial output," had been hit, "due to self-imposed restraints":

> These restraints have caused a piecemealing of air operations which has allowed the enemy a latitude of freedom to select and use methods that significantly increase his combat effectiveness. It has permitted him to receive war supporting materiel from external sources through routes of ingress which for the most part have been immune from attack and then to disperse and store this materiel in politically assured sanctuaries. From these sanctuaries the enemy then infiltrates this materiel to SVN/Laos....Throughout the entire movement, maximum use is made of villages and towns as sanctuaries. These and the Hanoi, Haiphong, and China border buffer areas cloak and protect his forces and materiel, provide him a military training and staging area free from attack, and permit him to mass his air defense weapons.
>
> ....The less than optimum air campaign, and the relatively unmolested receipt of supplies from Russia, China, satellite countries, and certain elements of the Free World have undoubtedly contributed to Hanoi's belief in ultimate victory. Therefore, it is essential that an intensified air campaign be promptly initiated against specific target systems critical to North Vietnam's capability for continued aggression and support of insurgency. 48/

The study went on to outline an intensified bombing campaign to cause NVN to stop supporting the insurgency in the South

> by making it difficult and costly for North Vietnam to continue effective support of the NVN/VC forces in South Vietnam and to impose progressively increasing penalties on NVN for continuing to support insurgency in Southeast Asia. 49/

Its language left no doubt that while the strikes were intended "to restrict NVN capability to support and conduct armed aggression in

SEAsia," the ultimate purpose was to apply pressure against Hanoi's will:

> The strategy of this plan requires initial application of air attacks over a widespread area against the NVN military base structure and war supporting resources. The intensity of air operations and the number of targets to be attacked gradually increase. Under such pressure of attack, NVN must further disperse or face destruction in depth of its military base and resources. The dispersal will increase the stresses on command, control, and logistic support and should cause some concern in the Military Command of the wisdom of further aggression....The combined effects of reducing and restricting external assistance to NVN, the progressive attacks against NVN military and war supporting resources, the interdiction of infiltration routes in NVN and Laos, and the destruction of NVN/VC forces and bases in SVN and Laos should cause a reappraisal in Hanoi as to NVN's military capability to continue aggression. 50/

The plan, which was merely "noted" and not red-striped by the JCS, called for the "controlled and phased intensification of air strikes" and a "modest adjustment" in the sanctuaries (to 10 miles around Hanoi, 4 around Haiphong, and 20 from the Chinese border, as previously recommended by the JCS). A first phase extended armed reconnaissance to the northeast, and struck 11 more JCS-listed bridges, the Thai Nguyen railroad yards and shops, 14 headquarters/barracks, 4 ammunition and 2 supply depots, 5 POL storage areas, 1 airfield, 2 naval bases, and 1 radar site, all outside the (reduced) sanctuaries. The second phase attacked 12 "military and war supporting installations" within the Hanoi and Haiphong sanctuaries: 2 bridges, 3 POL storage areas, 2 railroad shops and yards, 3 supply depots, 1 machine tool plant, and 1 airfield. The third phase attacked the 43 remaining JCS targets, including 6 bridges, 7 ports and naval bases, 6 industrial plants, 7 locks, 10 power plants, the NVN ministries of national and air defense, and assorted railroad, supply, radio, and transformer stations.

The plan also provided for three special attack options for execution during any of the phases "as a counter to enemy moves or when strong political and military action is desired." The options were: attack on the POL center at Haiphong; aerial mining of the channel approaches to Haiphong, Hon Gai, and Cam Pha, the three principal maritime ports; and strikes against the major jet airfields at Hanoi, Haiphong and Phuc Yen. 51/

a "logistic funnel" through which supplies from the USSR and China flowed. As such, it was a hard target, easy to maintain in operation and quite large for the load. This was particularly the case in the lower half of the "funnel", where the bombing had been concentrated:

> ...the rudimentary nature of the logistic targets in the southern part of North Vietnam, the small volume of traffic moving over them in relation to route capacities, the relative ease and speed with which they are repaired, the extremely high frequency with which they would have to be restruck -- once every three days -- all combine to make the logistic network in this region a relatively unattractive target system, except as a supplement to a larger program. A significant lesson from the ROLLING THUNDER program to date is that the goals of sustained interdictions of the rudimentary road and trail networks in southern North Vietnam and Laos will be extremely difficult and probably impossible to obtain in 1966, given the conventional ordnance and strike capabilities likely to exist. 58/

The upper half of the "funnel" was a much more lucrative target -- not, however, because attacking it would choke the volume of supplies flowing into the South, but because it would inflict more pain on the regime in the North.

> The flow of military logistics supplies from the USSR and China cannot be cut off, but the movement could be made considerably more expensive and unreliable if authorization is granted to attack intensively the rail connections to Communist China and if the three major ports are effectively mined. About 2/3 of North Vietnam's imports are carried by sea transport and the remainder move principally over the rail connections from Communist China. Mining the entrances to the three major ports would effectively transfer all imports to rail transport, including the flow of imports needed to maintain economic activity. The rail connections to Communist China would then become a more lucrative target and the disruptive effect of interdiction would then be more immediately felt. Sustained interdiction would then force Hanoi to allocate considerable amounts of manpower and materials to maintain the line. 59/

Bombing the supplies and supply facilities at the top of the "funnel" was therefore a "preferred LOC target system." It was not advanced as an interdiction measure, however, but as a means of increasing the penalty to Hanoi (and its allies), in terms of economic,

social, and political consequences, of supporting the war in the South, and thus presumably to reduce the desire to continue it. Other targets which might be attacked in order to similarly influence the will of the regime were: 26 military barracks and/or supply facilities on the JCS list, the neutralization of which would "impede the flow of military supplies and disrupt the military training programs of NVN"; 8 major POL storage facilities, which had a "direct bearing" on the regime's ability to support the war in the South, but which had to be hit almost simultaneously in order to reduce NVN to the critical point in meeting essential requirements; the Haiphong cement plant, the loss of which would "create a major impediment to reconstruction and repair programs" until cement could be imported; 3 major and 11 minor industrial plants which, though they made "no direct or significant contribution to the war effort" and "only a limited contribution" to the economy, were "highly prized and nominally lucrative" targets; or, as an alternative method of knocking out industrial production, the main electric power facilities. 60/

As for other potential targets in NVN -- the command and control system, agriculture, and manpower --

> Attacks on these targets are not recommended at this time. In each case the effects are debatable and are likely to provoke hostile reactions in world capitals. 61/

The March CIA report, with its obvious bid to turn ROLLING THUNDER into a punitive bombing campaign and its nearly obvious promise of real payoff, strengthened JCS proposals to intensify the bombing. In particular, however, the report gave a substantial boost to the proposal to hit the POL targets. The POL system appeared to be the one target system in NVN to which, what the report called, "the principle of concentration" might be applied; that is, in which enough of the system could be brought under simultaneous attack to cut through any cushion of excess capacity, and in which a concentrated attack might be able to overwhelm the other side's ability to reconstruct, repair, or disperse its capacity. 62/

The POL targets had other qualities to commend them as the next escalatory step in ROLLING THUNDER. They really were pressure targets, but they could be plausibly sold as interdiction targets. The main ones were in the Hanoi/Haiphong sanctuaries, so that over and above any economic or military impact, strikes against them would signal that the last sanctuaries were going and the industrial and other targets there were now at risk. They fit the image of "war-supporting" facilities which strategic bombing doctrine and ample military precedent had decreed to be fair game in bringing a war machine to a standstill. They had, in fact, been struck before in other parts of NVN without any unusual political repercussions. They were situated in the arbitrarily-defined urban/industrial centers, but somewhat set apart from the densest civilian housing areas, and thus might not entail as many civilian casualties

as other targets in those areas.

Moreover, even if the impact of POL strikes would be within NVN itself -- because NVN supplied no POL at all to NVA/VC forces in the South and used next to none in transporting other goods there -- POL was at least relevant as an interdiction target. It did power trucks and boats which were involved in carrying men and supplies South. If any truck in the NVN fleet was an acceptable interdiction target, wherever it was and whatever its cargo, why not any POL?

4. McNamara Endorses POL, The President Defers It

Resumption of ROLLING THUNDER, as initiation of the pause, did not, of course, constitute a final decision on escalation. The views of CINCPAC and the JCS remained unaltered, and Secretary McNamara stood committed, unless he reversed himself, to enlarging the area and intensity of interdiction bombing and to destroying North Vietnamese POL. Neither in OSD nor the White House had anyone opposed these measures on other than prudential grounds -- the risk of alienating allies or provoking Chinese or Russian intervention or uncertainty that results would justify either the risks or the costs. Everyone seemed agreed that, were it not for these factors, intensified bombing of the North would help to accomplish American objectives. Nevertheless, the position of the decision-makers can best be characterized as hesitant.

The services naturally undertook to tip the balance toward the rapid and extensive escalation they had all along advocated. To McNamara's memorandum to the President, the JCS had attached a dissent. They felt that the Secretary underrated the "cumulative effect of our air campaign against the DRV on morale and DRV capabilities" and overestimated the "constancy of will of the Hanoi leaders to continue a struggle which they realize they cannot win in the face of progressively greater destruction of their country." 63/

When McNamara reported to the Chairman the President's ruling on ROLLING THUNDER, he apparently spoke of the difficulty of making out a convincing case that air operations against North Vietnam could seriously affect PAVN/VC operations in the South. In any event, following a conversation with the Secretary, General Wheeler ordered formation of a special study group to devise a bombing effort "redirected for optimum military effect." He explained, "the primary objective should be to reduce to the maximum extent the support in men and materiel being provided by North Viet-Nam to the Viet Cong and PAVN forces in South Viet-Nam." 64/ Headed by a Brigadier General from SAC, composed of five Air Force, three Navy, two Army, and one Marine Corps officers, and making extensive use of CINCPAC assistance, this study group went to work in early February, with an assignment to produce at least an interim report by 1 March and a final report no later than 1 August. 65/

Meanwhile, routine continued, with CINCPAC recommending programs thirteen days prior to the beginning of a month and the JCS acting on these recommendations two days later. 66/ In consequence, McNamara received from the Chiefs on 19 February the same advice that had been given during the pause. 67/ He and the President responded much as before, though now permitting armed reconnaissance within the geographical limits fixed just before the pause and authorizing a significant increase -- to above 5,000 -- in numbers of sorties. 68/

On 1 March, when this slightly enlarged campaign opened the Chiefs filed a memorandum stressing the special importance of an early attack on North Vietnamese POL. 69/ They had singled out POL somewhat earlier, writing McNamara in November, 1965, that attack on this target "would be more damaging to the DRV capability to move war-supporting resources within country and along infiltration routes to SVN than an attack against any other single target system." While causing relatively little damage to the civilian economy, it would, they reasoned force a sharp reduction in truck and other road traffic carrying men and supplies southward. They held also that the attack should be made soon, before North Vietnam succeeded in improving air defenses and in dispersing POL storage. 70/

McNamara had rejected this recommendation, not only because of the planned pause, but also because CIA sources questioned some of the Chiefs' reasoning and stressed counterarguments which they tended to minimize. Assessing the probable results of not only taking out North Vietnamese POL, but also mining harbors and bombing military and industrial targets in the northeast quadrant, the Board of National Estimates said, "Damage from the strikes would make it considerably more difficult to support the war in the South, but these difficulties would neither be immediate nor insurmountable." 71/ With regard to the POL system alone, the Board observed "It is unlikely that this loss would cripple the Communist military operations in the South, though it would certainly embarrass them." Pointing out that the bulk of storage facilities stood near Haiphong and Hanoi, the Board went on to say that "the Communists would unquestionably regard the proposed U.S. attacks as opening a new stage in the war, and as a signal of U.S. intention to escalate the scale of conflict." 72/ This appraisal did not encourage adoption of the JCS recommendation.

The Chiefs continued nevertheless to press for a favorable decision. Before and during the pause, they presented fresh memoranda to McNamara. 73/ A more detailed CIA study, obtained just after Christmas, provided somewhat more backing for their view. It conceded that the Communists were dispersing POL facilities and that an early attack on those at Hanoi and Haiphong "would add appreciably to the DRV's difficulties in supplying the Communist forces in the South." Nevertheless, it forecast that "adequate quantities of supplies would continue to move by one means or another to the Communist forces in South Vietnam." 74/

In mid-January, the DIA prepared an estimate considerably more favorable to the scheme. 75/ But in early February appeared a SNIE estimating effects on "DRV physical capabilities to support the insurgency in the South" of the various measures, including attacks on POL, previously recommended by CINCPAC and the JCS. Its conclusion, subscribed to by all intelligence services except that of the Air Force, was that, even with a campaign extended to port facilities, power plants, and land LOC's from China, "with a determined effort, the DRV could still move substantially greater amounts than in 1965." 76/

In renewing their recommendation on 1 March, and again on 10 March, the JCS once more disputed such assessments. In an appendix to their long March 1 memorandum to the Secretary, the Chiefs outlined a concept of operations upon which they proposed to base future deployments. With respect to the air war, they urged that it be expanded to include POL and the aerial mining of ports and attacks on Hanoi and Haiphong. Their rationale was as follows:

> To cause...NVN to cease its control, direction, and support of the communist insurgency in SVN and Laos, air strikes are conducted against military and war-sustaining targets in all areas, including the Hanoi/Haiphong complex and areas to the north and northeast. Armed reconnaissance within NVN and its coastal waters is conducted to interdict LOCs, harass, destroy and disrupt military operations and the movement of men and materials from NVN into Laos and SVN. Aerial mining of ports and interdiction of inland waterways and coastal waters, harbors and water LOCs are conducted to reduce the flow of war resources. Air reconnaissance and special air operations are conducted in support of the overall effort." 77/

Ten days later the Chiefs again requested attacks on the POL together with authorization to mine the approaches to Haiphong. This time they noted that Ambassador Lodge and Admiral Sharp had each recently endorsed such measures (no documents so indicating are available to the writer). Supporting their request they cited recent intelligence reports of North Vietnamese orders for expedited delivery of additional trucks. With the arrival of more trucks, POL would become even more critical to the North Vietnamese logistical effort. Once POL reserves were initially destroyed, however, the mining of Haiphong harbor would be the next immediate priority to prevent resupply by North Vietnam's allies. 78/ The Chiefs argued that the elimination as a package of these high value targets would significantly damage the DRV's war-sustaining capability.

This time, moreover, the Chiefs possessed support in the intelligence community. A study by CIA addressed the question which had been deliberately omitted from the terms of reference for the 4 February

SNIE, i.e., what effect bombing might produce on the will of the North Vietnamese regime. Judging from a summary with some extracts, preserved in Task Force files, it made a strong case for almost unlimited bombing such as CINCPAC and the JCS had steadily advocated. It accepted previous judgments that "the goals of sustained interdictions of the rudimentary road and trail networks in southern North Vietnam and Laos will be extremely difficult and probably impossible to obtain in 1966, given the conventional ordnance and strike capabilities likely to exist." Though arguing that more payoff could result from regarding North Vietnam as a "logistic funnel" and attempting to stop what went into it rather than what came out, it conceded that the "flow of military logistics supplies from the USSR and China cannot be cut off." But the report contended that such measures as mining harbors, maintaining steady pressure on LOC's with China, and destroying militarily insignificant but "highly prized" industrial plants would not only reduce North Vietnam's capacity to support the insurgency in the South but would influence her leaders' willingness to continue doing so. "Fundamental changes must be made if the effectiveness of the campaign is to be raised significantly," said the report, "First, the constraints upon the air attack must be reduced. Secondly, target selection must be placed on a more rational basis militarily." One point stressed was the importance of taking out all remaining POL storage facilities simultaneously and at an early date. 79/

With memoranda from the JCS now reinforced by this CIA report, Secretary McNamara had to reconsider the POL issue. Conferring with Wheeler on 23 March, he put several specific questions, among them whether destruction of POL storage facilities would produce significant results if not coupled with mining of North Vietnamese ports, what exact targets were to be hit, and with how many sorties. 80/ Responding with the requested details, the Chiefs said that they attached the highest importance to the operation, even if enemy harbors remained open. They strongly recommended, in addition, attacks on adjoining industrial targets and LOC's, in order to enhance the effect of destroying POL facilities. 81/

In a memorandum for the President on bombing operations for April, McNamara endorsed most of these JCS recommendations. He proposed authorizing attacks on seven of the nine POL storage facilities in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. Of the two he omitted, one lay near the center of Hanoi. In addition, McNamara recommended attacks on the Haiphong cement plant and on roads, bridges, and railroads connecting Haiphong and Hanoi and leading from the two cities to the Chinese border, and asked that the military commanders be permitted to run up to 900 sorties into the north-east quadrant, at their discretion.

For this marked stepping-up of the air war, McNamara put on paper a much more forceful presentation than that in his January memorandum. Using as a point of departure the general estimate that bombing could neither interdict supply of the South nor halt flow from China and Russia into the North, he argued that:

> ...The movement can be made considerably more expansive and unreliable (a) by taking action to overload the roads and railroads (e.g., by destroying the domestic source of cement), (b) by attacking the key roads, railroads and bridge between Hanoi on the one hand and Haiphong and China on the other, and (c) by pinching the supply of POL, which is critical to ground movement and air operations.

Amplifying one of these recommendations, McNamara commented that destruction of the plant, which produced 50% of North Vietnam's cement, would make bridge and road rebuilding difficult. As for POL, he observed that the facilities targeted represented 70-80% of those in the country. Though the North Vietnamese possessed reserves and had probably already built up some in the South, their transportation system depended on a continuous supply. They were known to have recently doubled their orders for imported Soviet POL. Eventually, though not necessarily in the short run, he said, they were bound to suffer a shortage.

While McNamara conceded that he did not expect the proposed program to yield quick results in South Vietnam, he predicted that it would ultimately have some effect. Addressing some political issues that had influenced the previous hesitancy, he asserted that the South would probably do nothing more than adopt "a somewhat harsher diplomatic and propaganda line" and that the Chinese "would not react to these attacks by active entry -- by ground or air," unless the United States took further steps, the decisions on which "at each point would be largely within our own control." And offsetting such risks stood the possibility of favorable political effects. McNamara ventured no promises. He said, "We would not expect Hanoi to change its basic policy until and unless it concluded that its chances of winning the fight in the South had become so slim that they could no longer justify the damage being inflicted upon the North." Nevertheless, he commented that destruction of POL facilities "should cause concern in Hanoi about their ability to support troops in South Vietnam" and concluded his memorandum by writing:

> In the longer term, the recommended bombing program.... can be expected to create a substantial added burden on North Vietnam's manpower supply for defense and logistics tasks and to engender popular alienation from the regions should shortages become widespread. While we do not predict that the regime's control would be appreciably weakened, there might eventually be an aggravation of any differences which may exist within the regime as [to] the policies to be followed.

Reading this memorandum, one might conclude that the Secretary, after passing through a season of uncertainty, had finally

made up his mind -- that he now felt the right action to be sharp escalation such as CINCPAC, the JCS, and McNaughton had advocated during the pause. But even now, despite the comparatively vigorous language of the memorandum, one cannot be sure that McNamara expected or wanted the President to approve his recommendations.

The memorandum was probably brought up at the White House Tuesday luncheon on 28 March. Just sixteen days earlier, in response to Marshal Ky's removal of General Nguyen Chanh Thi from Command of the I Corps Area, Buddhist monks had initiated anti-Ky demonstrations in DaNang and Hue. Soon, with other groups joining in, dissidents dominated the northern and central part of the country. Many not only attacked the Ky regime but denounced the American presence in Vietnam and called for negotiation with the NLF. Controlling the Hue radio and having easy access to foreign newsmen, these dissidents won wide publicity in the United States. As a result, Americans previously counted as supporters of administration policy began to ask why the United States should expend its resources on people who apparently did not want or appreciate help. Such questioning was heard from both Democrats and Republicans in Congress. Quite probably, the political situation in Vietnam and its repercussions in America stood uppermost in the President's mind. Equally probably, McNamara recognized this fact. If so, it should not have surprised him to find the President taking much the same position as that which they had both taken, and recorded in NSAM 288 in March, 1964, when the Khanh government trembled -- that it was imprudent to mount new offensives "from an extremely weak base which might at any moment collapse and leave the posture of political confrontation worsened rather than improved." 83/

In any event, the principal outcome of White House meetings at the end of March was a string of urgent cables from Rusk to Lodge, suggesting steps which might be urged on the Ky government and saying, among other things,

> ....We are deeply distressed by the seeming unwillingness or inability of the South Vietnamese to put aside their lesser quarrels in the interest of meeting the threat from the Viet Cong. Unless that succeeds, they will have no country to quarrel about....We face the fact that we ourselves cannot succeed except in support of the South Vietnamese. Unless they are able to mobilize reasonable solidarity, the prospects are very grim." 84/

As for McNamara's proposals, the President approved only giving commanders discretion to launch 900 sorties into the northeast quadrant during April and permission to strike roads, railroads, and bridges outside or just on the fringe of the prohibited circles around Hanoi and Haiphong. He did not consent to measures involving more visible escalation of the air war.

McNamara returned to the Pentagon to inform the Chiefs that, while these operations had not been vetoed, they were not yet authorized. 85/

The President had authorized the extension of armed reconnaissance into the northeast quadrant and strikes on 4 of the 5 bridges recommended by McNamara but deferred any decision on the crucial portion, the strikes against the 5th bridge, the cement plant, the radar, and above all the 7 POL targets. The JCS execution message for ROLLING THUNDER 50, which was sent out on 1 April, directed implementation of what had been approved. In addition, it ordered CINCPAC to "plan for and be prepared to execute when directed attacks during April" against the 5th bridge, the cement plant, the radar, and the 7 POL sites. 86/ A pencilled notation by Secretary McNamara with reference to these targets also mentions April: "Defer...until specifically authorized but develop specific plans to carry out in April." 87/

C. April and May -- Delay and Deliberation

1. Reasons to Wait

Although the President's reasons for postponing the POL decision are not known, and although the initial postponement seemed short, a matter of weeks, it is evident from the indirect evidence available that the proposal to strike the POL targets ran into stiffening opposition within the Administration, presumably at State but perhaps in other quarters as well. Before the question was settled it had assumed the proportions of a strategic issue, fraught with military danger and political risk, requiring thorough examination and careful appraisal, difficult to come to grips with and hotly contended. The question remained on the agenda of senior officials for close to three months, repeatedly brought up for discussion and repeatedly set aside inconclusively. Before it was resolved a crisis atmosphere was generated, requiring the continuing personal attention of all the principals.

There can be little doubt that the POL proposal instigated a major policy dispute. The explanation seems to be two-fold. One, those who saw the bombing program, whatever its merits, as seriously risking war with China or the USSR, decided to seize the occasion as perhaps the last occasion to establish a firebreak against expanding the bombing to the "flash points." Two, those who saw the bombing program as incurring severe political penalties saw this as the last position up to which those penalties were acceptable and beyond which they were not. Both points no doubt merged into a single position. Both turned the POL question into an argument over breaching the Hanoi/Haiphong sanctuaries in any major way.

McNamara's Memorandum for the President, which had treated the POL strikes as a logical extension of the previous interdiction program into an area in which it might be more remunerative, did not address these questions of sanctuaries. No other single document has been located in the available files which does. Pieced together and deduced from the fragmentary evidence, however, it appears that the view that POL strikes ran too great a risk of counter-escalation involved several propositions. One was that the strikes might trigger a tit-for-tat reprisal (presumably by the VC) against the vulnerable POL stores near Saigon. The Secretary of Defense had himself made this point as early as mid-1965 in holding off Congressional and other proponents of Hanoi/Haiphong area POL strikes, citing the endorsement of General Westmoreland. 88/ The JCS had recognized the possibility in their November 1965 paper on POL strikes, although they considered it "of relatively small potential consequence, minor in comparison to the value of destruction of the DRV POL system." 89/ General Wheeler had also gone out of his way to allude to it. 90/ Under Secretary of State Ball, in a January 1966 memorandum, saw the possibility of an enemy reprisal in SVN as only the first act of a measure-countermeasure scenario which could go spiralling out of control: a VC reprisal against POL in SVN would put unbearable pressure on the U.S. to counter-retaliate against the North in some dangerous manner, which in turn would force the other side to react to that, and so on. 91/

More important than the fear of a VC reprisal, one assumes, was the belief that the POL sites were the first of the "vital" targets, high-value per se but also generally co-located with and fronting for NVN's other high-value targets. NVN, with its "vital" targets attacked and its economic life at stake, would at a minimum defend itself strenuously (again, provoking us to attack its airfields in our defense, which in turn might set off an escalatory sequence); or, at the other extreme, NVN might throw caution to the winds and call on its allies to intervene. This might be only a limited intervention at first, e.g. use of Chinese fighters from Chinese bases to protect NVN targets, but even this could go escalating upward into a full-scale collision with China. On the other hand, the strikes at the "vital" targets might be the Southeast Asian equivalent of the march to the Yalu, convince the other side that the U.S. was embarked on a course intolerable to its own interests, such as the obliteration of the NVN regime, and cause it to intervene directly. 92/

These arguments were not new, of course; they were arguments which could be, and no doubt were, used against any bombing at all. They gained force, however, as the bombing became more intense and the more the bombing was thought to really hurt Hanoi. (It was an irony of the original concept of the air war North that the more pressure it really applied and hence the more successful it was, the more difficult it was to prosecute.)

The belief that POL strikes would overload the negative side of the scale on political grounds had to do with the possibility that, since the targets were situated in relatively populated "urban" areas (even though outside of the center cities), the strikes would be construed as no less than the beginning of an attack on civilian targets and/or population centers. This possibility, too, could widen the war if it were taken by NVN and its allies as indicating a U.S. decision to commence "all-out" bombing aimed at an "unlimited" objective. But even if it did not widen the war, it could cause a storm of protest world-wide and turn even our friends against us. The world had been told repeatedly that the U.S. sought a peaceful settlement, not a total military victory; that the U.S. objectives were limited to safeguarding SVN; that bombing NVN was confined to legitimate military targets related to the aggression against SVN; and that great care was taken to avoid civilian casualties. Any or all of this could be called into question by the POL strikes, according to the argument, and the U.S. could be portrayed as embarking on a course of ruthless brutality against a poor defenseless population.

The argument about the escalatory implications of the proposed POL strikes was difficult to deal with. Official intelligence estimates were available which said, on balance, that Chinese or Soviet intervention in the war was unlikely, but no estimate could say that such intervention was positively out of the question, and of course intelligence estimates could misjudge the threshold of intervention, it was said, as they had in Korea. 93/

The argument about the political repercussions made some headway, however. Progress became possible because of the development of military plans to execute the strikes with "surgical" precision, thus minimizing the risk of civilian casualties, and because of the development of a "scenario" for the strikes in which military, diplomatic, and public affairs factors were coordinated in an effort to contain adverse reactions. There slowly unfolded a remarkable exercise in "crisis management."

2. The April Policy Review

Though McNamara's memorandum, and the President's indication that he might later approve POL, brought the Administration somewhat nearer to a decision for escalation, there was as yet no new consensus on how the air war against the North might be tailored to serve American objectives or, indeed, on what those objectives were or ought to be. The study group in the Joint Staff, completing its work early in April, offered a straightforward answer: "The overall objective is to cause NVN to cease supporting, directing, and controlling the insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos." With his understanding, they could recommend a three phase

campaign leading to destruction of between 90 and 100% of all POL storage, bridges, airfields, rail facilities, power plants, communications, port structures, and industry in North Vietnam. Whether the Chiefs reasoned similarly is not apparent from the papers available. Although they came out with comparable recommendations, they merely "noted" this study. 94/

Certainly, in spite of McNamara's memorandum recommending escalation, no clear view prevailed within OSD or among civilians elsewhere in the government occupied with Vietnam policy. Among the papers left behind by McNaughton are some fragments relating to an attempt early in April, 1966, to rethink the question of what the United States sought in Vietnam. These fragments suggest an evolution between winter, 1965-66, and spring, 1966, from hesitancy to perplexity.

The political situation in South Vietnam became increasingly explosive. On March 31, 10,000 Buddhists had demonstrated in Saigon against the government and the demonstrations had spread to other cities in the next several days. On April 5, Premier Ky flew to Danang to quell the rebellion and threatened to use troops if necessary. 95/ In this context, a meeting was convened at the White House on Friday, 9 April. Vance and McNaughton represented Defense; Ball, Bundy, and Leonard Unger the State Department; and George Carver the CIA. Walt Rostow, who had just replaced McGeorge Bundy, took part. So did Robert Komer and Bill Moyers. 96/

In preparation for this meeting, McNaughton, Ball, Unger, and Carver undertook to prepare memoranda outlining the broad alternatives open. Carver would make the case for continuing as is, Unger and McNaughton for continuing but pressing for a compromise settlement -- Unger to take an optimistic and McNaughton a pessimistic view and Ball to argue for disengagement. Then four options were labelled respectively, A, B-O, B-P, and C.

Carver, advocating Option A, wrote:

OPTION A

I. Description of the Course of Action

1. Option A involves essentially persevering in our present policies and programs, adhering to the objectives of

a. Preventing a North Vietnamese takeover of South Vietnam by insurrectionary warfare, thus

(1) Checking Communist expansion in Southeast Asia

(2) Demonstrating U.S. ability to provide support which will enable indigenous non-Communist elements to cope with "wars of national liberation" and, hence,

(3) Demonstrating the sterile futility of the militant and aggressive expansionist policy advocated by the present rulers of Communist China.

b. Aiding the development of a non-Communist political structure within South Vietnam capable of extending its writ over most of the country and acquiring sufficient internal strength and self-generated momentum to be able to survive without the support of U.S. combat forces whenever North Vietnam ceases its present campaign of intensive military pressure.

To adopt this option, Carver reasoned, required, on the political side, work with all non-Communist Vietnamese factions "to insure that the transition to civilian rule is as orderly as possible and effected with a minimum disruption of current programs." The United States would have to make plain in Saigon that continued support was "contingent upon some modicum of responsible political behavior" and would have to "initiate the Vietnamese in the techniques of developing political institutions such as constitutions and parties." An "intensive endeavor at provincial and district levels" would have to complement efforts in the capital.

On the military side, Carver judged the demands of Option A to be as follows:

a. Current U.S. force deployments in Vietnam will have to be maintained and additional deployments already authorized should be made.

b. Efforts to hamper Communist use of Laos as a corridor for infiltrating troops and supplies into South Vietnam should be continued and in some respects intensified. There should be further employment of B-52's against selected choke points vulnerable to this type of attack. Additional programs should be developed to make our interdiction attacks more effective.

c. The aerial pressure campaign on North Vietnam should be sustained for both military and psychological purposes. Attacks should not be mounted against population centers such as Hanoi or Haiphong, but major POL storage depots should be destroyed and, probably, Haiphong harbor should be mined.

d. Within South Vietnam we must recognize that the period of political transition now in train -- even if it evolves in the most favorable fashion possible -- will produce some diminution in the effectiveness of central authority and some disruption in current programs. At best, we will be in for a situation like that of late 1963. It is essential that the Communists be prevented from making major military gains during this time of transition or scoring military successes which would generate an aura of invincibility or seriously damage the morale of our South Vietnamese allies. Therefore, it is essential that during this period, Communist forces be constantly harried, kept off balance, and not permitted to press their advantage. The bulk of this task will have to be borne by U.S. and allied forces during the immediate future and these forces must be aggressively and offensively employed.

Option B-0, as developed by Unger, assumed a "policy decision that we will undertake to find a way to bring to an end by negotiation the military contest in South Viet-Nam." (This paper, dated "4/14/66," was prepared after the April 9 meeting but was filed with the other papers of that date.) It was the optimistic version of this option because Unger assumed the possibility of reaching a settlement "on terms which preserve South Vietnam intact and in a condition which offers at least a 60-40 chance of its successfully resisting Communist attempts at political takeover."

In pursuit of this option the United States would persuade the GVN to negotiate with the NLF, offering amnesty and a coalition government, though not one giving the NLF control of the military, the police, or the treasury. The United States would withdraw troops "in return for the withdrawal of North Vietnamese military forces and political cadre." Perhaps, agreements between South Vietnam and North Vietnam would provide for economic intercourse and mutual recognition.

It would not be easy to persuade the GVN, Unger conceded. Doing so might require not only words but withholding of funds or withdrawal of some American forces. And once the GVN appreciated that the United States was in earnest, there would be danger of its collapse. Even if these problems were surmounted, there would remain the difficulty of pressing the negotiations to conclusion. "There is no assurance," Unger wrote, "that a negotiated settlement can pass successfully between the upper millstone of excessively dangerous concessions to the VC/NLF and the nether millstone of terms insufficiently attractive to make the VC/NLF consider it worthwhile to negotiate."

Militarily, Unger reasoned, Option B-O would call for continuation of current efforts, perhaps with a modest increase in ground forces but with no step-up in the air war. Total refusal to talk on the part of the Communists would, however, Unger wrote,

> ...leave us with a question of what kind of stick we have to substitute for the proferred carrot and this might bring us up against the judgment of whether intensification and extension of our bombing in North Viet-Nam, coupled with whatever greater military efforts could be made in the South would bring the Communists to the table.

McNaughton's papers do not contain his original memorandum setting forth the pessimistic version of Option B. One can, however, infer its outlines from various other pieces in the McNaughton collection.

The difference between McNaughton and Unger presumably did not concern the objective -- negotiating out. It lay in McNaughton's expressing less confidence in an outcome not involving Communist control of South Vietnam. On the first Monday in April, he had talked with Michael Deutch, freshly back from Saigon. His notes read:

1. Place (VN) in unholy mess.

2. We control next to no territory.

3. Fears economic collapse.

4. People would not vote for 'our ride.'

5. Wants to carry out economic warfare in VC.

6. This is incorruptible and popular. Chieu [sic] is best successor for Ky.

7. Militarily will be same place year from now.

8. Pacification won't get off ground for a year.

If McNaughton himself accepted anything like this estimate, he would have been pessimistic indeed about prospects for the GVN's survival. Even if he did not take quite so gloomy a view, he probably felt, as he had intimated in one of his January memoranda, that the United States should prepare to accept something less than the conditions which Unger sketched. What practical consequences followed from this difference in view, one can only guess.

Option C, as stated by Ball, rested on the assumption that "the South Vietnamese people will not be able to put together a government capable of maintaining an adequate civil and military effort or -- if anything resembling actual independence is ever achieved -- running the country." On this premise, he concluded, much as in earlier memoranda, "we should concentrate our attention on cutting our losses." Specifically, he recommended official declarations that United States support depended on a representative government which desired American aid and which demonstrated its ability to create "the necessary unity of action to assure the effective prosecution of the war and the peace." Seizing upon the next political crisis in South Vietnam, the United States should, said Ball, "halt the deployment of additional forces, reduce the level of air attacks on the North, and maintain ground activity at the minimum level required to prevent the substantial improvement of the Viet Cong position."

Ball described two alternative outcomes from Option C. One was that the South Vietnamese might unify and "face reality," the other, far more likely in Ball's estimation, was that South Vietnam would fragment still further, "leading to a situation in which a settlement would be reached that contemplated our departure." He closed:

> Let us face the fact that there are no really attractive options open to us. To continue to fight the war with the present murky political base is, in my judgment, both dangerous and futile. It can lead only to increasing commitments, heavier losses, and mounting risks of dangerous escalation.

In McNaughton's files are pencil notes which may relate either to his own missing memorandum or to a conversation that took place among some of the officials concerned. Despite its cryptic nature, it is worth reproducing in its entirety, in part because it gives a clue to thoughts passing at this time through McNamara's mind:

> Do we press VNese or do they move themselves[?]
>
> ---
>
> What the point of probes if (w[oul]d be counterproductive otherwise)
>
> ---
>
> Ball
>
> 1. No more US forces unless better govt

2. Reemph[asis] of cond[itions]

   (a) Rep govt ask[ed]

   (b) Performance

3. Fashion govt unified and stable govt. Give time. Protect selves.

   Defend selves.

4. Effect

   (a) Nationalist

   (b) VC deal by GVN

If squeeze GVN first, and go to [Ball's position] later, have contaminated Course C. Better to claim we want to win and they rush out to settle.

Timing critical. 10 days ago. Not today. Will have new chance when advisors decide how election set up. Unless elections rigged, Buddhists to streets.

Need Pres. statements re (a) cond[itio]ns and (b) optimism VNese moving that way.

W[oul]dn't the SVNese just comply and knuckle down and not do any better [?] How do we move them toward compromise [?] Maybe second time, we do throw in the towel and they make deal.

Lodge more likely to go for Ball ultimatum than B.

Anti-US govt likely to follow. How handle actual departure [?] Do we want to precipitate anti-US [?]

Must we condition US and world public for 6 mos before 'ultimatun.'

Pres. to press, ans. qn. giving bases of our help.

BUT, why not get better deal for SVN by RSM approach? Give them choice now between (1) chaos 6 mos from now (via Ball) and VC govt. and (2) chance at compromise now with even chance of something better.

Who can deal -- Don, Thi?

If we followed RSM approach, ruin our image (pushing for deal) and cause demoralization. Tri Quang may even say we selling out.

We chilled bids earlier.

Could there be an independent Delta? Already accommodation.

As McNaughton's notes reveal, the group that met at the White House on April 9 was preoccupied with the immediate political crisis in South Vietnam. Early that morning, Walt Rostow had addressed a memo to Secretaries Rusk and McNamara suggesting a course of action for "breaking Tri Quang's momentum." 97/ His proposal -- which was the form the subsequent solution took -- called for giving substantial tactical concessions to the Buddhists on the issue of the Constituent Assembly in order to bring the regime-threatening deomonstrations to an end. At the White House meeting later that day several participants were called on to prepare papers on the crisis.

Leonard Unger of the State Department drafted a paper outlining five possible outcomes of the crisis, the last two of which were a secession of neutralist northern provinces and/or a complete collapse of Saigon political machinery with the VC moving into the vacuum. 98/ His paper was probably considered at a meeting on Monday, April 12, as suggested by McNaughton's handwritten notes. 99/ At the same meeting, a long memorandum prepared by George Carver of CIA in response to a request at the Friday meeting, and entitled "Consequences of Buddhist Political Victory in South Vietnam," was also considered. 100/ Carver argued that while a Buddhist government would have been difficult for us to deal with it would not have been impossible and, given the evident political strength of the Buddhists, might even work to our long range advantage. The three American options in such a contingency were: (1) trying to throw out the new government; (2) attempting to work with it; or (3) withdrawing from South Vietnam. Clearly, he argued, the second was the best in view of our commitments.

That same day, Maxwell Taylor sent the President a detailed memo with recommendations for dealing with the Buddhist uprising. In essence he recommended that the U.S. take a tough line in support of Ky and against the Buddhists. In his words,

> ...we must prevent Tri Quang from overthrowing the Directorate (with or without Ky who personally is expendable) and support a conservative, feasible schedule for a transition to constitutional government. In execution of such a program, the GVN (Ky, for the present) should be encouraged to use the necessary force to restore and maintain order, short of attempting to reimpose government rule by bayonets on

Danang-Hue which, for the time being, should be merely contained and isolated. 101/

These recommendations, however, had been overtaken by events. The GVN had already found a formula for restoring order and appeasing the Buddhists. In a three day "National Political Congress" in Saigon from April 12-14, the GVN adopted a program promising to move rapidly toward constitutional government which placated the main Buddhist demands. 102/ For a few weeks the demonstrations ceased and South Vietnam returned to relative political quiet. While not unusual as policy problems go, this political crisis in South Vietnam intervened temporarily to divert official attention from the broader issues of the war and indirectly contributed to the deferral of any decision to authorize attacks on the POL in North Vietnam. Other issues and problems would continue to defer the POL decision, both directly and indirectly, for another two months.

With some semblance of calm restored momentarily to South Vietnamese politics, the second-level Washington policy officials could turn their attention once again to the broader issues of U.S. policy direction. On April 14, Walt Rostow sent McNaughton a memo entitled "Headings for Decision and Action: Vietnam, April 14, 1966," (implying topics for discussion at a meeting later that day?). Item one on Rostow's agenda was a proposed high-level U.S. statement endorsing the recent evolution of events in South Vietnam and stipulating that continued U.S. assistance and support would be contingent on South Vietnamese demonstration of unity, movement toward constitutional government, effective prosecution of the war, and maintenance of order. His second topic was the bombing of the North, and subheading "b" re-opened the POL debate with the simple question, "Is this the time for oil?" 103/ Other issues which he listed for consideration included: accelerating the campaign against main force units, economic stabilization, revolutionary construction, Vietnamese politics (including constitution-making), and negotiations between the GVN and the VC (if only for political warfare purposes).

On the same day, the JCS forwarded to the Secretary the previously mentioned "ROLLING THUNDER Study Group Report: Air Operations Against NVN" with a cover memo noting that its recommendations for a stepped up bombing campaign were "in consonance with the general concept recommended in JCSM-41-66...." 104/ The voluminous study itself recommended a general expansion of the bombing with provision for three special attack options, one against the Haiphong POL center; the second for the aerial mining of the sea approaches to Haiphong, Hon Gai, and Cam Pha; and the third for strikes at the major airfields of Hanoi, Haiphong, and Phuc Yen. 105/ In offering these options, the report stated that, "Military considerations would require that two of the special attack options, POL and mining, be conducted now. However, appreciation of the sensitivity of such attacks is recognized and the precise time of execution must take into account political factors." 106/ Somewhat optimistically, the report

estimated that the POL strike would involve only 13 civilian casualties, and the mining would cause none. 107/ While there is no specific record of the Secretary's reaction to this full-blown presentation of the arguments for expanded bombing, he had sent a curt memo to the Chiefs the previous day in reply to their JCSM 189-66 of March 26, in which they had again urged attacking the POL. Tersely reflecting the President's failure to adopt their (and his) recommendation, he stated, "I have received JCSM-189-66. Your recommendations were considered in connection with the decision on ROLLING THUNDER 50." 108/

As the second-echelon policy group returned to its consideration of the four options for U.S. policy (previously known as A, B-O, B-P, and C), the weight of recent political instability shifted its focus somewhat. When the group met again on Friday, April 16, at least three papers were offered for deliberation. William Bundy's draft was titled, "Basic Choices in Viet-Nam"; George Carver of CIA contributed "How We Should Move"; and a third paper called "Politics in Vietnam: A 'Worst' Outcome" was probably written by John McNaughton.

Bundy began with a sober appraisal of the situation:

> The political crisis in South Viet-Nam has avoided outright disaster up to this point, but the temporary equilibrium appears to be uneasy and the crisis has meant at the very least a serious setback of the essential non-military programs. 109/

But the closeness with which political disaster had been averted in the South in the preceding week, "forces us to look hard at our basic position and policy in South Viet-Nam. We must now recognize that three contingencies of the utmost gravity are in some degree, more likely than our previous planning had recognized..." 110/ The three contingencies Bundy had in mind were: (1) a state of total political chaos and paralysis resulting from an uprising by the Buddhists countered by the Catholics, Army, etc.; (2) the emergence of a neutralist government with wide support that would seek an end to the war on almost any basis and ask for a U.S. withdrawal; and (3) a continuation of the present GVN but in an enfeebled condition unable to effectively prosecute the war, especially the vital non-military aspects of it. Bundy's estimate was that the third contingency was the most likely at that moment, and that even the most optimistic scenario for political and constitutional evolution could not foresee a change within the succeeding three to four months. Nevertheless, he outlined the four possible U.S. lines of action much as they had been presented before:

> Option A: To continue roughly along present lines, but to hope that the setback is temporary.

Option B: To continue roughly along present lines, but to move more actively to stimulate a negotiated solution, specifically through contact between the Saigon government and elements in the Viet Cong and Liberation Front. This ~~option~~ [lined out in McNaughton] could be approached on an "optimistic" [underlined in McNaughton] or "~~lesser risk~~" [lined out in McNaughton with "harder" penciled in above and question marks in the margin] basis, or on a "pessimistic" [McNaughton underline] or "~~greater risk~~" [lined out in McNaughton with "softer" pencilled in] basis. The opening moves might be the same in both options, but more drastic indications of the U.S. position would ["be involved" penned in by McNaughton] in the "pessimistic" approach [, which shades into option C below." penned by McNaughton].

Option C: To decide now that the chances of bringing about an independent (and non-Communist) [parenthesis added by McNaughton] South Viet-Nam have shrunk to the point where, on an over-all basis, the US effort is no longer warranted [lined out by McNaughton and replaced in pencil with "should be directed at a minimum-cost disengagement." Stet pencilled in the margin.] This would mean setting the stage rapidly [circled by McNaughton] for US disengagement and withdrawal irrespective of whether any kind of negotiation would work or not." [question marks in the margin.] 111/

Bundy did not identify in the paper his preferred option. The tone of his paper, however, suggested a worried preference for "A". In a concluding section he listed a number of "broader factors" which "cut, as they always have, in deeply contradictory directions." 112/ The first was the level of support for the Vietnam policy within the U.S. While it was adequate for the moment, continued GVN weakness and political unrest could seriously undermine it. With an eye on the 1968 Presidential elections, Bundy prophetically summed up the problem:

> As we look a year or two ahead, with a military program that would require major further budget costs--with all their implications for taxes and domestic programs--and with steady or probably rising casualties, the war could well become an albatross around the Administration's neck, at least equal to what Korea was for President Truman in 1952. 113/

Moreover, if the prevailing malaise about the war among our non-SEATO allies degenerated into open criticism, a far wider range of world issues on which their cooperation was required might be seriously affected. With respect to the Soviet Union, no movement on disarmament or other matters of detente could be expected while the war continued. But since no

significant change in Chinese or North Vietnamese attitudes had been expected in any circumstances, continuing the war under more adverse conditions in South Vietnam would hardly worsen them. Bundy ended his paper with an analysis of the impact of a U.S. failure in South Vietnam on the rest of non-communist Asia, even if the failure resulted from a political collapse in Saigon.

5. Vis-a-vis the threatened nations of Asia, we must ask ourselves whether failure in Viet-Nam because of clearly visible political difficulties not under our control would be any less serious than failure ~~by our own choice~~ /lined out in McNaughton/ without this factor. The question comes down, as it always has, to whether there is any tenable line of defense in Southeast Asia if Viet-Nam falls. Here we must recognize that the anti-Communist regime in Indonesia has been a tremendous "break" for us, both for in /McNaughton/ removing the possibility of a Communist pincer movement, which appeared ~~irresistible~~ almost certain /McNaughton/ a year ago, and in /McNaughton/opening up the possibility that over a period of some years Indonesia may become a constructive force. But for the next year or two any chance of holding the rest of Southeast Asia hinges on the same factors assessed a year ago, whether Thailand and Laos in the first instance and Malaysia, Singapore, and Burma close behind, would--in the face of a US failure for any reason in Viet-Nam--have any significant remaining will to resist the Chinese Communist pressures that would probably then be applied. Taking the case of Thailand as the next key point, it must be our present conclusion that--even if sophisticated leaders understood the Vietnamese /McNaughton/ political weaknesses and our inability to control them--to the mass of the Thai people the failure would remain a US failure and a proof that Communism from the north was the decisive force in the area. Faced with this reaction, we must still conclude that Thailand simply could not be held in these circumstances, and that the rest of Southeast Asia would probably follow in due course. In other words, the strategic stakes in Southeast Asia are fundamentally unchanged by the possible political nature of the causes for failure in Viet-Nam. The same is almost certainly true of the shockwaves that would arise against other free nations--Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines--in the wider area of East Asia. Perhaps these shockwaves can be countered, but they would not /McNaughton/ be mitigated by the fact that the failure arose from internal political /sic/ causes rather than any US major error or omission." 114/

Once again, the domino theory, albeit in a refined case by case presentation, was offered by this key member of the Administration as a fundamental argument for the continuing U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Bundy rejected even the subtle argument, offered by some longtime Asian experts, that the uniqueness of the Vietnamese case, particularly its extraordinary lack of political structure, invalidated any generalization of our experience there to the rest of Asia. Thus, he argued the American commitment was both open-ended and irreversible.

George Carver of CIA argued quite a different point of view. His paper began, "The nature and basis of the U.S. commitment in Vietnam is widely misunderstood within the United States, throughout the world, and in Vietnam itself." 115/ Placing himself squarely in opposition to the kind of analysis presented by Bundy, Carver argued that we had allowed control over our policy to slip from our grasp into the "sometimes irresponsible and occasionally unidentifiable hands of South Vietnamese over whom we have no effective control. This is an intolerable position for a great power. 116/ By inferring that our commitment was irreversible and open-ended, Carver maintained we permitted the Vietnamese to exercise leverage over us rather than vice versa. To correct this mistaken view of our commitment and get our own priorities straight, Carver proposed a reformulation of objectives:

> Whatever course of policy on Vietnam we eventually decide to adopt, it is essential that we first clarify the nature of our commitment in that country and present it in a manner which gives us maximum leverage over our Vietnamese allies and maximum freedom of unilateral action. What we need to do, in effect, is return to the original 1954 Eisenhower position and make it abundantly clear that our continued presence in Vietnam in support of the South Vietnamese struggle against the aggressive incursions of their northern compatriots is contingent on the fulfillment of both of two necessary conditions:
>
> (a) A continued desire by the South Vietnamese for our assistance and physical presence.
>
> (b) Some measure of responsible political behavior on the part of the South Vietnamese themselves including, but not limited to, their establishment of a reasonably effective government with which we can work. 117/

Carver was careful to state, however, that two to three months would be required to prepare the ground for this kind of clarification so as not to have it appear we were reversing directions on Vietnam

or presenting the GVN with an ultimatum. Effectively carried out, such a clarification would broaden the range of available options for the U.S. and place us in a much better position to effect desired changes. The mechanics of his proposal called for a Presidential speech in the near future along the lines suggested earlier that week by Walt Rostow. The President should express satisfaction at the evolution of political events in South Vietnam toward constitutional government and indicate "that our capacity to assist South Vietnam is dependent on a continued desire for our assistance and on the demonstration of unity and responsibility in the widening circle of those who will now engage in politics in South Vietnam." 118/ Other speeches by the Vice President and members of Congress in the succeeding weeks might stress the contingency of our commitment, and press stories conveying the new message could be stimulated. Finally, three or four months in the future, the President would complete this process by making our position and commitment crystal clear, possibly in response to a planted press conference question. This public effort would be supplemented by private diplomatic communication of the new message to South Vietnamese leaders by the Embassy.

Carver argued that putting the U.S. in a position to condition its commitment would considerably enhance U.S. flexibility in an uncertain policy environment.

> Once the U.S. position is clear we can then see whether our word to the Vietnamese stimulates better and more responsible political behavior. If it does, we will have improved Option A's chances for success. If it does not, or if South Vietnam descends into chaos and anarchy, we will have laid the groundwork essential to the successful adoption of Option C with minimal political cost. 119/

Questions which remained to be answered included: (1) whether to continue with scheduled troop deployments; (2) whether to give the GVN a specific list of actions on which we expected action and then rate their performance, or rely on a more general evaluation; (3) whether the U.S. should continue to probe the DRV/NLF on the possibility of negotiations; (4) whether to encourage the GVN to make negotiation overtures to the VC.

The third paper, Politics in Vietnam: A "Worst" Outcome, (presumably by McNaughton) dealt with the unsavory possibility of a fall of the current government and its replacement by a "neutralist" successor that sought negotiations, a ceasefire, and a coalition with the VC. After considering a variety of possible, although equally unpromising, courses of action, the paper argued that in such a case the U.S. would have "little choice but to get out of Vietnam....Governing objectives should be: minimizing the inevitable loss of face and protecting U.S. forces, allied forces, and those South Vietnamese who appeal to us for political refuge." 120/ An intriguing tab to the same paper considered the impact on the U.S. position in the Pacific and East Asia in the event of a withdrawal from Vietnam.

Unlike the Bundy paper this analysis eschewed pure domino theorizing for a careful country by country examination. The overall evaluation was that, "Except for its psychological impact, withdrawal from Vietnam would not affect the present line of containment from its Korean anchor down the Japan-Ryukyus-Taiwan-Philippine Island chain." 121/ Four possible alternate defense lines in Southeast Asia were considered: (1) the Thai border; (2) the Isthmus of Kra on the Malay peninsula; (3) the "Water Line" from the Strait of Malacca to the North of Borneo; and (4) an "Interrupted Line" across the gap between the Philippines and Australia.

The best alternatives were either the Isthmus of Kra or the Strait of Malacca; alternative four was to be considered only as a fall back position. The paper stands as a terse and effective refutation of the full-blown domino theory, offering as it does cool-headed alternatives that should have evoked more clear thinking than they apparently did about the irrevocability of our commitment to South Vietnam.

What the exact outcome of the deliberations on these papers was is not clear from the available documents. Nor is there any clear indication of the influence the documents or the ideas contained in them might have had on the Principals or the President. Judgments on this score must be by inference. A scenario drafted by Leonard Unger and included by McNaughton with Carver's paper suggests that some consensus was reached within the group reflecting mostly the ideas contained in Carver's draft. Its second point stated:

> On U.S. scene and internationally we will develop in public statements and otherwise the dual theme that the U.S. has gone into South Viet-Nam to help on the assumption that (a) the Government is representative of the people who do want our help (b) the Government is sufficiently competent to hold the country together, to maintain the necessary programs and use our help. President will elaborate this at opportune moment in constructive tone but with monetary overtones if there is any political turmoil or if Government unwilling to do what we consider essential in such fields as countering inflation, allocating manpower to essential tasks and the like. 122/

In fact, however, while we did attempt to steer the South Vietnamese toward constitutional government on a democratic model, when the President spoke out in succeeding weeks it was to reiterate the firmness of our commitment and the quality of our patience, not to condition them. At a Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House on April 21, he said:

> There are times when Viet-Nam must seem to many a thousand contradictions, and the pursuit of freedom there an almost unrealizable dream.

But there are also times--and for me this is one of them--when the mist of confusion lifts and the basic principles emerge:

--that South Viet-Nam, however young and frail, has the right to develop as a nation, free from the interference of any other power, no matter how mighty or strong;

--that the normal processes of political action, if given time and patience and freedom to work, will someday, some way create in South Viet-Nam a society that is responsive to the people and consistent with their traditions.... 123/

The third point in the Unger scenario was to encourage the GVN to establish contacts with the VC in order to promote defections and/or to explore the possibilities of "negotiated arrangements." This emphasis on contacts between the GVN and the VC may well have reflected the flurry of highly public international activity to bring about negotiations between the U.S. and the DRV that was taking place at that time (considered in more detail below). In any event, this entire effort at option-generation came to an inconclusive end around April 20.

The last paper to circulate was a much revised redraft of Course B that reflected the aforementioned ideas about GVN/VC contacts. It was, moreover, a recapitulation of ideas circulating in the spring of 1966 at the second-level of the government. That they were considerably out of touch with reality would shortly be revealed by the renewed I Corps-Buddhist political problem in May. The paper began with a paragraph discussing the "Essential element" of the course of action -- i.e. "...our decision now to press the GVN to expand and exploit its contacts with the VC/NLF." 124/ The point of these contacts was to determine what basis, if any, might exist for bringing the insurgency to an end.

The proposed approach to the GVN was to be made with three considerations in mind. The first was the dual theme that U.S. assistance in South Vietnam depended on a representative and effective GVN and the genuine desire of the people for our help. Continued political turmoil in South Vietnam would force us to state this policy with increasing sharpness. The second consideration was the U.S. military effort. McNaughton specifically bifurcated this section in his revision to include two alternatives, as follows:

(b) Continuation of the military program including U.S. deployments and air sorties.

(1) Alternative A. Forces increased by the end of

the year to 385,000 men and to attacks on the key military targets outside heavily populated areas in all of North Vietnam except the strip near China.

(2) Alternative B. Forces increased in modest amounts by the end of the year to about 300,000 (with the possibility of halting even the deployments implicit in that figure in case of signal failure by the GVN to perform) and air attacks in the northeast quadrant of North Vietnam kept to present levels in terms of intensity and type of target. 125/

The third consideration was a continuation of U.S. support for GVN revolutionary development and inflation control.

Two alternative GVN tactics for establishing contact with the NLF were offered. The first alternative would be an overt, highly publicized GVN appeal to the VC/NLF to meet with representatives of the GVN to work out arrangements for peace. Alternative two foresaw the initiation of the first contacts through covert channels with public negotiations to follow if the covert talks revealed a basis for agreement. All of this would produce, the paper argued, one of the following outcomes:

(a) If things were going passably for our side but the VC/NLF showed no readiness to settle on terms providing reasonable assurances for the continuation of a non-Communist regime in SVN, we might agree to plod on with present programs (with or without intensified military activity) until the VC/NLF showed more give.

(b) If things were going badly for our side we might feel obliged to insist on the GVN's coming to the best terms it could get with the VC/NLF, with our continuing military and other support conditioned on the GVN moving along those lines.

(c) If things were going well for our side, the VC/NLF might accede to terms which entailed no serious risks for a continuing non-Communist orientation of the GVN in the short term. It would probably have to be assumed that this would represent no more than a tactical retreat of the VC/NLF. 126/

3. Exogeneous Factors

No precise reason can be adduced for the termination of this interdepartmental effort to refine options for American action. In a general way, as the preceding paper shows, the effort had lost some

touch with the situation; the GVN was far too fragile a structure at that point (and about to be challenged again in May by I Corps Commander General Thi and his Buddhist allies) to seriously contemplate contacts or negotiations with the VC. In Washington, the President and his key advisors Rusk and McNamara were preoccupied with a host of additional immediate concerns as well. The President had a newly appointed Special Assistant, Robert Komer, who had recently returned from a trip to Vietnam urging greater attention to the non-military, nation-building aspects of the struggle. In addition, the President was increasingly aware of the importance of the war, its costs, and its public relations to the upcoming Congressional elections. McNamara and the JCS were struggling to reach agreement on force deployment schedules and requirements; and Rusk was managing the public U.S. response to a major international effort to bring about U.S. negotiations with Hanoi. These concerns, as we shall see, served to continue the deferral of any implementation of strikes against North Vietnamese POL reserves.

On April 19, about the time the option drafting exercise was ending, Robert Komer addressed a lengthy memo to the President (plus the Principals and their assistants) reporting on his trip to Vietnam to review the non-military aspects of the war. Presidential concern with what was to be called "pacification" had been piqued during the Honolulu Conference in February. Upon his return to Washington, President Johnson named Komer to become Special Assistant within the White House to oversee the Washington coordination of the program. To emphasize the importance attached to this domain, Komer's appointment was announced in a National Security Action Memorandum on March 28. 127/ As a "new boy" to the Vietnam problem, Komer betook himself to Saigon in mid-April to have a first-hand look. His eleven page report represents more a catalogue of the well-known problems than any very startling suggestion for their resolution. 128/ Nevertheless, it did provide the President with a detailed review of the specific difficulties in the RD effort, an effort that the President repeatedly stressed in his public remarks in this period. 129/

At Defense, problems of deployment phasing for Vietnam occupied a good portion of McNamara's time during the spring of 1966. On March 1, the JCS had forwarded a recommendation for meeting planned deployments that envisaged extending tours of service for selected specialties and calling up some reserve units. 130/ Whatever McNamara's own views on calling the reserves, the President was clearly unprepared to contemplate such seemingly drastic measures at that juncture. Like attacks on North Vietnamese POL, a reserve callup would have been seen as a complete rejection of the international efforts to get negotiations started and as a decisive escalation of the war. Moreover, to consider such an action at a time when South Vietnam was in the throes of a protracted political crisis would have run counter to the views of even some of the strongest supporters of the war. So, on March 10, the Secretary asked the Chiefs to redo their proposal in order to meet the stipulated deployment schedule, stating that it was imperative that, "...all necessary

actions...be taken to meet these deployment dates without callup of reserves or extension of terms of service." 131/ The JCS replied on April 4 that it would be impossible to meet the deployment deadlines because of shortages of critical skills. They proposed a stretch-out of the deployments as the only remedy if reserve callups and extension of duty tours were ruled out. 132/ Not satisfied, the Secretary asked the Chiefs to explain in detail why they could not meet the requirements within the given time schedule. 133/ The Chiefs replied on April 28 with a listing of the personnel problems that were the source of their difficulty, but promised to take "extraordinary measures" in an effort to conform as closely as possible to the desired closure schedule. 134/ The total troop figure for Vietnam for end CY 66 on which agreement was then reached was some 276,000 men. This constituted Program 2-AR.

These modifications and adjustments to the troop deployment schedules, of course, had implications for the supporting forces as well. The Chiefs also addressed a series of memos to the Secretary on required modifications in the deployment plans for tactical aircraft to support ground forces, and for increases in air munitions requirements. 135/ These force expansions generated a requirement for additional airfields. 136/ When these matters are added to the problems created for McNamara and his staff by the French decision that spring to request the withdrawal of all NATO forces from French soil, it is not hard to understand why escalating the war was momentarily set aside.

Another possible explanation for delaying the POL strikes can be added to those already discussed. The spring of 1966 saw one of the most determined and most public efforts by the international community to bring the U.S. and North Vietnam to the negotiating table. While at no time during this peace initiative was there any evidence, public or private, of give in either sides' uncompromising position and hence real possibility of talks, the widespread publicity of the effort meant that the Administration was constrained from any military actions that might be construed as "worsening the atmosphere" or rebuking the peace efforts. Air strikes against DRV POL reserves would obviously have fallen into this category.

In February, after the resumption of the bombing, Nkrumah and Nasser unsuccessfully attempted to get negotiations started, the former touring several capitals including Moscow to further the effort. DeGaulle replied to a letter from Ho Chi Minh with an offer to play a role in settling the dispute, but no response was forthcoming. Prime Minister Wilson met with Premier Kosygin in Moscow from Feb. 22-24 and urged reconvening the Geneva Conference; the Soviets countered by saying the U.S. and DRV must arrange a conference since the conflict was theirs. Early in March, Hanoi reportedly rejected a suggestion by Indian President Radharrishnon for an Asian-African force to replace American troops in South Vietnam.

Later that month Canadian Ambassador Chester Ronning went to Hanoi to test for areas in which negotiations might be possible. He returned with little hope, other than a vague belief the ICC could eventually play a role.

Early in April, UN Secretary General U Thant advocated Security Council involvement in Vietnam if Communist China and North Vietnam agreed, and he reiterated his three point proposal for getting the parties together (cessation of bombing; scaling down of all military activity; and willingness of both sides to meet). No response was forthcoming from the DRV, but later that month during meetings of the "Third National Assembly" Ho and Premier Pham Van Dong reiterated the unyielding North Vietnamese position that the U.S. must accept the four points as the basis for solving the war before negotiations could start. On April 29, Canadian Prime Minister Pearson proposed a ceasefire and a gradual withdrawal of troops as steps toward peace. The ceasefire was seen as the first part of peace negotiations without prior conditions. Phased withdrawals would begin as the negotiations proceeded. The U.S. endorsed the Pearson proposal which was probably enough at that stage to insure its rejection by Hanoi. On the same day, Danish PM Krag urged the US to accept a transitional coalition government as a realistic step toward peace.

In May, Netherlands Foreign Minister Luns proposed a mutual reduction in the hostilities as a step toward a ceasefire and to prevent any further escalation. Neither side made any direct response. On May 22, Guinea and Algeria called for an end to the bombing and a strict respect for the Geneva Agreements as the basis of peace in Vietnam. In a major speech on May 25, U Thant called for a reduction of hostilities, but rejected the notion that the UN had prime responsibility for finding a settlement. Early in June press attention was focused on apparent Romanian efforts to bring Hanoi to the negotiating table. Romanian intermediaries made soundings in Hanoi and Peking but turned up no new sentiment for talks. In mid-June Canadian Ambassador Ronning made a second trip to Hanoi but found no signs of give in the DRV portion (detailed discussion below). Near the end of June a French official, Jean Sainteny, reported from Hanoi and Peking through Agence France-Presse that the DRV had left him with the impression that negotiations might be possible if the U.S. committed itself in advance to a timetable for the withdrawal of forces from South Vietnam. With pressure again mounting for additional U.S. measures against the North and the failure of the Ronning mission, the State Department closed out this international effort on June 23 (the day after the original POL execute order), stating that neither oral reports nor public statements indicated any change in the basic elements of Hanoi's position. On June 27, Secretary Rusk told the SEATO Conference in Camberra, "I see no prospect of peace at the present moment." 137/ The bombing of the POL storage areas in Hanoi and Haiphong began on June 29.

The seriousness with which these international efforts were being treated within the U.S. Government is reflected in two memos from the period of late April and early May. On April 27, Maxwell Taylor, in his capacity as military advisor to the President, sent a memo to the President entitled, "Assessment and Uses of Negotiation Blue Chips." The heart of his analysis was that bombing was a "blue chip" like cease-fire, withdrawal of forces, amnesty for VC/NVA, etc., to be given away at the negotiation table for something concrete in return, not abandoned beforehand merely to get negotiations started. The path to negotiations would be filled with pitfalls, he argued,

> Any day, Hanoi may indicate a willingness to negotiate provided we stop permanently our bombing attacks against the north. In this case, our Government would be under great pressure at home and abroad to accept this precondition whereas to do so would seriously prejudice the success of subsequent negotiations. 138/

To avoid this dilemma, Taylor urged the President to clearly indicate to our friends as well as the enemy that we were not prepared to end the bombing except in negotiated exchange for a reciprocal concession from the North Vietnamese. His analysis proceeded like this:

> To avoid such pitfalls, we need to consider what we will want from the Communist side and what they will want from us in the course of negotiating a cease-fire or a final settlement. What are our negotiating assets, what is their value, and how should they be employed? As I see them, the following are the blue chips in our pile representing what Hanoi would or could like from us and what we might consider giving under certain conditions.
>
> a. Cessation of bombing in North Viet-Nam.
>
> b. Cessation of military operations against Viet Cong units.
>
> c. Cessation of increase of U.S. forces in South Viet-Nam.
>
> d. Withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Viet-Nam.
>
> e. Amnesty and civic rights for Viet Cong.
>
> f. Economic aid to North Viet-Nam.

The Viet Cong/Hanoi have a similar stack of chips representing actions we would like from them.

> a. Cessation of Viet Cong incidents in South Viet-Nam.
>
> b. Cessation of guerrilla military operations.

c. Cessation of further infiltration of men and supplies from North Viet-Nam to South Viet-Nam.

d. Withdrawal of infiltrated North Vietnamese Army units and cadres.

e. Dissolution or repatriation of Viet Cong. 139/

Continuing his argument, Taylor outlined his views about which "blue chips" we should trade in negotiations for concessions from the DRV.

> If these are the chips, how should we play ours to get theirs at minimum cost? Our big chips are a and d, the cessation of bombing and the withdrawal of U.S. forces; their big ones are c and e, the stopping of infiltration and dissolution of the Viet Cong. We might consider trading even, our a and d for their c and e except for the fact that all will require a certain amount of verification and inspection except our bombing which is an overt, visible fact. Even if Hanoi would accept inspection, infiltration is so elusive that I would doubt the feasibility of an effective detection system. Troop withdrawals, on the other hand, are comparatively easy to check. Hence, I would be inclined to accept as an absolute minimum a cessation of Viet Cong incidents and military operations (Hanoi a and b) which are readily verifiable in exchange for the stopping of our bombing and of offensive military operations against Viet Cong units (our a and b). If Viet Cong performance under the agreement were less than perfect, we can resume our activities on a scale related to the volume of enemy action. This is not a particularly good deal since we give up one of our big chips, bombing, and get neither of Hanoi's two big ones. However, it would achieve a cease-fire under conditions which are subject to verification and, on the whole, acceptable. We would not have surrendered the right to use our weapons in protection of the civil population outside of Viet Cong-controlled territory. 140/

Summing up, Taylor argued against an unconditional bombing halt in these words:

> Such a tabulation of negotiating blue chips and their purchasing power emphasized the folly of giving up any one in advance as a precondition for negotiations. Thus, if we gave up bombing in order to start discussions, we would not have the coins necessary to pay for all the concessions required for a satisfactory terminal settlement. My estimate of assets and values may be challenged, but I feel that it is important for us to go through some such exercise and make up our collective minds as to the value of our holdings and how

to play them. We need such an analysis to guide our own thoughts and actions and possibly for communication to some of the third parties who, from time to time, try to get negotiations started. Some day we may be embarrassed if some country like India should express the view to Hanoi that the Americans would probably stop their bombing to get discussions started and then have Hanoi pick up the proposal as a formal offer. To prepare our own people as well as to guide our friends, we need to make public explanation of some of the points discussed above. 141/

In conclusion he sounded a sharp warning about allowing ourselves to become embroiled in a repetition of our Korean negotiating experience, where casualties increased during the actual bargaining phase itself. It is hard to assess how much influence this memo had on the President's and the Administration's attitudes toward negotiations, but in hindsight it is clear that thinking of this kind prevailed within the U.S. Government until the early spring of 1968.

Taylor's memo attracted attention both at State and Defense at least down to the Assistant Secretary level. William Bundy at State sent a memo to Secretary Rusk the following week commenting on Taylor's ideas with his own assessment of the bargaining value and timing of a permanent cessation of the bombing. Since they represent views on the bombing which were to prevail for nearly two years, Bundy's memo is reproduced in substantial portions below. Recapitulating Taylor's analysis and his own position, Bundy began,

> Essentially, the issue has always been whether we would trade a cessation of bombing in the North for some degree of reduction or elimination of Viet Cong and new North Vietnamese activity in the South, or a cessation of infiltration from the North, or a combination of both. 142/

Worried that Taylor's willingness to trade a cessation of US/GVN bombing and offensive operations for a cessation of VC/NVA activity might be prejudicial to the GVN, Bundy outlined his own concept of what would be a reciprocal concession from the DRV:

> ...I have myself been more inclined to an asking price, at least, that would include both a declared cessation of infiltration and a sharp reduction in VC/NVA military operations in the South. Even though we could not truly verify the cessation of infiltration, the present volume and routes are such that we could readily ascertain whether there was any significant movement, using our own air. Moreover, DRV

action concerning infiltration would be a tremendous psychological blow to the VC and would constitute an admission which they have always declined really to make.

Whichever form of trade might be pursued if the issue even arose -- as it conceivably might through such nibbles as the present Ronning effort -- I fully agree with General Taylor that we should do all we can to avoid the pitfalls of ceasing bombing in return simply for a willingness to talk. 143/

Concerned that the current spate of international peace moves might entice the Administration in another bombing pause, Bundy reminded the Secretary that,

...during our long pause in January, we pretty much agreed among ourselves that as a practical matter, if Hanoi started to play negotiating games that even seemed to be serious, we would have great difficulty in resuming bombing for some time. This was and is a built-in weakness of the "pause" approach. It does not apply to informal talks with the DRV, directly or indirectly, on the conditions under which we would stop bombing, nor does it apply to possible third country suggestions. As to the latter, I myself believe that our past record sufficiently stresses that we could stop the bombing only if the other side did something in response. Thus, I would not at this moment favor any additional public statement by us, which might simply highlight the issue and bring about the very pressures we seek to avoid. 144/

Hence, he concluded,

As you can see, these reactions are tentative as to the form of the trade, but quite firm that there must in fact be a trade and that we should not consider another "pause" under existing circumstances. If we agree merely to these points, I think we will have made some progress. 145/

Bombing was thus seen from within the Administration as a counter to be traded during negotiations, a perception not shared by large segments of the international community where bombing was always regarded as an impediment to any such negotiations. Hanoi, however, had always clearly seen the bombing as the focal point in the test of wills with the U.S.

While Secretary Rusk was fending off this international pressure for an end to the bombing and de-escalation of the war as a means to peace, the President was having increasing trouble with war-dissenters within his own party. The US had scarcely resumed the bombing

of the North after the extended December-January pause when Senator Fulbright opened hearings by his Senate Foreign Relations Committee into the Vietnam war. Witnesses who took varying degrees of exception to U.S. policy as they testified in early February included former Ambassador George Kennan and retired General James Gavin. Secretary Rusk appeared on February 18 and defended U.S. involvement as a fulfillment of our SEATO obligations. In a stormy confrontation with Fulbright the Secretary repeatedly reminded the Senator of his support for the 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution. The next day, Senator Robert Kennedy stated that the NLF should be included in any postwar South Vietnamese government. Three days later, he clarified his position by saying that he had meant the NLF should not be "automatically excluded" from power in an interim government pending elections. Speaking no doubt for the President and the Administration, the Vice President pointedly rejected Kennedy's suggestion on February 21. On the other side of the political spectrum, Senator Russell, otherwise a hawk on the war, reacted in April to the continuing political turmoil in South Vietnam by suggesting a poll be taken in all large Vietnamese cities to determine whether our assistance was still desired by the Vietnamese. If the answer was no, he asserted, the U.S. should pull out of Vietnam.

The President was also regularly reminded by the press of the possible implications for the November Congressional elections of a continuing large effort in South Vietnam that did not produce results. Editorial writers were often even more pointed. On May 17, James Reston wrote:

> President Johnson has been confronted for some time with a moral question in Vietnam, but he keeps evading it. The question is this: What justifies more and more killing in Vietnam when the President's own conditions for an effective war effort -- a government that can govern and fight in Saigon -- are not met?
>
> By his own definition, this struggle cannot succeed without a regime that commands the respect of the South Vietnamese people and a Vietnamese army that can pacify the country. Yet though the fighting qualities of the South Vietnamese are now being demonstrated more and more against one another, the President's orders are sending more and more Americans into the battle to replace the Vietnamese who are fighting among themselves. 146/

Public reaction to the simmering political crisis in South Vietnam was reflected in declining popular approval of the President's performance. In March, 68% of those polled had approved the President's conduct in office, but by May, his support had declined sharply to only 54%. 147/

Some indication of the concern being generated by these adverse U.S. political effects of the governmental crisis in South Vietnam is offered by the fact that State, on May 21, sent the Embassy in Saigon the results of a Gallup Poll on whether the U.S. should continue its support for the war. These were the questions and the distribution of the responses:

> 1. Suppose South Vietnamese start fighting on big scale among themselves. Do you think we should continue help them, or should we withdraw our troops? (A) Continue to help 28 percent; (b) Withdraw 54 percent; (C) No opinion 18 percent.
>
> 2. If GVN decides stop fighting (discontinue war), what should US do -- continue war by itself, or should we withdraw? (A) Continue 16 percent; (B) Withdraw 72 percent; (C) No opinion 12 percent. Comparison August 1965 is 19, 63 and 18 percent.
>
> 3. Do you think South Vietnamese will be able to establish stable government or not? (A) Yes 32 percent; (B) No 48 percent; (C) No opinion 20 percent. Comparison January 1965 is 25, 42 and 33 percent. 148/

Lodge, struggling with fast moving political events in Hue and DaNang, replied to these poll results on May 23 in a harsh and unsympathetic tone,

> We are in Viet-Nam because it cannot ward off external aggression by itself, and is, therefore, in trouble. If it were not in trouble, we would not have to be here. The time for us to leave is when the trouble is over -- not when it is changing its character. It makes no sense for us here to help them against military violence and to leave them in the lurch to be defeated by criminal violence operating under political, economic and social guise.
>
> It is obviously true that the Vietnamese are not today ready for self-government, and that the French actively tried to unfit them for self-government. One of the implications of the phrase 'internal squabbling' is this unfitness. But if we are going to adopt the policy of turning every country that is unfit for self-government over to the communists, there won't be much of the world left. 149/

Lodge rejected the implications of these opinion polls in the strongest possible terms, reaffirming his belief in the correctness of the U.S. course,

> The idea that we are here simply because the Vietnamese want us to be here -- which is another implication of the

phrase 'internal squabbling' -; that we have no national interest in being here ourselves; and that if some of them don't want us to stay, we ought to get out is to me fallacious. In fact, I doubt whether we would have the moral right to make the commitment we have made here solely as a matter of charity towards the Vietnamese and without the existence of a strong United States interest. For one thing, the U.S. interest in avoiding World War III is very direct and strong. Some day we may have to decide how much it is worth to us to deny Viet-Nam to Hanoi and Peking -- regardless of what the Vietnamese may think. 150/

Apparently unable to get the matter off his mind, Lodge brought it up again in his weekly NODIS to the President on May 25,

I have been mulling over the state of American opinion as I observed it when I was at home. I have also been reading the recent Gallup polls. As I commented in my EMBTEL 4880, I am quite certain that the number of those who want us to leave Viet-Nam because of current 'internal squabbling' does not reflect deep conviction but a superficial impulse based on inadequate information.

In fact, I think one television fireside chat by you personally -- with all your intelligence and compassion -- could tip that figure over in one evening. I am thinking of a speech, the general tenor of which would be; 'we are involved in a vital struggle of great difficulty and complexity on which much depends. I need your help.'

I am sure you would get much help from the very people in the Gallup poll who said we ought to leave Viet-Nam -- as soon as they understood what you want them to support. 151/

Lodge's reassurances, however, while welcome bipartisan political support from a critical member of the team, could not mitigate the legitimate Presidential concerns about the domestic base for an uncertain policy. Thus, assailed on many sides, the President attempted to steer what he must have regarded as a middle course.

The President's unwillingness to proceed with the bombing of the POL storage facilities in North Vietnam continued in May in spite of the near consensus among his top advisors on its desirability. As already noted, the JCS recommendation that POL be included in Program 50 of the ROLLING THUNDER strikes for the month of May had been disapproved. 152/ An effort was made to have the strikes included in the ROLLING THUNDER

series for the month of May, which ordinarily would have been ROLLING THUNDER 51, but the decision was to extend ROLLING THUNDER 50 until further notice, holding the POL question in abeyance. 153/ On May 3, McNaughton sent Walt Rostow a belated list of questions, "to put into the 'ask-Lodge' hopper." The first set of proposed queries had to do with the bombing program and included specific questions about attacking POL. Whether Rostow did, in fact, query Lodge on the matter is not clear from the available cables, but in any case, Rostow took up the matter of the POL attacks himself in an important memorandum to Rusk and McNamara on May 6. Rostow developed his argument for striking the petroleum reserves on the basis of U.S. experience in the World War II attacks on German oil supplies and storage facilities. His reasoning was as follows:

> From the moment that serious and systematic oil attacks started, front line single engine fighter strength and tank mobility were affected. The reason was this: it proved much more difficult, in the face of general oil shortage, to allocate from less important to more important uses than the simple arithmetic of the problem would suggest. Oil moves in various logistical channels from central sources. When the central sources began to dry up the effects proved fairly prompt and widespread. What look like reserves statistically are rather inflexible commitments to logistical pipelines. 154/

The same results might be expected from heavy and sustained attacks on the North Vietnamese oil reserves,

> With an understanding that simple analogies are dangerous, I nevertheless feel it is quite possible the military effects of a systematic and sustained bombing of POL in North Vietnam may be more prompt and direct than conventional intelligence analysis would suggest.
>
> I would underline, however, the adjectives 'systematic and sustained.' If we take this step we must cut clean through the POL system--- and hold the cut -- if we are looking for decisive results. 155/

On May 9, recalling that the VC had recently attacked three South Vietnamese textile factories, Westmoreland suggested that to deter further assaults against South Vietnamese industry, the U.S. should strike a North Vietnamese industrial target with considerable military significance such as the Thai Nguyen iron and steel plant. 156/ Concurring with the basic intent of the proposal, CINCPAC recommended that the target be the North Vietnamese POL system instead. "Initiation of strikes against NVN POL system and subsequent completed destruction, would be more meaningful and further deny NVN essential war making resources. 157/

Lending further support to these military and civilian recommendations was a study completed on May 4 by the Air Staff which suggested that civilian casualties and collateral damage could be minimized in POL strikes if only the most experienced pilots, with thorough briefing were used; if the raids were executed only under favorable visual flight conditions with maximum use of sophisticated navigational aids; and if weapons and tactics were selected for their pinpoint accuracy rather than area coverage. 158/ On May 22, COMUSMACV sent CINCPAC yet another recommendation for retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnamese industrial and military targets. He called for plans that would permit the U.S. to respond to any VC terror attacks by an air strike against a similar target in the North. In particular, the Hanoi and Haiphong oil storage sites were recommended as reprisal targets for VC attacks against U.S. or South Vietnamese POL. 159/

Intervening again in mid-May, however, was yet another round of the continuing South Vietnamese political crisis. It is not clear whether or not a decision on the strikes against Hanoi/Haiphong POL was deferred by the President for this reason, but it is plausible to think that it was a factor. In brief, the Buddhists in Hue and DaNang, with the active support and later leadership of General Thi, the I Corps commander, defied the central government. Thi refused to return to Saigon when ordered and only when Ky flew to DaNang and intervened with troops and police to recapture control of the two cities was GVN authority restored to the area. The crisis temporarily put the constitutional processes off the track and diverted high level American attention from other issues. 160/ The effect of this dispute on public support for the U.S. involvement in the war has already been discussed. Concern with bringing an end to this internal strife in South Vietnam and with pushing a reluctant GVN steadily along the road to constitutional and democratic government preoccupied the highest levels of the U.S. Government throughout May. These concerns momentarily contributed to forcing the military aspects of the war into the background for harried U.S. leaders whose time is always insufficient to the range of problems to be dealt with.

D. The Decision to Strike

The POL decision was rapidly coming to a head. On May 31, a slight relaxation of the restrictions against attacking POL was made when six minor storage areas in relatively unpopulated areas were approved for attack. 161/ Apparently sometime in late May, possibly at the time of the approval of the six minor targets, the President decided that attacks on the entire North Vietnamese POL network could not be delayed much longer. In any case, sometime near the end of the month he informed British Prime Minister Wilson of his intentions. When Wilson protested, McNamara arranged a special briefing by an American officer for Wilson and Foreign Minister Michael Stewart on June 2. The following day, Wilson

cabled his appreciation to the President for his courtesy, but expressed his own feeling of obligation to urge the President not to make these new raids. Thus, he stated:

> I was most grateful to you for asking Bob McNamara to arrange the very full briefing about the two oil targets near Hanoi and Haiphong that Col. Rogers gave me yesterday....
>
> I know you will not feel that I am either unsympathetic or uncomprehending of the dilemma that this problem presents for you. In particular, I wholly understand the deep concern you must feel at the need to do anything possible to reduce the losses of young Americans in and over Vietnam; and Col. Rogers made it clear to us what care has been taken to plan this operation so as to keep civilian casualties to the minimum.
>
> However,...I am bound to say that, as seen from here, the possible military benefits that may result from this bombing do not appear to outweigh the political disadvantages that would seem the inevitable consequence. If you and the South Vietnamese Government were conducting a declared war on the conventional pattern...this operation would clearly be necessary and right. But since you have made it abundantly clear -- and you know how much we have welcomed and supported this -- that your purpose is to achieve a negotiated settlement, and that you are not striving for total military victory in the field, I remain convinced that the bombing of these targets, without producing decisive military advantage, may only increase the difficulty of reaching an eventual settlement....
>
> The last thing I wish is to add to your difficulties, but, as I warned you in my previous message, if this action is taken we shall have to dissociate ourselves from it, and in doing so I should have to say that you had given me advance warning and that I had made my position clear to you....
>
> Nevertheless I want to repeat...that our reservations about this operation will not affect our continuing support for your policy over Vietnam, as you and your people have made it clear from your [April 1965] Baltimore speech onwards. But, while this will remain the Government's position, I know that the effect on public opinion in this country -- and I believe throughout Western Europe -- is likely to be such as to reinforce the existing disquiet and criticism that we have to deal with. 162/

The failure of the special effort to obtain Wilson's support must have been disappointing, but it did not stop the onward flow of events. Available information leaves unclear exactly how firmly the President had decided to act and gives no specific indication of the intended date for the strikes. A package of staff papers prepared by McNaughton suggests that the original date was to have been June 10. A scenario contained in the package proposes a list of actions for the period 8-30 June and begins with strike-day minus 2. The suggested scenario was as follows:

> S-/Strike/ day minus 2: Inform UK, Australia, Japan
> S-day minus 1: Notify Canada, New Zealand, Thailand, Laos, Philippines (Marcos only), GRC (Chiang only), Korea
> S-hour minus 1: Inform GVN
> S-hour: Strike Hanoi, Haiphong
> S-hour plus 2: Announce simultaneously in Washington and Saigon
> S-hour plus 3-5: SecDef press backgrounder (depends on strike timing and completeness of post-strike reports) 163/

The package also included a draft JCS execute message, a draft State cable to the field on notifying third countries, a draft public announcement, a talking paper for a McNamara press conference, a list of anticipated press questions, and maps and photographs of the targets.

The circle of those privy to this tentative Presidential decision probably did not include more than a half dozen of the key Washington advisers. Certainly the military commanders in the field had not been informed. On June 5, Westmoreland urged that strikes be made against POL at the "earliest possible" moment, noting that ongoing North Vietnamese dispersal efforts would make later attacks less effective. 164/ Admiral Sharp took the occasion to reiterate to Washington that the strikes, besides underscoring the US resolve to support SVN and increase the pressure against NVN, would make it difficult for Hanoi to disperse POL, complicate off-loading from tankers, necessitate new methods of transshipment, "temporarily" halt the flow to dispersed areas, and have a "direct effect" on the movement of trucks and watercarft -- perhaps (if imports were inadequate) limiting truck use. Sharp called the POL targets the most lucrative available in terms of impairing NVN's military logistics capabilities. 165/ Two days later, in reporting the results of a review of the armed recce program, CINCPAC again urged that POL be attacked. He particularly noted the importance of,

> ...the effort being made by the NVN to disperse, camouflage and package things into ever smaller increments. This is particularly true of POL....This again emphasizes the importance of souce /sic/ targets such as ports and major POL installations.

It is hoped that June will see a modification to the RT /ROLLING THUNDER/ rules with authorization to syrike /sic/ key POL targets, selected targets in the Hon Gai and Cam Pha compleses /sic/, and relaxation of the restrictions against coastal armed recce in the NE. In addition, reduction in the size of the Hanoi/Haiphong restricted areas would be helpful.... 166/

The CIA, however, remained skeptical of these expectations for strikes against POL. On June 8, they produced a special assessment of the likely effects of such an attack, probably in response to a request from the Principals for a last minute evaluation. The report emphasized that "neutralization" of POL would not in itself stop North Vietnamese support of the war, although it would have an adverse general effect on the economy.

It is estimated that the neutralization of the bulk petroleum storage facilities in NVN will not in itself preclude Hanoi's continued support of essential war activities. The immediate impact in NVN will be felt in the need to convert to an alternative system of supply and distribution. The conversion program will be costly and create additional burdens for the regime. It is estimated, however, that the infiltration of men and supplies into SVN can be sustained. The impact on normal economic activity, however, would be more severe. New strains on an already burdened economic control structure and managerial talent would cause reductions in economic activity, compound existing distribution problems, and further strain manpower resources. The attacks on petroleum storage facilities in conjunction with continued attacks on transportation targets and armed reconnaissance against lines of communications will increase the burden and costs of supporting the war. 167/

The sequence of events in the POL scenario drawn up by McNaughton was interrupted on June 7 by yet another international diplomatic effort to get negotiations started, or at least to test Hanoi's attitudes toward such a possibility. Canadian Ambassador Chester Ronning had been planning a second visit to Hanoi for June 14-18 with State Department approval. Thus, when Rusk, who was travelling in Europe, learned on June 7 of the possibility of strikes before Ronning's trip, he urgently cabled the President to defer them.

...Regarding special operation in Vietnam we have had under consideration, I sincerely hope that timing can be postponed until my return. A major question in my mind is Ronning mission to Hanoi occurring June 14 through 18. This

is not merely political question involving a mission with which we have fully concurred. It also involves importance of our knowing whether there is any change in the thus far harsh and unyielding attitude of Hanoi. 168/

Much on his mind in making the request, as he revealed in a separate cable to McNamara the following day, was the likelihood of "...general international revulsion...." toward an act that might sabatoge Ronning's efforts.

> ...I am deeply disturbed by general international revulsion, and perhaps a great deal at home, if it becomes known that we took an action which sabotaged the Ronning mission to which we had given our agreement. I recognize the agony of this problem for all concerned. We could make arrangements to get an immediate report from Ronning. If has a negative report, as we expect, that provides a firmer base for the action we contemplate and would make a difference to people like Wilson and Pearson. If, on the other hand, he learns that there is any serious breakthrough toward peace, the President would surely want to know of that before an action which would knock such a possibility off the tracks. I strongly recommend, therefore, against ninth or tenth. I regret this because of my maximum desire to support you and your colleagues in your tough job. 169/

The President responded to the Secretary's request and suspended action until Ronning returned. When Ronning did return, William Bundy flew to Ottawa and met with him on June 21. Bundy reported that he was "markedly more sober and subdued" and had found no opening or flexibility in the North Vietnamese position. 170/

While these diplomatic efforts were underway, McNamara had informed CINCPAC of the high level consideration for the POL strikes, but stated:

> Final decision for or against will be influenced by extent they can be carried out without significant civilian casualties. What preliminary steps to minimize would you recommend and if taken what number of casualties do you believe would result? 171/

CINCPAC replied eagerly listing the conditions and safeguards for the attack that the Air Staff study had suggested in early May. He would execute only under favorable weather conditions, with good visibility and no cloud cover, in order to assure positive identification of the targets and improved strike accuracy; select the best axis of attack to

avoid populated areas; select weapons with optimum ballistic characteristics for precision; make maximum use of ECM support in order to hamper SA-2 and AAA radars and reduce "pilot distraction" during the strikes; and employ the most experienced pilots, thoroughly briefed. He added that NVN had an excellent alert system, which would provide ample time for people to take cover. In all, he expected "under 50" civilian casualties. 172/ (This was the Joint Staff estimate, too, but CIA in its 8 June report estimated that civilian casualties might run to 200-300.)

McNamara cabled his approval of the measures suggested and indicated that they would be included in the execute message. He stressed that the President's final decision would be greatly influenced by the ability to minimize civilian casualties and inquired about restrictions against flak and SAM suppression that might endanger populated areas. 173/ On June 16, CINCPAC offered further assurances that all possible measures would be taken to avoid striking civilians and that flak and SAM suppression would be under the rightest of restrictions. 174/

The stage was thus set, and when the feedback from the Ronning mission revealed no change in Hanoi's position, events moved quickly.

On 22 June the execution message was released. 175/ It authorized strikes on the 7 POL targets plus the Kep radar, beginning with attacks on the Hanoi and Haiphong sites, effective first light on 24 June Saigon time.

The execution message is a remarkable document, attesting in detail to the political sensitivity of the strikes and for some reason ending in a "never on Sunday" injunction. The gist of the message was as follows:

> Strikes to commence with initial attacks against Haiphong and Hanoi POL on same day if operationally feasible. Make maximum effort to attain operational surprise. Do not conduct initiating attacks under marginal weather conditions but reschedule when weather assures success. Follow-on attacks authorized as operational and weather factors dictate.
>
> At Haiphong, avoid damage to merchant shipping. No attacks authorized on craft unless US aircraft are first fired on and then only if clearly North Vietnamese. Piers servicing target will not be attacked if tanker is berthed off end of pier.
>
> Decision made after SecDef and CJCS were assured every feasible step would be taken to minimize civilian casualties would be small. If you do not believe you can accomplish objective while destroying targets and protecting

crews, do not initiate program. Take the following measures: maximum use of most experienced ROLLING THUNDER personnel, detailed briefing of pilots stressing need to avoid civilians, execute only when weather permits visual identification of targets and improved strike accuracy, select best axis of attack to avoid populated areas, maximum use of ECM to hamper SAM and AAA fire control, in order to limit pilot distraction and improve accuracy, maximum use of weapons of high precision delivery consistent with mission objectives, and limit SAM and AAA suppression to sites located outside populated areas.

Take special precautions to insure security. If weather or operational considerations delay initiation of strikes, do not initiate on Sunday, 26 June. 176/

The emphasis on striking Hanoi and Haiphong POL targets on the same day and trying to achieve operational surprise reflected an acute concern that these targets were in well-defended areas and U.S. losses might be high. The concern about merchant shipping, especially tankers which might be in the act of off-loading into the storage tanks, reflected anxiety over sparking an international incident, especially one with the USSR.

With the execute message out, high-level interest turned to the weather in the Hanoi/Haiphong area. The MACC began to send Secretary McNamara written forecasts every few hours. These indicated that the weather was not promising. Twice the strikes were scheduled but had to be postponed. Then, on 24 June, Philip Geyelin of the Wall Street Journal got hold of a story that the President had decided to bomb the POL at Haiphong, and the essential details appeared in a Dow Jones news wire that evening. This was an extremely serious leak, because of the high risk of U.S. losses if NVN defenses were fully prepared. The next day an order was issued cancelling the strikes. 177/

The weather watch continued, however, under special security precautions. The weather reports, plus other messages relating to the strikes, continued, handled as Top Secret Special Category (SpeCat) Exclusive for the SecDef, CJCS, and CINCPAC. (It is not known whether the diplomatic scenario which involved informing some countries about the strikes ahead of time was responsible for the press leak; in any case, the classification and handling of these messages kept them out of State Department channels.) The continued activity suggests that the cancellation of the strikes on the 25th may have been only a cover for security purposes.

On the 28th Admiral Sharp cabled General Wheeler that his forces were ready and the weather was favorable for the strikes; he requested authority to initiate them on the 29th. 178/ General Wheeler responded with a message rescinding the previous cancellation, reinstating the original execution order, and approving the recommendation to execute on the 29th. The message informed Admiral Sharp that preliminary and planning messages should continue as SpeCat Exclusive for himself and the SecDef. 179/

The strikes were launched on 29 June, reportedly with great success. The large Hanoi tank farm was apparently completely knocked out; the Haiphong facility looked about 80 percent destroyed. One U.S. aircraft was lost to ground fire. Four MIGs were encountered and one was probably shot down. The Deputy Commander of the 7th Air Force in Saigon called the operation "the most significant, the most important strike of the War."

III. McNAMARA'S DISENCHANTMENT -- JULY-DECEMBER 1966

The attack on North Vietnam's POL system was the last major escalation of the air war recommended by Secretary McNamara. Its eventual failure to produce a significant decrease in infiltration or cripple North Vietnamese logistical support of the war in the South, when added to the cumulative failure of the rest of ROLLING THUNDER, appears to have tipped the balance in his mind against any further escalation of air attacks on the DRV. As we shall see, a major factor in this reversal of position was the report and recommendation submitted at the end of the summer by an important study group of America's top scientists. Another consideration weighing in his mind must have been the growing antagonism, both domestic and international, to the bombing, which was identified as the principle impediment to the opening of negotiations. But disillusionment with the bombing alone might not have been enough to produce a recommendation for change had an alternative method of impeding infiltration not been proposed at the same time. Thus, in October when McNamara recommended a stabilization of the air war at prevailing levels, he was also able to recommend the imposition of a multi-system anti-infiltration barrier across the DMZ and the Laos panhandle. The story of this momentous policy shift is the most important element in the evolution of the air war in the summer and fall of 1966.

A. Results of the POL Attacks

1. Initial Success

Official Washington reacted with mild jubilation to the reported success of the POL strikes and took satisfaction in the relatively mild reaction of the international community to the escalation. Secretary McNamara described the execution of the raids as "a superb professional job," and sent a message of personal congratulation to the field commanders involved in the planning and execution of the attacks shortly after the results were in. 1/

In a press conference the next day, the Secretary justified the strikes "to counter a mounting reliance by NVN on the use of trucks and powered junks to facilitate the infiltration of men and equipment from North Vietnam to South Vietnam." He explained that truck movement in the first half of 1966 had doubled, and that daily supply tonnage and troop infiltration on the Ho Chi Minh trail were up 150 and 120 percent, respectively, over 1965. The enemy had built new roads and its truck inventory by the end of the year was expected to be double that of January 1965, an increase which would require 50-70 percent more POL. 2/

The Department of State issued instructions to embassies abroad to explain the strikes to foreign governments in counter-infiltration terms. The guidance was to the effect that since the Pause, the bombing of NVN had been carefully restricted to actual routes of infiltration and supply; there had been no response whatever from Hanoi suggesting any willingness to engage in discussions or move in any way toward peace; on the contrary, during the Pause and since, NVN had continued to increase the infiltration of regular NVN forces South, and to develop and enlarge supply routes; it was relying more heavily on trucking and had sharply increased the importation and use of POL. The U.S. could no longer afford to overlook this threat. Major POL storage sites in the vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong were military targets that needed to be attacked.

The targets, the guidance continued, were located away from the centers of both cities. Strike forces had been instructed to observe every precaution to confine the strikes to military targets and there had been no change in the policy of not carrying out attacks against civilian targets or population centers. There was no intention of widening the war. The U.S. still desired to meet Hanoi for discussions without conditions or take any other steps which might lead toward peace. 3/

The strikes made spectacular headlines everywhere. Hanoi charged that U.S. planes had indiscriminately bombed and strafed residential and economic areas in the outskirts of Hanoi and Haiphong, and called this "a new and extremely serious step." The USSR called it a step toward further escalation. The UK, France, and several other European countries expressed official disapproval. India expressed "deep regret and sorrow," and Japan was understanding but warned that there was a limit to its support of the bombing of NVN. Nevertheless, according to the State Department's scoreboard, some 26 Free World nations indicated either full approval or "understanding" of the strikes, and 12 indicated disapproval. Press reaction to the attacks was short-lived, however, and within a week or so they were accepted as just another facet of the war. 4/

Meanwhile in the U.S., following a familiar pattern of the Vietnam war, in which escalations of the air war served as preludes to additional increments of combat troops, Secretary McNamara informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Service Secretaries and the Assistant Secretaries of Defense on July 2 that the latest revision of the troop deployment schedule had been approved as Program #3. 5/ The troop increases were not major as program changes have gone in the Vietnam war, an increase in authorized year-end strength from 383,500 approved in April to 391,000 and an increase of the final troop ceiling from 425,100 to 431,000. 6/ But McNamara had personally rewritten the draft memo submitted to him by Systems Analysis inserting as its title, "Program #3." His handwritten

changes also included a closing sentence which read, "Requests for changes in the Program may be submitted by the Service Secretaries or JCS whenever these appear appropriate." 7/ This language clearly reflected the following instruction that McNamara had received from the President on June 28:

> As you know, we have been moving our men to Viet Nam on a schedule determined by General Westmoreland's requirements.
>
> As I have stated orally several times this year, I should like this schedule to be accelerated as much as possible so that General Westmoreland can feel assured that he has all the men he needs as soon as possible.
>
> Would you meet with the Joint Chiefs and give me at your early convenience an indication of what acceleration is possible for the balance of this year. 8/

While the Chiefs were unable to promise any further speed-up in the deployment schedule, the Secretary assured the President on July 15 that all possible steps were being taken. 9/ But as in the air war, so also in the question of troop deployments a turning point was being reached. By the fall of 1966 when Program #4 was under consideration, the President would no longer be instructing McNamara to honor all of General Westmoreland's troop requests as fully and rapidly as possible.

2. ROLLING THUNDER 51

In the air campaign strikes continued on the other major POL storage sites, and were soon accepted as a routine part of the bombing program. On 8 July, at a Honolulu conference, Secretary McNamara was given a complete briefing on the POL program. He informed CINCPAC that the President wished that first priority in the air war be given to the complete "strangulation" of NVN's POL system, and he must not feel that there were sortie limitations for this purpose. (He also stressed the need for increased interdiction of the railroad lines to China.) 10/ As a result, ROLLING THUNDER program No. 51, which went into effect the next day, specified a "strangulation" program of armed reconnaissance against the POL system, including dispersed sites. The ceiling for attack sorties on NVN and Laos was raised from 8100 to 10,100 per month. 11/

McNamara left CINCPAC with instructions to develop a comprehensive plan to accomplish the maximum feasible POL destruction while maintaining a balanced effort against other priority targets. On July 24, CINCPAC forwarded his concept for the operation to Washington. 12/ In addition to the fixed and dispersed sites already under attack, he recommended strikes against the storage facilities at Phuc Yen and Kep airfields;

against the DRV's importation facilities (i.e., foreign ships in Haiphong harbor, destruction of harbor dredges, destruction of docks, etc.); and the expansion of the reconnaissance effort to provide more and better information on the overall POL system. Also recommended was a step-up in attacks on rolling stock of all kinds carrying POL, and strikes on the Xom Trung Hoa lock and dam. In spite of this recommendation and a follow-up on August 8, ROLLING THUNDER 51 was only authorized to strike previously approved targets plus some new bridges and a bypass as outlined in the July 8 execute order. 13/

While CINCPAC and his subordinates were making every effort to hamstring the DRV logistical operation through the POL attacks, the Secretary of Defense was keeping tabs on results through specially commissioned reports from DIA. These continued through July and into August. By July 20, DIA reported that 59.9% of North Vietnam's original POL capacity had been destroyed. 14/ By the end of July, DIA reported that 70% of NVN's large bulk (JCS-targeted) POL storage capacity had been destroyed, together with 7% of the capacity of known dispersed sites. The residual POL storage capacity was down from some 185,000 metric tons to about 75,000 tons, about 2/3 still in relatively vulnerable large storage centers -- two of them, those at the airfields, still off limits -- and 1/3 in smaller dispersed sites. 15/ This still provided, however, a fat cushion over NVN's requirements. What became clearer and clearer as the summer wore on was that while we had destroyed a major portion of North Vietnam's storage capacity, she retained enough dispersed capacity, supplemented by continuing imports (increasingly in easily dispersable drums, not bulk), to meet her on-going requirements. The greater invulnerability of dispersed POL meant an ever mounting U.S. cost in munitions, fuel, aircraft losses, and men. By August we were reaching the point at which these costs were prohibitive. It was simply impractical and infeasible to attempt any further constriction of North Vietnam's POL storage capacity.

As the POL campaign continued, the lucrative POL targets disappeared and the effort was confined more and more to the small scattered sites. Finally, on September 4, CINCPAC (probably acting by direction although no instructions appear in the available documents) directed a shift in the primary emphasis of ROLLING THUNDER strikes. Henceforth they were to be aimed at, "...attrition of men, supplies, equipment and...POL...." 16/ Stressing the new set of priorities CINCPAC instructed, "POL will also receive emphasis on a selective basis." 17/ By mid-October, even PACAF reported that the campaign had reached the point of diminishing returns. 18/

3. POL - Strategic Failure

It was clear in retrospect that the POL strikes had been a failure. Apart from the possibility of inconveniences, interruptions, and local shortages of a temporary nature, there was no evidence that NVN had at any time been pinched for POL. NVN's dependence on the unloading facilities at Haiphong and large storage sites in the rest of the country had been greatly overestimated. Bulk imports via ocean-going tanker continued at Haiphong despite the great damage to POL docks and storage there. Tankers merely stood offshore and unloaded into barges and other shallow-draft boats, usually at night, and the POL was transported to hundreds of concealed locations along internal water-ways. More POL was also brought in already drummed, convenient for dispersed storage and handling and virtually immune from interdiction. 19/

The difficulties of switching to a much less vulnerable but perfectly workable storage and distribution system, not an unbearable strain when the volume to be handled was not really very great, had also been overestimated. Typically, also, NVN's adaptability and resourceful-ness had been greatly underestimated. As early as the summer of 1965, about six months after the initiation of ROLLING THUNDER, NVN had begun to import more POL, build additional small, dispersed, underground tank storage sites, and store more POL in drums along LOCs and at consumption points. It had anticipated the strikes and taken out insurance against them; by the time the strikes came, long after the decision had been telegraphed by open speculation in the public media, NVN was in good position to ride them out. Thus, by the end of 1966, after six months of POL attacks, it was estimated that NVN still had about 26,000 metric tons storage capacity in the large sites, about 30-40,000 tons capacity in medium-sized dispersed sites, and about 28,000 tons capacity in smaller tank and drum sites. 20/

One of the unanticipated results of the POL strikes, which further offset their effectiveness, was the skillful way in which Ho Chi Minh used them in his negotiations with the Soviets and Chinese to extract larger commitments of economic, military and financial assistance from them. Thus, on July 17 he made a major appeal to the Chinese based on the American POL escalation. 21/ Since North Vietnam is essentially a logistical funnel for supplies originating in the USSR and China, this increase in their support as a direct result of the POL strikes must also be discounted against whatever effect they may have had on hampering North Vietnam's transportation.

The real and immediate failure of the POL strikes was reflected, however, in the undiminished flow of men and supplies down the Ho Chi Minh trail to the war in the South. In early July, the

intelligence community had indicated that POL could become a factor in constricting the truck traffic to the South. The statement was, however, qualified,

> The POL requirement for trucks involved in the infiltration movement has not been large enough to present significant supply problems. But local shortages have occurred from time to time and may become significant as a result of attacks on the POL distribution system. 22/

By the end of the month, however, the CIA at least was more pessimistic:

> Hanoi appears to believe that its transportation system will be able to withstand increased air attacks and still maintain an adequate flow of men and supplies to the South.
>
> ...Recent strikes against North Vietnam's POL storage facilities have destroyed over 50 percent of the nation's petroleum storage capacity. However, it is estimated that substantial stocks still survive and that the DRV can continue to import sufficient fuel to keep at least essential military and economic traffic moving. 23/

DIA continued to focus its assessments on the narrower effectiveness of the strikes in destruction of some percentage of North Vietnamese POL storage capacity without directly relating this to needs and import potential. 24/ By September, the two intelligence agencies were in general agreement as to the failure of the POL strikes. In an evaluation of the entire bombing effort they stated, "There is no evidence yet of any shortage of POL in North Vietnam and stocks on hand, with recent imports, have been adequate to sustain necessary operations." 25/ The report went even further and stated that there was no evidence of insurmountable transport difficulties from the bombing, no significant economic dislocation and no weakening of popular morale.

Powerful reinforcement about the ineffectiveness of the strikes came at the end of August when a special summer study group of top American scientists submitted a series of reports through the JASON Division of the Institute for Defense Analyses (treated comprehensively below). One of their papers dealt in considerable detail with the entire bombing program, generally concluding that bombing had failed in all its specified goals. With respect to the recent petroleum attacks to disrupt North Vietnamese transportation, the scientists offered the following summary conclusions:

> In view of the nature of the North Vietnamese POL system, the relatively small quantities of POL it requires, and the options available for overcoming the effects of U.S. air strikes thus far, it seems doubtful that any critical denial

of essential POL has resulted, apart from temporary and local shortages. It also seems doubtful that any such denial need result if China and/or the USSR are willing to pay greater costs in delivering it.

Maintaining the flow of POL to consumers within North Vietnam will be more difficult, costly, and hazardous, depending primarily on the effectiveness of the U.S. armed reconnaissance effort against the transportation system. Temporary interruptions and shortages have probably been and can no doubt continue to be inflicted, but it does not seem likely that North Vietnam will have to curtail its higher priority POL-powered activities as a result.

Since less than 5 percent of North Vietnamese POL requirements are utilized in supporting truck operations in Laos, it seems unlikely that infiltration South will have to be curtailed because of POL shortages; and since North Vietnamese and VC forces in South Vietnam do not require POL supplied from the North, their POL-powered activities need not suffer, either. 26/

Coming as they did from a highly prestigious and respected group of policy-supporting but independent-thinking scientists and scholars, and coming at the end of a long and frustrating summer in the air war, these views must have exercised a powerful influence on McNamara's thinking. His prompt adoption of the "infiltration barrier" concept they recommended as an alternative to the bombing (see below) gives evidence of the overall weight these reports carried.

McNamara, for his part, made no effort to conceal his dissatisfaction and disappointment at the failure of the POL attacks. He pointed out to the Air Force and the Navy the glaring discrepancy between the optimistic estimates of results their pre-strike POL studies had postulated and the actual failure of the raids to significantly decrease infiltration. 27/ The Secretary was already in the process of rethinking the role of the entire air campaign in the U.S. effort in Southeast Asia. He was painfully aware of its inability to pinch off the infiltration to the South and had seen no evidence of its ability to break Hanoi's will, demoralize its population, or bring it to the negotiation table. The full articulation of his disillusionment would not come until the following January, however, when he appeared before a joint session of the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees to argue against any further extension of the bombing. To illustrate the ineffectualness of bombing he cited our experience with the POL strikes:

There is no question but what petroleum in the North is an essential material for the movement, under present circumstances, of men and equipment to their borders. But neither is there any doubt that with, in effect, an unrestricted bombing campaign against petroleum, we were not able to dry up the supply.

The bombing of the POL system was carried out with as much skill, effort, and attention as we could devote to it, starting on June 29, and we haven't been able to dry up those supplies....

We in effect took out the Haiphong docks for unloading of POL and we have had very little effect on the importation level at the present time. I would think it is about as high today as it would have been if we had never struck the Haiphong docks. And I think the same thing would be true if we took out the cargo docks in Haiphong for dry cargo....

I don't believe that the bombing up to the present has significantly reduced, nor any bombing that I could contemplate in the future would significantly reduce, actual flow of men and materiel to the South. 28/

Thus disenthralled with air power's ability to turn the tide of the war in our favor, McNamara would increasingly in the months ahead recommend against any further escalation of the bombing and turn his attention to alternative methods of shutting off the infiltration and bringing the war to an end.

B. Alternatives -- The Barrier Concept

1. Genesis

The fact that bombing had failed to achieve its objectives did not mean that all those purposes were to be abandoned. For an option-oriented policy adviser like McNamara the task was to find alternative ways of accomplishing the job. The idea of constructing an anti-infiltration barrier across the DMZ and the Laotian panhandle was first proposed in January 1966 by Roger Fisher of Harvard Law School in one of his periodic memos to McNaughton. 29/ The purpose of Fisher's proposal was to provide the Administration with an alternative strategic concept for arresting infiltration, thereby permitting a cessation of the bombing (a supporting sub-thesis of his memo was the failure of the bombing to break Hanoi's will). He had in mind a primarily air-seeded line of barbed wire, mines

and chemicals since the terrain in question would make actual on-the-ground physical construction of a barrier difficult and would probably evoke fierce military opposition. In his memo, Fisher dealt at length with the pros and cons of such a proposal including a lengthy argument for its political advantages.

The memo must have struck a responsive cord in McNaughton because six weeks later he sent McNamara an only slightly revised version of the Fisher draft. 30/ McNaughton's changes added little to the Fisher ideas; they served merely to tone down some of his assertions and hedge the conclusions. The central argument for the barrier concept proceeded from a negative analysis of the effects of the bombing,

B. Present Military Situation in North Vietnam

1. Physical consequences of bombing

a. The DRV has suffered some physical hardship and pain, raising the cost to it of supporting the VC.

b. Best intelligence judgment is that:

(1) Bombing may or may not - by destruction or delay - have resulted in net reduction in the flow of men or supplies to the forces in the South;

(2) Bombing has failed to reduce the limit on the capacity of the DRV to aid the VC to a point below VC needs;

(3) Future bombing of North Vietnam cannot be expected physically to limit the military support given the VC by the DRV to a point below VC needs.

2. Influence consequences of bombing

a. There is no evidence that bombings have made it more likely the DRV will decide to back out of the war.

b. Nor is there evidence that bombings have resulted in an increased DRV resolve to continue the war to an eventual victory. [Fisher's draft had read "There is some evidence that bombings...."]

C. The Future of a Bombing Strategy

Although bombings of North Vietnam improve GVN morale and provide a counter in eventual negotiations (should they take place) there is no evidence that they meaningfully reduce

either the capacity or the will for the DRV to support the VC. The DRV knows that we cannot force them to stop by bombing and that we cannot, without an unacceptable risk of a major war with China or Russia or both, force them to stop by conquering them or "blotting them out." Knowing that if they are not influenced we cannot stop them, the DRV will remain difficult to influence. With continuing DRV support, victory in the South may remain forever beyond our reach.

Having made the case against the bombing, the memo then spelled out the case for an anti-infiltration barrier:

II. SUBSTANCE OF THE BARRIER PROPOSAL

A. That the US and GVN adopt the concept of physically cutting off DRV support to the VC by an on-the-ground barrier across the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the general vicinity of the 17th Parallel and Route 9. To the extent necessary the barrier would run from the sea across Vietnam and Laos to the Mekong, a straight-line distance of about 160 miles.

B. That in Laos an "interdiction and verification zone," perhaps 10 miles wide, be established and legitimated by such measures as leasing, international approval, compensation, etc.

C. That a major military and engineering effort be directed toward constructing a physical barrier of minefields, barbed wire, walls, ditches and military strong points flanked by a defoliated strip on each side.

D. That such bombing in Laos and North Vietnam as takes place be narrowly identified with interdiction and with the construction of the barrier by

1. Being within the 10-mile-wide interdiction zone in Laos, or

2. Being in support of the construction of the barrier, or

3. Being interdiction bombing pending the completion of the barrier.

E. That, of course, intensive interdiction continues at sea and from Cambodia.

(It might be stated that all bombings of North Vietnam will stop as soon as there is no infiltration and no opposition to the construction of the verification barrier.) 32/

Among the McNaughton additions to the Fisher draft were several suggested action memos including one to the Chiefs asking for military comment on the proposal. Available documents do not reveal whether McNamara sent the memo nor indicate what his own reaction to the proposal was. He did, however, contact the Chiefs in some way for their reaction to the proposal because on March 24 the Chiefs sent a message to CINCPAC requesting field comment on the barrier concept. 33/ After having in turn queried his subordinates, CINCPAC replied on April 7 that construction and defense of such a barrier would require 7-8 U.S. divisions and might take up to three and one half to four years to become fully operational. 34/ It would require a substantial diversion of available combat and construction resources and would place a heavy strain on the logistics support system in Southeast Asia, all in a static defense effort which would deny us the military advantages of flexibility in employment of forces. Not surprisingly, after this exaggerated catalog of problems, CINCPAC recommended against such a barrier as an inefficient use of resources with small likelihood of achieving U.S. objectives in Vietnam. These not unexpected objections notwithstanding, the Army (presumably at McNamara's direction) had begun an R&D program in March to design, develop, test and deliver within six to nine months for operational evaluation a set of anti-personnel route and trail interdiction devices. 35/

At approximately the same time an apparently unrelated offer was made by four distinguished scientific advisors to the Government to form a summer working group to study technical aspects of the war in Vietnam. It is possible that the idea for such a study really originated in the Pentagon, although the earliest documents indicate that the four scholars (Dr. George Kistiakowsky - Harvard; Dr. Karl Kaysen - Harvard; Dr. Jerome Wiesner - MIT; and Dr. Jerrold Zacharias - MIT) made the first initiative with Adam Yarmolinsky, then working for McNaughton. 36/ In any case, McNamara liked the idea and sent Zacharias a letter on April 16 formally requesting that he and the others arrange the summer study on "technical possibilities in relation to our military operations in Vietnam." 37/ On April 26 he advised John McNaughton, who was to oversee the project, that the scientists' group should examine the feasibility of "A 'fence' across the infiltration trails, warning systems, reconnaissance (especially night) methods, night vision devices, defoliation techniques, and area-denial weapons." 38/ In this way the barrier concept was officially brought to the attention of the study group.

During the remainder of the spring, while McNamara and the other Principals were preoccupied with the POL decision, the summer study group was organized and the administrative mechanics worked out for providing

its members with briefings and classified material. The contract, it was determined, would be let to the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) for the study to be done through its JASON Division (ad hoc high-level studies using primarily non-IDA scholars). The group of 47 scientists (eventually to grow to 67 with the addition of 20 IDA personnel), representing the cream of the scholarly community in technical fields, finally met in Wellesley on June 13 for ten days of briefings by high-level officials from the Pentagon, CIA, State and the White House on all facets of the war. Thereafter they broke into four sub-groups to study different aspects of the problem from a technical (not a political) point of view. Their work proceeded through July and August and coincided with McNamara's disillusionment over the results of the POL strikes.

2. The JASON Summer Study Reports

At the end of August the Jason Summer Study, as it had come to be known, submitted four reports: (1) The Effects of US Bombing in North Vietnam; (2) VC/NVA Logistics and Manpower; (3) An Air Supported Anti-Infiltration Barrier; and (4) Summary of Results, Conclusions and Recommendations. The documents were regarded as particularly sensitive and were extremely closely held with General Wheeler and Mr. Rostow receiving the only copies outside OSD. The reason is easy to understand. The Jason Summer Study reached the conclusion that the bombing of North Vietnam was ineffective and therefore recommended that the barrier concept be implemented as an alternative means of checking infiltration.

Several factors combined to give these conclusions and recommendations a powerful and perhaps decisive influence in McNamara's mind at the beginning of September 1966. First, they were recommendations from a group of America's most distinguished scientists, men who had helped the Government produce many of its most advanced technical weapons systems since the Second World War, and men who were not identified with the vocal academic criticism of the Administration's Vietnam policy. Secondly, the reports arrived at a time when McNamara, having witnessed the failure of the POL attacks to produce decisive results, was harboring doubts of his own about the effectiveness of the bombing, and at a time when alternative approaches were welcome. Third, the Study Group did not mince words or fudge its conclusions, but stated them bluntly and forcefully. For all these reasons, then, the reports are significant. Moreover, as we shall see, they apparently had a dramatic impact on the Secretary of Defense and provided much of the direction for future policy. For these reasons, then, the reports are significant. Moreover, as we shall see, they apparently had a dramatic impact on the Secretary of Defense and provided much of the direction for future policy. For these reasons important sections of them are reproduced at some length below.

The report evaluating the results of the U.S. air campaign against North Vietnam began with a forceful statement of conclusions:

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. As of July 1966 the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam (NVN) had had no measurable direct effect on Hanoi's ability to mount and support military operations in the South at the current level.

Although the political constraints seem clearly to have reduced the effectiveness of the bombing program, its limited effect on Hanoi's ability to provide such support cannot be explained solely on that basis. The countermeasures introduced by Hanoi effectively reduced the impact of U.S. bombing. More fundamentally, however, North Vietnam has basically a subsistence agricultural economy that presents a difficult and unrewarding target system for air attack.

The economy supports operations in the South mainly by functioning as a logistic funnel and by providing a source of manpower. The industrial sector produces little of military value. Most of the essential military supplies that the VC/NVN forces in the South require from external sources are provided by the USSR and Communist China. Furthermore, the volume of such supplies is so low that only a small fraction of the capacity of North Vietnam's rather flexible transportation network is required to maintain the flow. The economy's relatively underemployed labor force also appears to provide an ample manpower reserve for internal military and economic needs including repair and reconstruction and for continued support of military operations in the South.

2. Since the initiation of the ROLLING THUNDER program the damage to facilities and equipment in North Vietnam has been more than offset by the increased flow of military and economic aid, largely from the USSR and Communist China.

The measurable costs of the damage sustained by North Vietnam are estimated by intelligence analysts to have reached approximately $86 million by 15 July 1966. In 1965 alone, the value of the military and economic aid that Hanoi received from the USSR and Communist China is estimated to have been on the order of $250-400 million, of which about $100-150 million was economic, and they have continued to provide aid, evidently at an increasing rate, during the current year. Most of it has been from the USSR, which had virtually cut off aid during the 1962-64 period. There can be little doubt, therefore, that

Hanoi's Communist backers have assumed the economic costs to a degree that has significantly cushioned the impact of U.S. bombing.

3. The aspects of the basic situation that have enabled Hanoi to continue its support of military operations in the South and to neutralize the impact of U.S. bombing by passing the economic costs to other Communist countries are not likely to be altered by reducing the present geographic constraints, mining Haiphong and the principal harbors in North Vietnam, increasing the number of armed reconnaissance sorties and otherwise expanding the U.S. air offensive along the lines now contemplated in military recommendations and planning studies.

An expansion of the bombing program along such lines would make it more difficult and costly for Hanoi to move essential military supplies through North Vietnam to the VC/NVN forces in the South. The low volume of supplies required, the demonstrated effectiveness of the countermeasures already undertaken by Hanoi, the alternative options that the NVN transportation network provides and the level of aid the USSR and China seem prepared to provide, however, make it quite unlikely that Hanoi's capability to function as a logistic funnel would be seriously impaired. Our past experience also indicates that an intensified air campaign in NVN probably would not prevent Hanoi from infiltrating men into the South at the present or a higher rate, if it chooses. Furthermore, there would appear to be no basis for assuming that the damage that could be inflicted by an intensified air offensive would impose such demands on the North Vietnamese labor force that Hanoi would be unable to continue and expand its recruitment and training of military forces for the insurgency in the South.

4. While conceptually it is reasonable to assume that some limit may be imposed on the scale of military activity that Hanoi can maintain in the South by continuing the ROLLING THUNDER program at the present, or some higher level of effort, there appears to be no basis for defining that limit in concrete terms or, for concluding that the present scale of VC/NVN activities in the field have approached that limit.

The available evidence clearly indicates that Hanoi has been infiltrating military forces and supplies into South Vietnam at an accelerated rate during the current year. Intelligence estimates have concluded that North Vietnam is capable of substantially increasing its support.

5. The indirect effects of the bombing on the will of the North Vietnamese to continue fighting and on their leaders' appraisal of the prospective gains and costs of maintaining the present policy have not shown themselves in any tangible way. Furthermore, we have not discovered any basis for concluding that the indirect punitive effects of bombing will prove decisive in these respects.

It may be argued on a speculative basis that continued or increased bombing must eventually effect Hanoi's will to continue, particularly as a component of the total U.S. military pressures being exerted throughout Southeast Asia. However, it is not a conclusion that necessarily follows from the available evidence; given the character of North Vietnam's economy and society, the present and prospective low levels of casualties and the amount of aid available to Hanoi. It would appear to be equally logical to assume that the major influences on Hanoi's will to continue are most likely to be the course of the war in the South and the degree to which the USSR and China support the policy of continuing the war and that the punitive impact of U.S. bombing may have but a marginal effect in this broader context. 39/

In the body of the report these summary formulations were elaborated in more detail. For instance, in assessing the military and economic effect of the bombing on North Vietnam's capacity to sustain the war, the report stated:

The economic and military damage sustained by Hanoi in the first year of the bombing was moderate and the cost could be (and was) passed along to Moscow and Peiping.

The major effect of the attack on North Vietnam was to force Hanoi to cope with disruption to normal activity, particularly in transportation and distribution. The bombing hurt most in its disruption of the roads and rail nets and in the very considerable repair effort which became necessary. The regime, however, was singularly successful in overcoming the effects of the U.S. interdiction effort.

Much of the damage was to installations that the North Vietnamese did not need to sustain the military effort. The regime made no attempt to restore storage facilities and little to repair damage to power stations, evidently because of the existence of adequate excess capacity and

because the facilities were not of vital importance. For somewhat similar reasons, it made no major effort to restore military facilities, but merely abandoned barracks and dispersed materiel usually stored in depots.

The major essential restoration consisted of measures to keep traffic moving, to keep the railroad yards operating, to maintain communications, and to replace transport equipment and equipment for radar and SAM sites. 40/

A little further on the report examined the political effects of the bombing on Hanoi's will to continue the war, the morale of the population, and the support of its allies.

The bombing through 1965 apparently had not had a major effect in shaping Hanoi's decision on whether or not to continue the war in Vietnam. The regime probably continued to base such decisions mainly on the course of the fighting in the South and appeared willing to suffer even stepped-up bombing so long as prospects of winning the South appeared to be reasonably good.

Evidence regarding the effect of the bombing on the morale of the North Vietnamese people suggests that the results were mixed. The bombing clearly strengthened popular support of the regime by engendering patriotic and nationalistic enthusiasm to resist the attacks. On the other hand, those more directly involved in the bombing underwent personal harships and anxieties caused by the raids. Because the air strikes were directed away from urban areas, morale was probably damaged less by the direct bombing than by its indirect effects, such as evacuation of the urban population and the splitting of families.

Hanoi's political relations with its allies were in some respects strengthened by the bombing. The attacks had the effect of encouraging greater material and political support from the Soviet Union than might otherwise have been the case. While the Soviet aid complicated Hanoi's relationship with Peking, it reduced North Vietnam's dependence on China and thereby gave Hanoi more room for maneuver on its own behalf. 41/

This report's concluding chapter was entitled "Observations" and contained some of the most lucid and penetrating analysis of air war produced to that date, or this! It began by reviewing the original objectives the bombing was initiated to achieve:

...reducing the ability of North Vietnam to support the Communist insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos, and...increasing progressively the pressure on NVN to the point where the regime would decide that it was too costly to continue directing and supporting the insurgency in the South. 42/

After rehearsing the now familiar military failure of the bombing to halt the infiltration, the report crisply and succinctly outlined the bombing's failure to achieve the critical second objective --the psychological one:

...initial plans and assessments for the ROLLING THUNDER program clearly tended to overestimate the persuasive and disruptive effects of the U.S. air strikes and, correspondingly, to underestimate the tenacity and recuperative capabilities of the North Vietnamese. This tendency, in turn, appears to reflect a general failure to appreciate the fact, well-documented in the historical and social scientific literature, that a direct, frontal attack on a society tends to strengthen the social fabric of the nation, to increase popular support of the existing government, to improve the determination of both the leadership and the populace to fight back, to induce a variety of protective measures that reduce the society's vulnerability to future attack, and to develop an increased capacity for quick repair and restoration of essential functions. The great variety of physical and social countermeasures that North Vietnam has taken in response to the bombing is now well documented in current intelligence reports, but the potential effectiveness of these countermeasures was not stressed in the early planning or intelligence studies. 43/

Perhaps the most trenchant analysis of all, however, was reserved for last as the report attacked the fundamental weakness of the air war strategy -- our inability to relate operations to objectives:

In general, current official thought about U.S. objectives in bombing NVN implicitly assumes two sets of causal relationships:

1. That by increasing the damage and destruction of resources in NVN, the U.S. is exerting pressure to cause the DRV to stop their support of the military operations in SVN and Laos; and

2. That the combined effect of the total military effort against NVN -- including the U.S. air strikes in NVN and Laos, and the land, sea, and air operations in SVN -- will ultimately cause the DRV to perceive that its probable losses accruing from the war have become greater than its possible gains and, on the basis of this net evaluation, the regime will stop its support of the war in the South.

These two sets of interrelationships are assumed in military planning, but it is not clear that they are systematically addressed in current intelligence estimates and assessments. Instead, the tendency is to encapsulate the bombing of NVN as one set of operations and the war in the South as another set of operations, and to evaluate each separately; and to tabulate and describe data on the physical, economic, and military effects of the bombing, but not to address specifically the relationship between such effects and the data relating to the ability and will of the DRV to continue its support of the war in the South.

The fragmented nature of current analyses and the lack of an adequate methodology for assessing the net effects of a given set of military operations leaves a major gap between the quantifiable data on bomb damage effects, on the one hand, and policy judgments about the feasibility of achieving a given set of objectives, on the other. Bridging this gap still requires the exercise of broad political-military judgments that cannot be supported or rejected on the basis of systematic intelligence indicators. It must be concluded, therefore, that there is currently no adequate basis for predicting the levels of U.S. military effort that would be required to achieve the stated objectives -- indeed, there is no firm basis for determining if there is <u>any</u> feasible level of effort that would achieve these objectives. 44/

The critical impact of this study on the Secretary's thinking is revealed by the fact that many of its conclusions and much of its analysis would find its way into McNamara's October trip report to the President.

Having submitted a stinging condemnation of the bombing, the Study Group was under some obligation to offer constructive alternatives and this they did, siezing, not surprisingly, on the very idea McNamara had suggested -- the anti-infiltration barrier. The product of their summer's work was a reasonably detailed proposal for a multi-system barrier across the DMZ and the Laotian panhandle that would make extensive use of recently innovated mines and sensors. The central portion of their recommendation follows:

The barrier would have two somewhat different parts, one designed against foot traffic and one against vehicles. The preferred location for the anti-foot-traffic barrier is in the region along the southern edge of the DMZ to the Laotian border and then north of Tchepone to the vicinity of Muong Sen, extending about 100 by 20 kilometers. This area is virtually unpopulated, and the terrain is quite rugged, containing mostly V-shaped valleys in which the opportunity for alternate trails appears lower than it is elsewhere in the system. The location of choice for the anti-vehicle part of the system is the area, about 100 by 40 kilometers, now covered by Operation Cricket. In this area the road network tends to be more constricted than elsewhere, and there appears to be a smaller area available for new roads. An alternative location for the anti-personnel system is north of the DMZ to the Laotian border and then north along the crest of the mountains dividing Laos from North Vietnam. It is less desirable economically and militarily because of its greater length, greater distance from U.S. bases, and greater proximity to potential North Vietnamese counter-efforts.

The air-supported barrier would, if necessary, be supplemented by a manned "fence" connecting the eastern end of the barrier to the sea.

The construction of the air-supported barrier could be initiated using currently available or nearly available components, with some necessary modifications, and could perhaps be installed by a year or so from go-ahead. However, we anticipate that the North Vietnamese would learn to cope with a barrier built this way after some period of time which we cannot estimate, but which we fear may be short. Weapons and sensors which can make a much more effective barrier, only some of which are now under development, are not likely to be available in less than 18 months to 2 years. Even these, it must be expected, will eventually be overcome by the North Vietnamese, so that further improvements in weaponry will be necessary. Thus we envisage a dynamic "battle of the barrier," in which the barrier is repeatedly improved and strengthened by the introduction of new components, and which will hopefully permit us to keep the North Vietnamese off balance by continually posing new problems for them.

This barrier is in concept not very different from what has already been suggested elsewhere; the new aspects are: the very large scale of area denial, especially mine

fields kilometers deep rather than the conventional 100-200 meters; the very large numbers and persistent employment of weapons, sensors, and aircraft sorties in the barrier area; and the emphasis on rapid and carefully planned incorporation of more effective weapons and sensors into the system.

The system that could be available in a year or so would, in our conception, contain [sic] the following components:

-- Gravel mines (both self-sterilizing for harassment and non-sterilizing for area denial).

-- Possibly, "button bomblets" developed by Picatinny Arsenal, to augment the range of the sensors against foot traffic.*

-- SADEYE/BLU-26B clusters,** for attacks on area-type targets of uncertain locations.

-- Acoustic detectors, based on improvements of the "Acoustic Sonobuoys" currently under test by the Navy.

-- P-2V patrol aircraft, equipped for acoustic sensor monitoring, Gravel dispensing, vectoring strike aircraft, and infrared detection of campfires in bivouac areas.

-- Gravel Dispensing Aircraft (A-1's, or possibly C-123's)

-- Strike Aircraft

-- Photo-reconnaissance Aircraft

-- Photo Interpreters

--(Possibly) ground teams to plant mines and sensors, gather information, and selectively harass traffic on foot trails.

---

* These are small mines (aspirin-size) presently designed to give a loud report but not to injure when stepped on by a shod foot. They would be sown in great density along well-used trails, on the assumption that they would be much harder to sweep than Gravel. Their purpose would be to make noise indicating pedestrian traffic at a range of approximately 200 feet from the acoustic sensors.

** CBU-24 in Air Force nomenclature.

The anti-troop infiltration system (which would also function against supply porters) would operate as follows: There would be a constantly renewed mine field of non-sterilizing Gravel (and possibly button bomblets), distributed in patterns covering interconnected valleys and slopes (suitable for alternate trails) over the entire barrier region. The actual mined area would encompass the equivalent of a strip about 100 by 5 kilometers. There would also be a pattern of acoustic detectors to listen for mine explosions indicating an attempted penetration. The mine field is intended to deny opening of alternate routes for troop infiltrators and should be emplaced first. On the trails and bivouacs currently used, from which mines may--we tentatively assume--be cleared without great difficulty, a more dense pattern of sensors would be designed to locate groups of infiltrators. Air strikes using Gravel and SADEYES would then be called against these targets. The sensor patterns would be monitored 24 hours a day by patrol aircraft. The struck areas would be reseeded with new mines.

The anti-vehicle system would consist of acoustic detectors distributed every mile or so along all truckable roads in the interdicted area, monitored 24 hours a day by patrol aircraft, with vectored strike aircraft using SADEYE to respond to signals that trucks or truck convoys are moving. The patrol aircraft would distribute self-sterilizing Gravel over parts of the road net at dusk. The self-sterilization feature is needed so that road-watching and mine-planting teams could be used in this area. Photo-reconnaissance aircraft would cover the entire area each few days to look for the development of new truckable roads, to see if the transport of supplies is being switched to porters, and to identify any other change in the infiltration system. It may also be desirable to use ground teams to plant larger anti-truck mines along the roads, as an interim measure pending the development of effective air-dropped anti-vehicle mines.

The cost of such a system (both parts) has been estimated to be about $800 million per year, of which by far the major fraction is spent for Gravel and SADEYES. The key requirements would be (all numbers are approximate because of assumptions which had to be made regarding degradation of system components in field use, and regarding the magnitude of infiltration): 20 million Gravel mines per month; possibly 25 million button bomblets per month;

10,000 SADEYE-BLU-26B clusters* per month; 1600 acoustic sensors per month (assuming presently employed batteries with 2-week life), plus 68 appropriately equipped P-2V patrol aircraft; a fleet of about 50 A-1's or 20 C-123's for Gravel dispensing (1400 A-1 sorties or 600 C-123 sorties per month); 500 strike sorties per month (F-4C equivalent); and sufficient photo-reconnaissance sorties, depending on the aircraft, to cover 2500 square miles each week, with an appropriate team of photo interpreters. Even to make this system work, there would be required experimentation and further development for foliage penetration, moisture resistance, and proper dispersion of Gravel; development of a better acoustic sensor than currently exists (especially in an attempt to eliminate the need for button bomblets); aircraft modifications; possible modifications in BLU-26B fuzing; and refinement of strike-navigation tactics.

For the future, rapid development of new mines (such as tripwire, smaller and more effectively camouflaged Gravel, and various other kinds of mines), as well as still better sensor/information processing systems will be essential. 45/

Thus, not only had this distinguished array of American technologists endorsed the barrier idea McNamara had asked them to consider, they had provided the Secretary with an attractive, well-thought-out and highly detailed proposal as a real alternative to further escalation of the ineffective air war against North Vietnam. But, true to their scientific orientations, the study group members could not conclude their work without examining the kinds of counter-measures the North Vietnamese might take to circumvent the barrier. Thus, they reasoned:

Assuming that surprise is not thrown away, countermeasures will of course still be found, but they may take some time to bring into operation. The most effective countermeasures we can anticipate are mine sweeping; provision of shelter against SADEYE strikes and Gravel dispersion; spoofing of sensors to deceive the system or decoy aircraft into ambushes, and in general a considerable step-up of North Vietnamese anti-aircraft capability along the road net. Counter-countermeasures must be an integral part of the system development.

* These quantities depend on an average number of strikes consistent with the assumption of 7000 troops/month and 180 tons/day of supplies by truck on the infiltration routes. This assumption was based on likely upper limits at the time the barrier is installed. If the assumption of initial infiltration is too high, or if we assume that the barrier will be successful, the number of weapons and sorties will be reduced accordingly.

Apart from the tactical countermeasures against the barrier itself, one has to consider strategic alternatives available to the North Vietnamese in case the barrier is successful. Among these are: a move into the Mekong Plain; infiltration from the sea either directly to SVN or through Cambodia; and movement down the Mekong from Thakhek (held by the Pathet Lao-North Vietnamese) into Cambodia.

Finally, it will be difficult for us to find out how effective the barrier is in the absence of clearly visible North Vietnamese responses, such as end runs through the Mekong plain. Because of supplies already stored in the pipeline, and because of the general shakiness of our quantitative estimates of either supply or troop infiltration, it is likely to be some time before the effect of even a wholly successful barrier becomes noticeable. A greatly stepped-up intelligence effort is called for, including continued road-watch activity in the areas of the motorable roads, and patrol and reconnaissance activity south of the anti-personnel barrier. 46/

This, then, was the new option introduced into the Vietnam discussions in Washington at the beginning of September.

Their work completed, the Jason Group met with McNamara and McNaughton in Washington on August 30 and presented their conclusions and recommendations. McNamara was apparently strongly and favorably impressed with the work of the Summer Study because he and McNaughton flew to Massachusetts on September 6 to meet with members of the Study again for more detailed discussions. Even before going to Massachusetts, however, McNamara had asked General Wheeler to bring the proposal up with the Chiefs and to request field comment. 47/ After having asked CINCPAC for an evaluation, Wheeler sent McNamara the preliminary reactions of the Chiefs. 48/ They agreed with the Secretary's suggestion to establish a project manager (General Starbird) in DDR&E, but expressed concern that, "the very substantial funds required for the barrier system would be obtained from current Service resources thereby affecting adversely important current programs."

CINCPAC's evaluation of the barrier proposal on September 13 was little more than a rehash of the overdrawn arguments against such a system advanced in April. The sharpness of the language of his summary arguments, however, is extreme even for Admiral Sharp. In no uncertain terms he stated:

The combat forces required before, during and after construction of the barrier; the initial and follow-on logistic support; the engineer construction effort and time required; and the existing logistic posture in Southeast Asia with respect to ports and land LOCs make construction of such a barrier impracticable.

....Military operations against North Vietnam and operations in South Vietnam are of transcendent importance. Operations elsewhere are complementary supporting undertakings. Priority and emphasis should be accorded in consideration of the forces and resources available to implement the strategy dictated by our objectives. 49/

To some extent, the vehemence of CINCPAC's reaction must have stemmed from the fact that he and General Westmoreland had just completed a paper exercise in which they had struggled to articulate a strategic concept for the conduct of the war to achieve U.S. objectives as they understood them. This effort had been linked to the consideration of CY 1967 force requirements for the war, the definition of which required some strategic concept to serve as a guide. With respect to the war in the North, CINCPAC's final "Military Strategy to Accomplish United States Objectives for Vietnam," stated:

In the North - Take the war to the enemy by unremitting but selective application of United States air and naval power. Military installations and those industrial facilities that generate support for the aggression will be attacked. Movement within, into and out of North Vietnam will be impeded. The enemy will be denied the great psychological and material advantage of conducting an aggression from a sanctuary. This relentless application of force is designed progressively to curtail North Vietnam's war-making capacity. It seeks to force upon him major replenishment, repair and construction efforts. North Vietnamese support and direction of the Pathet Lao and the insurgency in Thailand will be impaired. The movement of men and material through Laos and over all land and water lines of communications into South Vietnam will be disrupted. Hanoi's capability to support military operations in South Vietnam and to direct those operations will be progressively reduced. 50/

With this formulation of intent for the air war, it is not surprising that the barrier proposal should have been anathema to CINCPAC.

McNamara, however, proceeded to implement the barrier proposal in spite of CINCPAC's condemnation and the Chiefs' cool reaction. On September 15 he appointed Lt. General Alfred Starbird to head Joint Task Force 728 within DDR&E as manager for the project. 51/ The Joint Task Force was eventually given the cover name Defense Communications Planning Group to protect the sensitivity of the project. Plans for implementing the barrier were pushed ahead speedily. Early in October, just prior to the Secretary's trip, General Starbird made a visit to Vietnam to study the problem on the ground and begin to set the administrative wheels in motion. In spite of the fact that McNamara was

vigorously pushing the project forward, there is no indication that he had officially raised the matter with the President, although it is hard to imagine that some discussion of the Jason Summer Study recommendations had not taken place between them. In any case, as McNamara prepared to go to Vietnam again to assess the situation in light of new requests for troop increases, he made arrangements to have General Starbird remain for the first day of his visit and placed the anti-infiltration barrier first on the agenda of discussions. 52/

3. A Visit to Vietnam and a Memorandum for the President

McNamara's trip to Vietnam in October 1966 served a variety of purposes. It came at a time when CINCPAC was involved in a force planning exercise to determine desired (required in his view) force levels for fighting the war through 1967. This was related to DOD's fall DPM process in which the Pentagon reviews its programs and prepares its budget recommendations for the coming fiscal year. This in turn engenders a detailed look at requirements in all areas for the five years to come. As a part of this process, just three days before the Secretary's departure, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had sent him an important memo reviewing force posture the world over and recommending a call-up of the reserves to meet anticipated 1967 requirements. 53/ This recommendation as a part of the overall examination of force requirements needed his personal assessment on the spot in Vietnam. Other important reasons for a trip were, no doubt, the ones to which we have referred in detail: McNamara's dissatisfaction with the results of the POL attacks; and the reports of the Jason Summer Study. Furthermore, the off-year Congressional elections were only a month away and the President had committed himself to go to Manila for a heads of state meeting later in October. For both these events the President probably felt the need of McNamara's fresh impressions and recommendations.

Whatever the combination of reasons, McNamara left Washington on October 10 and spent four days in Vietnam. Accompanying the Secretary on the trip were Under Secretary of State Katzenbach, General Wheeler, Mr. Komer, John McNaughton, John Foster, Director of DDR&E, and Henry Kissinger. In the course of the visit McNamara worked his way through a detailed seventeen item agenda of briefings, visited several sections of the country plus the Fleet, and met with the leaders of the GVN. 54/

His findings in those three days in South Vietnam must have confirmed his disquiet about the lack of progress of the war and the ineffectualness of U.S. actions to date, for when he returned to Washington he sent the President a gloomy report with recommendations for leveling off the U.S. effort and seeking a solution through diplomatic channels. 55/ McNamara recommended an increase in the total authorized final troop strength in Vietnam of only about 40,000 over Program #3, for an end strength of 470,000. This was a direct rejection of CINCPAC's request for a 12/31/67 strength of 570,000 and marked a significant turning point

in McNamara's attitude toward the force buildup. 56/ The issue would continue to be debated until the President's decision shortly after the election in November to approve the McNamara recommended total of 469,300 troops under Program #4.

With respect to the air war he stated that the bombing had neither significantly reduced infiltration nor diminished Hanoi's will to continue the fight, and he noted the concurrence of the intelligence community in these conclusions. Pulling back from his previous positions, he now recommended that the President level off the bombing at current levels and seek other means of achieving our objectives. The section of the memo on bombing follows:

> Stabilize the ROLLING THUNDER program against the North. Attack sorties in North Vietnam have risen from about 4,000 per month at the end of last year to 6,000 per month in the first quarter of this year and 12,000 per month at present. Most of our 50 percent increase of deployed attack-capable aircraft has been absorbed in the attacks on North Vietnam. In North Vietnam, almost 84,000 attack sorties have been flown (about 25 percent against fixed targets), 45 percent during the past seven months.
>
> Despite these efforts, it now appears that the North Vietnamese-Laotian road network will remain adequate to meet the requirements of the Communist forces in South Vietnam -- this is so even if its capacity could be reduced by one-third and if combat activities were to be doubled. North Vietnam's serious need for trucks, spare parts and petroleum probably can, despite air attacks, be met by imports. The petroleum requirement for trucks involved in the infiltration movement, for example, has not been enough to present significant supply problems, and the effects of the attacks on the petroleum distribution system, while they have not yet been fully assessed, are not expected to cripple the flow of essential supplies. Furthermore, it is clear that, to bomb the North sufficiently to make a radical impact upon Hanoi's political, economic and social structure, would require an effort which we could make but which would not be stomached either by our own people or by world opinion; and it would involve a serious risk of drawing us into open war with China.
>
> The North Vietnamese are paying a price. They have been forced to assign some 300,000 personnel to the lines of communication in order to maintain the critical flow of personnel and materiel to the South. Now that the lines of communication have been manned, however, it is doubtful that either a

large increase or decrease in our interdiction sorties would substantially change the cost to the enemy of maintaining the roads, railroads, and waterways or affect whether they are operational. It follows that the marginal sorties -- probably the marginal 1,000 or even 5,000 sorties -- per month against the lines of communication no longer have a significant impact on the war.

When this marginal inutility of added sorties against North Vietnam and Laos is compared with the crew and aircraft losses implicit in the activity (four men and aircraft and $20 million per 1,000 sorties), I recommend, as a minimum, against increasing the level of bombing of North Vietnam and against increasing the intensity of operations by changing the areas or kinds of targets struck.

Under these conditions, the bombing program would continue the pressure and would remain available as a bargaining counter to get talks started (or to trade off in talks). But, as in the case of a stabilized level of US ground forces, the stabilization of ROLLING THUNDER would remove the prospect of ever-escalating bombing as a factor complicating our political posture and distracting from the main job of pacification in South Vietnam.

At the proper time, as discussed on pages 6-7 below, I believe we should consider terminating bombing in all of North Vietnam, or at least in the Northeast zones, for an indefinite period in connection with covert moves toward peace. 57/

As an alternative to further escalation of the bombing, McNamara recommended the barrier across the DMZ and Laos:

Install a barrier. A portion of the 470,000 troops -- perhaps 10,000 to 20,000 -- should be devoted to the construction and maintenance of an infiltration barrier. Such a barrier would lie near the 17th parallel -- would run from the sea, across the neck of South Vietnam (choking off the new infiltration routes through the DMZ) and across the trails in Laos. This interdiction system (at an approximate cost of $1 billion) would comprise to the east a ground barrier of fences, wire, sensors, artillery, aircraft and mobile troops; and to the west -- mainly in Laos -- an interdiction zone covered by air-laid mines and bombing attacks pin-pointed by air-laid acoustic sensors.

The barrier may not be fully effective at first, but I believe that it can be made effective in time and that even the threat of its becoming effective can substantially change to our advantage the character of the war. It would hinder enemy efforts, would permit more efficient use of the limited number of friendly troops, and would be persuasive evidence both that our sole aim is to protect the South from the North and that we intend to see the job through. 58/

The purpose of these two actions would be to lay the groundwork for a stronger U.S. effort to get negotiations started. With the war seemingly stalemated, this appeared to be the only "out" to the Secretary that offered some prospect of bringing the conflict to an end in any near future. In analyzing North Vietnamese unwillingness to date to respond to peace overtures, McNamara noted their acute sensitivity to the air attacks on their homeland (recalling the arguments of the Jason Summer Study) and the hostile suspicion of U.S. motives. To improve the climate for talks, he argued, the U.S. should make some gesture to indicate our good faith. Foremost of these was a cessation or a limitation of the bombing.

As a way of projective [sic] U.S. bona fides, I believe that we should consider two possibilities with respect to our bombing program against the North, to be undertaken, if at all, at a time very carefully selected with a view to maximizing the chances of influencing the enemy and world opinion and to minimizing the chances that failure would strengthen the hand of the "hawks" at home: First, without fanfare, conditions, or avowal, whether the stand-down was permanent or temporary, stop bombing all of North Vietnam. It is generally thought that Hanoi will not agree to negotiations until they can claim that the bombing has stopped unconditionally. We should see what develops, retaining freedom to resume the bombing if nothing useful was forthcoming.

Alternatively, we could shift the weight-of-effort away from "Zones 6A and 6B" -- zones including Hanoi and Haiphong and areas north of those two cities to the Chinese border. This alternative has some attraction ir that it provides the North Vietnamese a "face saver" if only problems of "face" are holding up Hanoi peace gestures; it would narrow the bombing down directly to the objectionable infiltration (supporting the logic of a stop-infiltration/full-pause deal); and it would reduce the international heat on the US. Here, too, bombing of the Northeast could be resumed at any time, or "spot" attacks could be made there from time to time to keep North Vietnam off balance and to require

her to pay almost the full cost by maintaining her repair crews in place. The sorties diverted from Zones 6A and 6B could be concentrated on the infiltration routes in Zones 1 and 2 (the southern end of North Vietnam, including the Mu Gia Pass), in Laos and in South Vietnam.a/

a/ Any limitation on the bombing of North Vietnam will cause serious psychological problems among the men who are risking their lives to help achieve our political objectives; among their commanders up to and including the JCS; and among those of our people who cannot understand why we should withhold punishment from the enemy. General Westmoreland, as do the JCS, strongly believes in the military value of the bombing program. Further, Westmoreland reports that the morale of his Air Force personnel may already be showing signs of erosion -- an erosion resulting from current operational restrictions. 59/

The Secretary's footnote was judicious. The Chiefs did indeed oppose any curtailment of the bombing as a means to get negotiations started. They fired off a dissenting memo to the Secretary the same day as his memo and requested that it be passed to the President. With respect to the bombing program per se they stated:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff do not concur in your recommendation that there should be no increase in level of bombing effort and no modification in areas and targets subject to air attack. They believe our air campaign against NVN to be an integral and indispensable part of our over all war effort. To be effective, the air campaign should be conducted with only those minimum constraints necessary to avoid indiscriminate killing of population. 60/

As to the Secretary's proposal for a bombing halt:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff do not concur with your proposal that, as a carrot to induce negotiations, we should suspend or reduce our bombing campaign against NVN. Our experiences with pauses in bombing and resumption have not been happy ones. Additionally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that the likelihood of the war being settled by negotiation is small, and that, far from inducing negotiations, another bombing pause will be regarded by North Vietnamese leaders, and our Allies, as renewed evidence of lack of US determination to press the war to a successful

conclusion. The bombing campaign is one of the two trump cards in the hands of the President (the other being the presence of US troops in SVN). It should not be given up without an end to the NVN aggression in SVN. 61/

The Chiefs did more than just dissent from a McNamara recommendation, however. They closed their memo with a lengthy counter-proposal with significant political overtones clearly intended for the President's eyes. In their own words this is what they said:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that the war has reached a stage at which decisions taken over the next sixty days can determine the outcome of the war and, consequently, can affect the over-all security interests of the United States for years to come. Therefore, they wish to provide to you and to the President their unequivocal views on two salient aspects of the war situation: the search for peace and military pressures on NVN.

a. The frequent, broadly-based public offers made by the President to settle the war by peaceful means on a generous basis, which would take from NVN nothing it now has, have been admirable. Certainly, no one - American or foreigner - except those who are determined not to be convinced, can doubt the sincerity, the generosity, the altruism of US actions and objectives. In the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff the time has come when further overt actions and offers on our part are not only non-productive, they are counterproductive. A logical case [sic] can be made that the American people, our Allies, and our enemies alike are increasingly uncertain as to our resolution to pursue the war to a successful conclusion. The Joint Chiefs of Staff advocate the following:

(1) A statement by the President during the Manila Conference of his unswerving determination to carry on the war until NVN aggression against SVN shall cease;

(2) Continued covert exploration of all avenues leading to a peaceful settlement of the war; and

(3) Continued alertness to detect and react appropriately to withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from SVN and cessation of support to the VC.

b. In JCSM-955-64, dated 14 November 1964, and in JCSM-962-64, dated 23 November 1964, the Joint Chiefs of Staff provided their views as to the military pressures which should be

brought to bear on NVN. In summary, they recommended a "sharp knock" on NVN military assets and war-supporting facilities rather than the campaign of slowly increasing pressure which was adopted. Whatever the political merits of the latter course, we deprived ourselves of the military effects of early weight of effort and shock, and gave to the enemy time to adjust to our slow quantitative and qualitative increase of pressure. This is not to say that it is now too late to derive military benefits from more effective and extensive use of our air and naval superiority. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend:

(1) Approval of their ROLLING THUNDER 52 program, which is a step toward meeting the requirement for improved target systems. This program would decrease the Hanoi and Haiphong sanctuary areas, authorize attacks against the steel plant, the Hanoi rail yards, the thermal power plants, selected areas within Haiphong port and other ports, selected locks and dams controlling water LOCs, SAM support facilities within the residual Hanoi and Haiphong sanctuaries, and POL at Haiphong, Ha Gia (Phuc Yen) and Can Thon (Kep).

(2) Use of naval surface forces to interdict North Vietnamese coastal waterborne traffic and appropriate land LOCs and to attack other coastal military targets such as radar and AAA sites.

5. The Joint Chiefs of Staff request that their views as set forth above be provided to the President.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff

(Sgd) EARLE G. WHEELER 62/

Such a memo from the Chiefs represents more than a dissent or an alternative recommendation; it constitutes a statement for the record to guarantee that in the historical accounts the Chiefs will appear having discharged their duty. It always comes as a form of political notification, not merely a military recommendation.

The available documents do not show what the reaction at the State Department was (apart from Mr. Katzenbach's apparent endorsement), nor do they indicate the views of the White House staff under W. W. Rostow. McNaughton's files do contain a commentary on the McNamara recommendations prepared by George Carver of CIA for the Director, Richard Helms. Carver agreed with the basic McNamara analysis of the results of the air war but did not think they constituted a conclusive statement about possible results from an escalation. Carver wrote,

> We concur in Secretary McNamara's analysis of the effects of the ROLLING THUNDER program, its potential for reducing the flow of essential supplies, and his judgment on the marginal inutility of added sorties against lines of communication. We endorse his argument on stabilizing the level of sorties. We do not agree, however, with the implied judgment that changes in the bombing program could not be effective. We continue to judge that a bombing program directed both against closing the port of Haiphong and continuously cutting the rail lines to China could have a significant impact. 63/

Carver also opposed any halt or de-escalation of the bombing to start negotiations, arguing that we could either pursue negotiations or try to build up the GVN but we could not do both. His preference was to build in the South. Hence, a bombing halt or pause was not required. As to a reduction, he argued that,

> Shifting the air effort from the northeast quadrant to the infiltration areas in Laos and southern North Vietnam would be quite unproductive. Such a course of action would not induce Hanoi to negotiate (since it would still involve bombing in the north) and would probably have little effect in changing present international attitudes. Furthermore, a concentration of sorties against the low-yield and elusive targets along the infiltration routes in the southern end of North Vietnam and in Laos would not appreciably diminish North Vietnam's ability to maintain the supply of its forces in South Vietnam. 64/

As for the anti-infiltration barrier, neither the Chiefs nor Carver had a great deal of comment. The Chiefs reiterated their reservations with respect to resource diversion but endorsed the barrier concept in principle. Carver somewhat pessimistically observed that,

> In order to achieve the objectives set for the barrier in our view it must be extended well westward into Laos. Air interdiction of the routes in Laos unsupplemented by ground action will not effectively check infiltration. 65/

To no one's surprise, therefore, McNamara proceeded with the barrier project in all haste, presumably with the President's blessing.

C. The Year End View

1. Presidential Decisions

The President apparently did not react immediately to the McNamara recommendations, although he must have approved them in general. He was at the time preparing for the Manila Conference to take place October 23-25 and major decisions before would have been badly timed. Thus, formal decisions on the McNamara recommendations, particularly the troop level question would wait until he had returned and the elections were over. At Manila, the President worked hard to get the South Vietnamese to make a greater commitment to the war and pressed them for specific reforms. He also worked hard to get a generalized formulation of allied objectives in the war and saw his efforts succeed in the agreed communique. Its most important feature was an appeal to the North Vietnamese for peace based on a commitment to withdraw forces within six months after the end of the war. It contained, however, no direct reference to the air war.

While in Manila, the President and his advisors also conferred with General Westmoreland. As McNaughton subsequently reported to McNamara (who did not attend), Westmoreland opposed any curtailment of the air war in the North, calling it "our only trump card." 66/ Unlike the Jason Study Group, Westmoreland felt the strikes had definite military value in slowing the southward movement of supplies, diverting DRV manpower and creating great costs to the North. Rather than stabilize or de-escalate, Westmoreland advocated lifting the restrictions on the program. Citing the high level of aircraft attrition on low priority targets, he warned, "you are asking for a very bad political reaction." 67/ He recommended that strikes be carried out against the MIG airfields, the missile assembly area, the truck maintenance facility, the Haiphong port facilities, the twelve thermal power plants, and the steel plant. When McNaughton pressed him on the question of whether the elimination of these targets would have much payoff in reduced logistical support for the Southern war, Westmoreland backed off stating, "I'm not responsible for the bombing program. Admiral Sharp is. So I haven't spent much time on it. But I asked a couple of my best officers to look into it, and they came up with the recommendations I gave you." In any event, he opposed any pause in the bombing, contending that the DRV would just use it to strengthen its air defenses and repair air fields. McNaughton reported that Westmoreland had repeated these views to the President in the presence of Ky and Thieu at Johnson's request; moreover, he planned to forward them to the President in a memo [not available] at the request of Walt Rostow.

As to the barrier, McNaughton reported that, "Westy seems to be fighting the barrier less (although he obviously fears that it is designed mainly to justify stopping RT [ROLLING THUNDER], at which

he 'shudders'...." 69/ Apart from that his concerns about the barrier were minor (although he did propose a NIKE battalion for use in a surface to surface role in support of the barrier).

On his way home from Manila, the President made the now famous dramatic visit to U.S. troops at Cam Ranh Bay. Once home, however, he deferred any major decisions on the war until after the elections. Several "peace" candidates were aggressively challenging Administration supporters in the off-year Congressional contests and the President wished to do nothing that might boost their chances. As it turned out, they were overwhelmingly defeated in the November 8 balloting.

Meanwhile, at the Pentagon the dispute over the level of effort for the air war continued. Even before Manila, the Chiefs had attempted to head off McNamara's recommendation for stabilizing the bombing with a request for a 25 percent increase in B-52 sorties per month. 70/ The Secretary, for his part, was showing considerable concern over the high attrition rates of ROLLING THUNDER aircraft. Among other things he questioned the utility of committing pilots to repeated risks when the operational return from many of the missions was so small and the expectations for achieving significant destruction so minimal. 71/

The force level arguments had continued during the President's trip too. On October 20, CINCPAC forwarded his revised Force Planning Program containing the results of the October 5-14 Honolulu Planning Conference to the JCS. 72/ In effect, it constituted a reclama to the Secretary's October 14 recommendations. CINCPAC requested U.S. ground forces totalling 493,969 by end CY 1967; 519,310 by end CY 1968; and 520,020 by end CY 1969. But the total by end CY 1969 would really be 555,262 reflecting an additional 35,721 troops whose availability was described in the planning document as "unknown." 73/

With respect to the air war, CINCPAC stated a requirement for an additional ten tactical fighter squadrons (TFS) and an additional aircraft carrier to support both an intensification of the air war in the North and the additional maneuver battalions requested for the war in the South. These new squadrons were needed to raise sortie levels in the North above 12,000/month in CY 1967. Of these ten TFS, the Air Force indicated that three were unavailable and the Secretary of Defense had previously deferred deployment of five. Nonetheless, the requirement was reiterated. 74/ They were needed to implement the strategic concept of the air mission in SEA that CINCPAC had articulated on September 5 and that was included again here as justification. 75/ Moreover, the objective of attacking the ports and water LOCs was reiterated as well. 76/

On November 4, the JCS sent the Secretary these CINCPAC force planning recommendations with their own slight upward revision of the troop figures to an eventual end strength of 558,432. 77/ In the body of the memo they endorse the CINCPAC air war recommendations in

principle but indicated that 3 TFS and the carrier would not be available. They supplemented CINCPAC's rationale with a statement of their own on the matter in appendix A. The two objectives of the air war were to "make it as difficult and costly as possible" for NVN to support the war in the South and to motivate the DRV to "cease controlling and directing the insurgency in South Vietnam." 78/ Their evaluation of the effectiveness of the bombing in achieving these objectives was that:

> Air operations in NVN have disrupted enemy efforts to support his forces and have assisted in preventing the successful mounting of any major offensives. The NVN air campaign takes the war home to NVN by complicating the daily life, causing multiple and increasing management and logistic problems, and preventing the enemy from conducting an aggression from the comfort of a sanctuary. 79/

Failures to date were attributed to the constraints imposed on the bombing by the political authorities, and the Chiefs again urged that these be lifted and the target base be widened to apply increasing pressure to the DRV.

These were the standard old arguments. But on October 6, the Secretary had addressed them a memo with an attached set of 28 "issue papers" drafted in Systems Analysis. One of these took sharp issue with any increase in the air war on purely force effectiveness grounds. The Chiefs attempted to rebut all 28 issue papers in one of the attachments to the November 4 memo. The original Systems Analysis "issue paper" on air war effectiveness had argued that additional deployments of air squadrons should not be made because: (1) the bulk of the proposed new sorties for North Vietnam were in Route Package I (see Map) and could be attacked much more economically by naval gunfire; (2) although interdiction had forced the enemy to make greater repair efforts and thereby had diverted some resources, had forced more reliance on night operations, and had inflicted substantial casualties to vehicular traffic, none of these had created or were likely to create insuperable problems for the DRV; and (3) CINCPAC's increased sortie requirements would generate 230 aircraft losses in CY 1967 and cost $1.1 billion while only doing negligible damage to the DRV. 80/ The similarity of much of this analysis to the conclusions of the Jason Summer Study is striking.

The Chiefs rejected all three of the Systems Analysis arguments. Naval gunfire, in their view, should be regarded as a necessary supplement for the bombing, not as a substitute since it lacked flexibility and responsiveness. As to the question of comparative costs in the air war, the Chiefs reasoned as follows:

> The necessity for this type of air campaign is created by constraints imposed, for other than military reasons, upon the conduct of the war in NVN. These constraints result in maximizing exposure of larger numbers of aircraft for longer periods against increasingly well defended targets of limited comparative values. [sic] The measure of the effectiveness of the interdiction effort is the infiltration and its consequence which would be taking place if the air campaign were not being conducted. The cost to the enemy is not solely to be measured in terms of loss of trucks but in terms of lost capability to pursue his military objectives in SVN. Similarly, the cost to the US must consider that damage which the enemy would be capable of inflicting by infiltrating men and supplies now inhibited by the interdiction effort; this includes increased casualties in RVN for which a dollar cost is not applicable. 81/

Sensing that the thrust of the OSD analysis was to make a case for the barrier at the expense of the bombing, the Chiefs at last came down hard against any diversion of resources to barrier construction. In no uncertain terms they stated:

> The Joint Chiefs of Staff agree that improved interdiction strategy is needed, but such improvement would not necessarily include the barrier operation. As mentioned above and as recommended previously, an effective air campaign against NVN should include closing the ports, destruction of high value military targets, attack of their air defense systems and airfields and the other fixed targets on the target list that have not been struck. These improvements have thus far been denied.
>
> Preliminary information developed by Task Force 728 indicates that the forces and cost for the barrier will be substantial. The concept and equipment for the barrier have not been subjected to a cost analysis study. Its effectiveness is open to serious question and its cost could well exceed the figure of $1.1 billion given for projected aircraft losses in this issue paper. 82/

As already indicated, these issues were all decided upon by the President immediately after the election. On November 11, McNamara sent the Chiefs a memo with the authorized levels for Program #4. CINCPAC's proposed increases in sortie levels were rejected and the McNamara recommendation of October 14 for their stabilization was adopted. 83/ As a reason for rejecting expansion of the air war, the Secretary simply stated that such would not be possible since no additional tactical fighter squadrons had been approved. The one upward adjustment of the air war

that was authorized was the increase of B-52 sorties from 600 to 800 in February 1967 as proposed by CINCPAC and the JCS. 84/

2. Stabilization of the Air War

With the President's decision not to increase squadrons or sorties for the air campaign in 1967 added to McNamara's strong recommendation on stabilizing the level of the bombing, activity for the remainder of 1966 was kept at about the current level. Among the continuing constraints that was just beginning to alleviate itself was an insufficiency of certain air munitions to sustain higher levels of air combat. 85/ The real constraints, however, as CINCPAC and the JCS correctly stated were political.

The principle supporters of halting the expansion of the air war, as we have already seen, were the Secretary of Defense and his civilian advisors. The arguments they had used during the debate over Program #4 and its associated air program were reiterated and somewhat enlarged later in November in the backup justification for the FY 1967 Southeast Asia Supplemental Appropriation. Singled out for particular criticism was the ineffective air effort to interdict infiltration. The draft Memorandum for the President began by making the best case possible, on the basis of results, for the bombing, and then proceeded to demonstrate that those accomplishments were simply far below what was required to really interdict. The section of the memo in question follows:

> A substantial air interdiction campaign is clearly necessary and worthwhile. In addition to putting a ceiling on the size of the force that can be supported, it yields three significant military effects. First, it effectively harasses and delays truck movements down through the southern panhandles of NVN and Laos, though it has no effect on troops infiltrating on foot over trails that are virtually invisible from the air. Our experience shows that daytime armed reconnaissance above some minimum sortie rate makes it prohibitively expensive to the enemy to attempt daylight movement of vehicles, and so forces him to night movement. Second, destruction of bridges and cratering of roads forces the enemy to deploy repair crews, equipment, and porters to repair or bypass the damage. Third, attacks on vehicles, parks, and rest camps destroy some vehicles with their cargoes and inflict casualties. Moreover, our bombing campaign may produce a beneficial effect on U.S. and SVN morale by making NVN pay a price for its enemy. But at the scale we are now operating, I believe our bombing is yielding very small marginal returns, not worth the cost in pilot lives and aircraft.

The first effect, that of forcing the enemy into a system of night movement, occurs at a lower frequency of armed reconnaissance sorties than the level of the past several months. The enemy was already moving at night in 1965, before the sortie rate had reached half the current level; further sorties have no further effect on the enemy's overall operating system. The second effect, that of forcing the enemy to deploy repair crews, equipment, and porters, is also largely brought about by a comparatively low interdiction effort. Our interdiction campaign in 1965 and early this year forced NVN to assign roughly 300,000 additional personnel to LOCs; there is no indication that recent sortie increases have caused further increases in the number of these personnel. Once the enemy system can repair road cuts and damaged bridges in a few hours, as it has demonstrated it can, additional sorties may work this system harder but are unlikely to cause a significant increase in its costs. Only the third effect, the destruction of vehicles and their cargoes, continues to increase in about the same proportion as the number of armed reconnaissance sorties, but without noticeable impact on VC/NVA operations. The overall capability of the NVN transport system to move supplies within NVN apparently improved in September in spite of 12,200 attack sorties. 86/

In a summary paragraph, the draft memo made the entire case against the bombing:

The increased damage to targets is not producing noticeable results. No serious shortage of POL in North Vietnam is evident, and stocks on hand, with recent imports, have been adequate to sustain necessary operations. No serious transport problem in the movement of supplies to or within North Vietnam is evident; most transportation routes appear to be open, and there has recently been a major logistical build-up in the area of the DMZ. The raids have disrupted the civil populace and caused isolated food shortages, but have not significantly weakened popular morale. Air strikes continue to depress economic growth and have been responsible for abandonment of some plans for economic development, but essential economic activities continue. The increasing amounts of physical damage sustained by North Vietnamese are in large measure compensated by aid received from other Communist countries. Thus, in spite of an interdiction campaign costing at least $250 million per month at current levels, no significant impact on the war in South Vietnam is evident. The monetary value of damage to NVN since the

start of bombing in February 1965 is estimated at about $140 million through October 10, 1966. 87/

As an alternative method of arresting the infiltration the memo proposed the now familiar barrier, preparatory work on which was proceeding rapidly. No new arguments for it were offered, and its unproven qualities were acknowledged. But it seemed to offer at that point a better possibillty of significantly curtailing infiltration than an escalation of the ineffective air war. Its costs were estimated, however, at an astounding $1 billion per year.

While these considerations were dominant at the Pentagon, the air war in the North continued. The only exceptions to the even pattern of air strikes at the end of 1966 were strikes authorized in early December within the 30-mile Hanoi sanctuary against the Yen Vien rail classification yard and the Van Dien vehicle depot. 88/ The former was attacked on December 4 and again on the 13th and 14th with extensive damage to buildings but little destruction of rolling stock. The Van Dien vehicle depot was struck six times between December 2 and 14 with some two thirds of its 184 buildings being either destroyed or damaged. 89/ Hanoi's reaction was prompt and vociferous. The DRV accused the U.S. of blatantly attacking civilian structures and of having caused substantial civilian casualties. On December 13, the Soviet Press Agency TASS picked up the theme claiming that U.S. planes had attacked residential areas in Hanoi. This brought a prompt State Department denial, but on December 15 further attacks on the two targets were suspended. Three days later there were new charges. This time the Communist Chinese claimed the U.S. had bombed their embassy in Hanoi. On December 17 the Rumanians made a similar allegation. The net result of all this public stir was another round of world opinion pressure on Washington. 90/ In this atmosphere, on December 23, attacks against all targets within 10 n.m. of Hanoi were prohibited without specific Presidential authorization.

The most important result of these attacks, however, was to undercut what appeared to be a peace feeler from Hanoi. In late November, the DRV had put out a feeler through the Poles for conversations in Warsaw. The effort was given the code name Marigold, but when the attacks were launched inadvertently against Hanoi in December, the attempt to start talks ran into difficulty. A belated U.S. attempt to mollify North Vietnam's bruised ego failed and formal talks did not materialize. Some significant exchanges between Hanoi and Washington on their respective terms apparently did take place, however. 91/

The controversy over civilian casualties from the bombing continued through the end of the year and into January 1967. Harrison Salisbury, a respected senior editor of the New York Times, went to Hanoi at Christmas and dispatched a long series of articles that attracted much world-wide attention. He corroborated DRV allegations of civilian casualties and damage to residential areas including attacks on Nam Dinh,

North Vietnam's third city, and other towns and cities throughout the country. 92/ The matter reached a level of concern such that the President felt compelled to make a statement to the press on December 31 to the effect that the bombing was directed against legitimate military targets and that every effort was being made to avoid civilian casualties. 93/

At no time in the fall of 1966 is there any evidence that a second major "pause" like that of the previous year was planned for the holiday period to pursue a diplomatic initiative on negotiations. But as the holidays drew near a brief military standdown was expected. The Chiefs went on record in November opposing any suspension of military operations, North or South, at Christmas, New Years or the Lunar New Year the coming February. 94/ The failure of the initiative through Poland in early December left the U.S. with no good diplomatic reason for lengthening the holiday suspensions into a pause, so the President ordered only 48-hour halts in the fighting for Christmas and New Year's. The Pope had made an appeal on December 8 for both sides to extend the holiday truces into an armistice and begin negotiations, but this had fallen on deaf ears in both capitals. 95/ As window-dressing, the U.S. had asked UN Secretary General U Thant to take whatever steps were necessary to get talks started. He replied in a press conference on the last day of the year that the first step toward negotiations must be an "unconditional" U.S. bombing halt. 96/ This evoked little enthusiasm and some annoyance in the Johnson Administration.

Thus, 1966 drew to a close on a sour note for the President. He had just two months before resisted pressure from the military for a major escalation of the war in the North and adopted the restrained approach of the Secretary of Defense, only to have a few inadvertent raids within the Hanoi periphery mushroom into a significant loss of world opinion support. He was in the uncomfortable position of being able to please neither his hawkish nor his dovish critics with his carefully modulated middle course.

3. 1966 Summary

ROLLING THUNDER was a much heavier bombing program in 1966 than in 1965. There were 148,000 total sorties flown in 1966 as compared with 55,000 in 1965, and 128,000 tons of bombs were dropped as compared with 33,000 in the 10 months of bombing the year before. The number of JCS fixed targets struck, which stood at 158 at the end of 1965, increased to 185, or 27 more, leaving only 57 untruck out of a list of 242. 97/ Armed reconnaissance, which was still kept out of the northeast quadrant at the end of 1965, was extended during 1966 throughout NVN except for the Hanoi/Haiphong sanctuaries and the China buffer zone, and beginning with ROLLING THUNDER 51 on 6 July was even permitted to penetrate a short way into the Hanoi circle along small selected route segments. Strikes had

even been carried out against a few "lucrative" POL targets deep within the circles.

The program had also become more expensive. 318 ROLLING THUNDER aircraft were lost during 1966, as compared with 171 in 1965 (though the loss rate dropped from .66% of attack sorties in 1965 to .39% in 1966). CIA estimated that the direct operational cost of the program (i.e., production costs of aircraft lost, plus direct sortie overhead costs -- not including air base or CVA maintenance or logistical support -- plus ordnance costs) came to $1,247 million in 1966 as compared with $460 million in 1965. 98/

Economic damage to NVN went up from $36 million in 1965 to $94 million in 1966, and military damage from $34 million to $36 million. As CIA computed it, however, it cost the U.S. $9.6 to inflict $1 worth of damage in 1966, as compared with $6.6 in 1965. 99/

Estimated civilian and military casualties in NVN also went up, from 13,000 to 23-24,000 (about 80% civilians), but the numbers remained small relative to the 18 million popula ion. 100/

The program in 1966 had accomplished little more than in 1965, however. In January 1967, an anlaysis by CIA concluded that the attacks had not eliminated any important sector of the NVN economy or the military establishment. They had not succeeded in cutting route capacities south of Hanoi to the point where the flow of supplies required in SVN was significantly impeded. The POL attacks had eliminated 76% of JCS-targeted storage capacity, but not until after NVN had implemented a system of dispersed storage, and the POL flow had been maintained at adequate levels. 32% of NVN's power-generating capacity had been put out of action, but the remaining capacity was adequate to supply most industrial consumers. Hundreds of bridges were knocked down, but virtually all of them had been quickly repaired, replaced, or bypassed, and traffic continued. Several thousand freight cars, trucks, barges, and other vehicles were also destroyed or damaged, but inventories were maintained through imports and there was no evidence of a serious transport problem due to equipment shortages. The railroad and highway networks were considerably expanded and improved during the year. 101/

The main losses to the economy, according to the CIA analysis, had been indirect -- due to a reduction in agricultural output and the fish catch, a cut in foreign exchange earnings because of a decline in exports, disruptions of production because of dispersal and other passive defense measures, and the diversion of effort to repair essential transportation facilities. On the military side, damage had disrupted normal military practices, caused the abandonment of many facilities, and forced the widespread dispersal of equipment, but overall military capabilities had continued at a high level. 102/

The summary CIA assessment was that ROLLING THUNDER had not helped either to reduce the flow of supplies South or to shake the will of the North:

> The evidence available does not suggest that ROLLING THUNDER to date has contributed materially to the achievement of the two primary objectives of air attack -- reduction of the flow of supplies to VC/NVA forces in the South or weakening the will of North Vietnam to continue the insurgency. ROLLING THUNDER no doubt has lessened the capacity of the transport routes to the South -- put a lower 'cap' on the force levels which North Vietnam can support in the South -- but the 'cap' is well above present logistic supply levels. 103/

The bombing had not succeeded in materially lowering morale among the people, despite some "war weariness." The leaders continued to repeat in private as well as public that they were willing to withstand even heavier bombing rather than accept a settlement on less than their terms. As to the future:

> There may be some degree of escalation which would force the regime to reexamine its position, but we believe that as far as pressure from air attack is concerned the regime would be prepared to continue the insurgency indefinitely in the face of the current level and type of bombing program. 104/

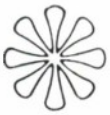
A key factor in sustaining the will of the regime, according to the CIA analysis, was the "massive" economic and military aid provided by the USSR, China, and Eastern Europe. Economic aid to NVN from these countries, which ran about $100 million a year on the average prior to the bombing, increased to $150 million in 1965 and $275 million in 1966. Military aid was $270 million in 1965 and $455 million in 1966. Such aid provided NVN with the "muscle" to strengthen the insurgency in the South and to maintain its air defense and other military forces; and it provided the services and goods with which to overcome NVN's economic difficulties. So long as the aid continued, CIA said, NVN would be able and willing to persevere "indefinitely" in the face of the current ROLLING THUNDER program. 105/

The military view of why ROLLING THUNDER had failed in its objectives in 1966 was most forcefully given by Admiral Sharp, USCINCPAC, in a briefing for General Wheeler at Honolulu on January 12, 1967. Admiral Sharp described three tasks of the air campaign in achieving its objective of inducing Hanoi to "cease supporting, controlling, and directing" the insurgency in the South: "(1) reduce or deny external assistance; (2) increase pressures by destroying in depth those resources that contributed most to support the aggression; and (3) harass, disrupt and impede movement of men and materials to South Vietnam." 106/ CINCPAC

had developed and presented to the Secretary of Defense an integrated plan to perform these tasks, but much of it had never been approved. Therein lay the cause of whatever failure could be attributed to the bombing in Admiral Sharp's view.

The rest of the briefing was a long complaint about the lack of authorization to attack the Haiphong harbor in order to deny external assistance, and the insignificant number of total sorties devoted to JCS numbered targets (1% of some 81,000 sorties). Nevertheless, CINCPAC was convinced the concept of operations he had proposed could bring the DRV to give up the war if "self-generated US constraints" were lifted in 1967. 107/

Thus, as 1966 drew to a close, the lines were drawn for a long fifteen month internal Administration struggle over whether to stop the bombing and start negotiations. McNamara and his civilian advisers had been disillusioned in 1966 with the results of the bombing and held no sanguine hopes for the ability of air power, massively applied, to produce anything but the same inconclusive results at far higher levels of overall hostility and with significant risk of Chinese and/or Soviet intervention. The military, particularly CINCPAC, were ever more adamant that only civilian imposed restraints on targets had prevented the bombing from bringing the DRV to its knees and its senses about its aggression in the South. The principle remained sound, they argued; a removal of limitations would produce dramatic results. And so, 1967 would be the year in which many of the previous restrictions were progressively lifted and the vaunting boosters of air power would be once again proven wrong. It would be the year in which we relearned the negative lessons of previous wars on the ineffectiveness of strategic bombing.



UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

1945 - 1967

IV. C. 7.(b)

Volume II

THE AIR WAR IN NORTH VIETNAM

VOLUME II

THE AIR WAR IN NORTH VIETNAM

TABLE OF CONTENTS and OUTLINE

Page

IV. THE ATTEMPT TO DE-ESCALATE -- JANUARY-JULY 1967 1

A. The Year Begins with No Change 1
1. Escalation Proposals 1
2. The TET Pause -- 8-14 February 3
B. More Targets 8
1. The Post-TET Debate 8
2. A "Little" Escalation 13
3. The Guam Conference and More Salami Slices 15
C. The Question Again -- Escalate or Negotiate? 21
1. Two Courses - Escalate or Level Off 21
2. The May DPM Exercise 30
3. The May 19 DPM 43
4. JCS, CIA and State Reactions 53
5. The McNamara Bombing Options 62
6. The June 12th DPM 66
7. The RT 57 Decision -- No Escalation 73
FOOTNOTES 81

V. THE LONG ROAD TO DE-ESCALATION -- AUGUST-DECEMBER 1967 90

A. Senator Stennis Forces an Escalation 90
1. The Addendum to ROLLING THUNDER 90
2. The Stennis Hearings 92
3. The Fallout 99
B. The San Antonio Formula 101
1. Peace Feelers 101
2. The President's Speech and Hanoi's Reaction 101
3. More Targets 103
4. The Decibel Level Goes Up 114
C. New Studies 115
1. SEACABIN 115
2. The JASON Study 122
3. Systems Analysis Study on Economic Effects 127
D. The Year Closes on a Note of Optimism 131
FOOTNOTES 137

Page

VI. THE CORNER IS TURNED -- JANUARY-MARCH 1968..... 141

A. The Crisis Begins..... 141
1. Public Diplomacy Gropes On..... 141
2. The Tet Offensive..... 144
B. The "A to Z" Review..... 149
1. The Reassessment Begins..... 149
2. The Clifford Group..... 150
3. The March 4 DPM..... 171
C. The President Weighs the Decision..... 180
1. More Meetings and More Alternatives..... 180
2. The New Hampshire Primary..... 185
3. ISA Attempts to Force A Decision..... 186
4. The "Senior Informal Advisory Group"..... 190
D. March 31 -- "I Shall Not Seek...Another Term as Your President..... 194
1. The Decision..... 194
2. The Speech..... 196
FOOTNOTES..... 205

IV. THE ATTEMPT TO DE-ESCALATE -- JANUARY-JULY 1967

During the first seven months of 1967 a running battle was fought within the Johnson Administration between the advocates of a greatly expanded air campaign against North Vietnam, one that might genuinely be called "strategic," and the disillusioned doves who urged relaxation, if not complete suspension, of the bombing in the interests of greater effectiveness and the possibilities for peace. The "hawks" of course were primarily the military, but in war-time their power and influence with an incumbent Administration is disproportionate. McNamara, supported quantitatively by John McNaughton in ISA, led the attempt to de-escalate the bombing. Treading the uncertain middle ground at different times in the debate were William Bundy at State, Air Force Secretary Harold Brown and, most importantly, the President himself. Buffetted from right and left he determinedly tried to pursue the temperate course, escalating gradually in the late spring but levelling off again in the summer. To do so was far from easy because such a course really pleased no one (and, it should be added, did not offer much prospect for a breakthrough one way or the other). It was an unhappy, contentious time in which the decibel level of the debate went up markedly but the difficult decision was not taken -- it was avoided.

A. The Year Begins with No Change

1. Escalation Proposals

The year 1967 began with the military commands still grumbling about the Christmas and New Year's truces ordered from Washington. Both had been grossly violated by multiple VC incidents, and both had been the occasions of major VC/NVA resupply efforts. The restrictions placed on U.S. forces were felt by the field commands to be at the expense of American life. U.S. military authorities would argue long and hard against a truce for the TET Lunar New Year holiday, but in the end they would loose.

Early in 1967, CINCPAC reopened his campaign to win Washington approval for air strikes against a wider list of targets in North Vietnam. On January 14 CINCPAC sent the JCS a restatement of the objectives for ROLLING THUNDER he had developed in 1966, noting his belief that they remained valid for 1967. 1/ Four days later he forwarded a long detailed list of proposed new targets for attack. What he proposed was a comprehensive destruction of North Vietnam's military and industrial base in Route Package 6 (Hanoi-Haiphong). 2/ This called for the destruction of 7 power plants (all except the one in the very center of Hanoi, and the 2 in Haiphong included in a special Haiphong package); 10 "war supporting industries" (with the Thai Nguyen iron and steel plant at the head of the list); 20 transportation support facilities; 44 military complexes; 26 POL targets; and 28 targets in Haiphong and the other ports (including docks, shipyards, POL, power plants, etc.). CINCPAC

optimistically contended that this voluminous target system could be attacked with no increase in sorties and with an actual decline in aircraft lost to hostile fire.

The proposal was evidently received in Washington with something less than enthusiasm. The Chiefs did not send such a recommendation to the Secretary and there is no evidence that the matter was given serious high level attention at that time. On January 25 in a cable on anti-infiltration (i.e. the much-maligned barrier), CINCPAC again raised the question. He was careful to note (as he had previously in a private cable to Wheeler and Westmoreland on January 3) 3/ that, "...no single measure can stop infiltration." 4/ But he argued that the extraordinary measures the enemy had taken to strengthen his air defenses and generate a world opinion against the bombing were evidence of how much the air strikes were hurting him.

These arguments were reinforced by the January CIA analysis which also made something of a case for a heavier bombing campaign. It considered a number of alternative target systems -- modern industry, shipping, the Red River levees, and other targets -- and two interdiction campaigns, one "unlimited" and the other restricted to the southern NVN panhandle and Laos, and concluded that the unlimited campaign was the most promising. 5/

On the modern industry target list, CIA included 20 facilities, 7 of them electric power plants. Knocking out these facilities, it said, would eliminate the fruits of several hundred million dollars capital investment, cut off the source of one-fourth of the GNP and most foreign exchange earnings, disrupt other sectors of the economy which used their products, add to the burden of aid required from NVN's allies, and temporarily displace the urban labor force. The loss would be a serious blow to NVN's hopes for economic progress and status, negating a decade of intense effort devoted to the construction of modern industry. This would exert additional pressure on the regime, but would not by itself, CIA believed, be intense enough to bring Hanoi to the negotiating table. Outside aid could no doubt make up the deficit in goods to sustain the economy and the national defense of the North as well as to continue the war in the South. 6/

Aerial mining, provided it was extended to coastal and inland waters as well as the harbors, and especially if accompanied by intensive armed reconnaissance against all LOCs to China, would be very serious. NVN would almost certainly have to reduce some import programs, not sufficiently perhaps to degrade the flow of essential military supplies or prevent continued support of the war in SVN, but enough to hurt the economy. 7/

Bombing the levee system which kept the Red River under control, if timed correctly, could cause large crop losses and force NVN to import

large amounts of rice. Depending on the success of interdiction efforts, such imports might overload the transport system. The levees themselves could be repaired in a matter of weeks, however, and any military effects of bombing them would be limited and short-lived. 8/

An "unlimited" campaign against transportation and remaining targets, in addition to attacking industry and mining the harbors and waterways, would greatly increase the costs and difficulties in maintaining the flow of the most essential military and civilian goods within NVN. If the attack on transportation were able to cut the capacity of the railroads by 1/3 on a sustained basis and roads by 1/4, the remaining available route capacity would not be sufficient to satisfy NVN's minimum daily needs:

> If an unlimited interdiction program were highly successful, the regime would encounter increasing difficulty and cost in maintaining the flow of some of their most essential military and economic goods. In the long term the uncertainties and difficulties resulting from the cumulative effect of the air campaigns would probably cause Hanoi to undertake a basic reassessment of the probable course of the war and the extent of the regime's commitment to it. 9/

By contrast, according to the CIA analysis, restricting the bombing to the Panhandle of NVN and Laos would tend to strengthen Hanoi's will. The main effect would be to force NVN to increase the repair labor force in southern NVN and Laos by about 30 percent, which could easily be drawn from other areas no longer being bombed. The flow of men and supplies would continue. NVN would regard the change in the bombing pattern as a clear victory, evidence that international and domestic pressures on the U.S. were having an effect. It would be encouraged to believe that the U.S. was tiring of the war and being forced to retreat. 10/

Other considerations, however, were dominant in Washington at the highest levels. In mid-January another effort to communicate positions with the DRV had been made and there was an understandable desire to defer escalatory decisions until it had been determined whether some possibility for negotiations existed. 11/ Moreover, the TET holiday at the beginning of February, for which a truce had been announced, made late January an inpropitious time to expand the bombing. Thus, on January 28, ROLLING THUNDER program #53 authorized little more than a continuation of strikes within the parameters of previous authorizations. 12/

2. The TET Pause -- 8-14 February

As noted in the previous section of this paper, the Chiefs had recorded their opposition to any truce or military standdown for the holidays in late November. 13/ On January 2, General Westmoreland had strongly recommended against a truce for TET because of the losses to friendly forces during the Christmas and New Year's truces just concluded. 14/

CINCPAC endorsed his opposition to any further truce as did the JCS on January 4. 15/ The Chiefs pointed out that the history of U.S. experience with such holiday suspensions of operations was that the VC/NVA had increasingly exploited them to resupply, prepare for attacks, redeploy forces and commit violations. Perhaps of most concern was the opportunity such standdowns provided the enemy to mount major unharassed logistical resupply operations. Thus, they concluded:

> Against this background of persistent exploitation of the standdown periods by the enemy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff view the forthcoming standdown for TET with grave concern. To grant the enemy a respite during a four-day standdown at TET will slow our campaign, allow him time to reconstitute and replenish his forces, and cost us greater casualties in the long run. 16/

This unanimous military opposition was falling on deaf ears. The President and his advisors had already committed the U.S. to a four-day truce and such a belated change of course would have clearly rebounded to the public opinion benefit of the North Vietnamese (who had already, on January 1, announced their intention to observe a 7-day TET truce). Thus, on January 14, Ambassador Lodge was instructed to get the GVN's concurrence to maintain just the 96-hour standdown, but to tell them that the Allies should be prepared to extend the pause if fruitful contacts developed during it. 17/ Lodge replied the following day that the proposal was agreeable to the GVN and to the Allied Chiefs of Mission in Saigon. 18/

Acknowledging the political considerations which required a pause, the Chiefs on January 16 proposed the announcement of a set of conditions to the standdown: (1) that SEA DRAGON countersea infiltration operations continue up to 19°; (2) that CINCPAC be authorized to resume air attacks against major land resupply efforts south of 19°; (3) that operations be resumed in the DMZ area to counter any major resupply or infiltration; and (4) that warning be given that violations or VC/NVA efforts to gain tactical advantage in SVN during the truce, would prompt direct military counteractions. 19/ The reaction at State to these new JCS conditions was vigorous. On January 21, Bundy sent Katzenbach a memo urging him to oppose anything that would compromise our suspension of operations against North Vietnam.

> ...I strongly recommend against approving JCS proposals for broader military authority to respond to North Viet-Namese resupply activities in North Viet-Nam....In my view, resupply activities in North Viet-Nam cannot be considered a sufficiently immediate and direct threat to our forces to justify the great political and psychological disadvantages of U.S. air and naval strikes against North Viet-Namese territory during a truce period. 20/

No information is available on McNamara's reaction to the proposed JCS truce limitations, but on the basis of his general position on the bombing at that time he can be presumed to have opposed them. In any case, they were not adopted. The execute order for the suspension of hostilities authorized CINCPAC strikes only in the case of an immediate and direct threat to U.S. forces, and stipulated that, "In the event reconnaissance disclosed major military resupply activity in North Vietnam south of 19 degrees north latitude, report immediately to the JCS." 21/ Decisions on how and when to respond to such resupply efforts would be made in Washington not Honolulu. This, then, was the issue whose merits would be the focus of debate at the end of the pause when furious diplomatic efforts to get talks started would generate pressure for an extension.

Even before the holiday arrived pressure to extend the pause had begun to mount. On February 2, Leonard Marks, Director of USIA proposed to Rusk that the truce be extended, "in 12 or 24 hour periods contingent upon DRV and VC continued observance of the truce conditions." 22/ The latter included in his definition, "...suspension of all infiltration and movement toward infiltration...." 23/ At the Pentagon, at least within civilian circles, there was sentiment for extending the pause too. In the materials that John McNaughton left behind is a handwritten scenario for the pause with his pencilled changes. The authorship is uncertain since the handwriting is neither McNaughton's nor McNamara's (nor apparently that of any of the other key Pentagon advisors), but a note in the margin indicates it had been seen and approved by the Secretary. Therefore it is reproduced below. Underlined words or phrases are McNaughton's modifications.

SCENARIO

1. President tell DRV before Tet, "We are stopping bombing at start of Tet and at the end of Tet we will not resume."

2. During Tet and in days thereafter:
   a. Observe DRV/VC conduct for 'signs'
   b. Try to get talks started.

3. Meantime, avoid changes in 'noise level' in other areas of conduct -- e.g., no large US troop deployments for couple weeks, no dramatic changes in rules of engagement in South, etc.

4. As for public handling:
   a. At end of 4 days of Tet merely extend to 7 days.
   b. At end of 7 days just keep pausing, making ~~make~~ no expansion.
   c. Later say "We are seeing what happens."
   d. Even later, say (if true) infiltration down, etc.

5. If we must resume RT, have ~~reasons~~ justifications and start in Route packages 1 & 2, working ~~work~~ North as excuses appear (and excuses will appear).

6. If talks start and DRV &-~~they~~ demands ceasefire in South or cessation of US troop additions, consider exact deal then.

7. Accelerate readiness of Project 728. [anti-infiltration barrier]

8. Avoid allowing our terms to harden just because things appear to be going better.

(Vance: How handle case if resupply keeps up during Pause?) 24/

In a puzzling marginal note, McNaughton recorded McNamara's reaction to the scenario: "SecDef (2/?/67: 'Agreed we will do this if answer to note is unproductive' (?). Something like this even if productive. JTM." 25/ It is not clear what the Secretary may have had in mind in his reference to a "note." The U.S. had exchanged notes with the DRV through the respective embassies in Moscow in late January and he may have meant this contact. Another possibility is that he was thinking of the letter from the President to Ho that must have been in draft at that time (it was to have been delivered in Moscow on February 7 but actual delivery was not until the 8th). In either case, McNamara must have foreseen this scenario for unilateral extension of the pause based on DRV actions on the ground as an alternative if they formally rejected our demands for reciprocity.

Whatever the explanation, the President's letter to Ho reiterated the demand for reciprocity:

> I am prepared to order a cessation of bombing against your country and the stopping of further augmentation of U.S. forces in South Vietnam as soon as I am assured that infiltration into South Vietnam by land and by sea has stopped. 26/

The President did, however, tie his proposal to the Tet pause and voiced the hope that an answer would be received before the end of Tet that would permit the suspension to continue and peace talks to begin.

Pressures on the President to continue the pause also came from his domestic critics and from the international community. On the very day the pause began, the Pope sent a message to both sides in the conflict expressing his hope that the suspension of hostilities could be extended and open the way to peace. The President's reply was courteous

but firm:

> We are prepared to talk at any time and place, in any forum, and with the object of bringing peace to Vietnam; however, I know you would not expect us to reduce military action unless the other side is willing to do likewise. 27/

Meanwhile the possibility that a definitive suspension of the bombing might produce negotiations became increasingly likely. Premier Kosygin had arrived in London to confer with Prime Minister Wilson on February 6, two days before the truce started. They immediately began a frantic weeklong effort to bring the two sides together. Multiple interpretations of position were passed through the intermediaries in London, but in the end, the massive DRV resupply effort forced the U.S. to resume the bombing without having received a final indication from the DRV as to their willingness to show restraint. But this was not before the bombing halt had been extended from 4 to 6 days, and not before the Soviets had informed the DRV of the deadline for an answer.

The factor which took on such importance and eventually forced the President's hand was the unprecedented North Vietnamese resupply activity during the bombing suspension. As already noted, the military had opposed the halt for just this reason and the Christmas and New Year's halts had given warning of what might be expected. By the time the truce had been in effect 24 hours, continuing surveillance had already revealed the massive North Vietnamese effort to move supplies into its southern panhandle. Washington sounded the alarm. On February 9 Rusk held a press conference and warned about the high rate of supply activity. The same day Bundy called Saigon and London with details of the rate of logistical movement and with instructions for dealing with the press. To London he stated:

> Ambassador Bruce...should bring this story to the attention of highest British levels urgently, pointing out its relevance both to the problems we face in continuing the Tet bombing suspension and to the wider problem involved in any proposal that we cease bombing in exchange for mere talks. In so doing, you should not repeat not suggest that we are not still wide open to the idea of continuing the Tet bombing suspension through the 7-day period or at least until Kosygin departs London. You should emphasize, however, that we are seriously concerned about these developments and that final decision on such additional two- or three-day suspension does involve serious factors in light of this information. 28/

On February 10 DIA sent the Secretary a summary of the resupply situation in the first 48-hours of the truce. If the pattern of the first 48 hours contirued, the DRV would move some 24,000 tons of materiel southward, the equivalent of 340 division-days of supply. 29/

Thus the pressure on the President to resume mounted. On February 12 when the truce ended, the bombing was not resumed, but no announcement of the fact was made. The DRV were again invited to indicate what reciprocity the U.S. could expect. But no answer was forthcoming. Finally after more hours of anxious waiting by Kosygin and Wilson for a DRV reply, the Soviet Premier left London for home on February 13. The same day, the New York Times carried the latest Harris poll which showed that 67% of the American people supported the bombing. Within hours, the bombing of the North was resumed. The President, in speaking to the press, stressed the unparalleled magnitude of the North Vietnamese logistical effort during the pause as the reason he could no longer maintain the bombing halt. 30/ On February 15, Ho sent the President a stiff letter rejecting U.S. demands for reciprocity and restating the DRV's position that the U.S. must unconditionally halt the bombing before any other issues could be considered. 31/ Thus, the book closed on another effort to bring the conflict to the negotiating table.

B. More Targets

1. The Post-TET Debate

The failure of the Tet diplomatic initiatives once again brought attention back to measures which might put more pressure on the DRV. CINCPAC's January targetting proposals were reactivated for consideration in the week following the resumption of bombing. In early February, before the pause, CINCPAC had added to his requests for additional bombing targets a request for authority to close North Vietnam's ports through aerial mining. Arguing that, "A drastic reduction of external support to the enemy would be a major influence in achieving our objectives...," he suggested that this could be accomplished by denying use of the ports. Three means of closing the ports were considered: (1) naval blockade; (2) air strikes against port facilities; and (3) aerial mining of the approaches. The first was rejected because of the undesirable political ramifications of confrontations with Soviet and third country shipping. But air strikes and mining were recommended as complementary ways of denying use of the ports. Closure of Haiphong alone, it was estimated, would have a dramatic effect because it handled some 95% of North Vietnamese shipping. 32/ In a related development, the JCS, on February 2, gave their endorsement to mining certain inland waterways including the Kien Giang River and its seaward approaches. 33/

In the week following the Tet pause the range of possible escalatory actions came under full review. The President apparently requested a listing of options for his consideration, because on February 21, Cyrus Vance, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, forwarded a package of proposals to Under Secretary Katzenbach at State for comment. Vance's letter stated, "The President wants the paper for his night reading tonight." 34/ The paper Vance transmitted gives every indication of having been written by McNaughton, although that cannot be verified. In any case, it began with the following outline "shopping list" of possible actions with three alternative JCS packages indicated:

OUTLINE

JCS Program A	JCS Program B	JCS Program C		Page
			I. Military actions against North Vietnam and in Laos	
			A. Present program	1
			B. Options for increased military programs	2
			1. Destroy modern industry	3
X	X	X	- Thermal power (7-plant grid)	
X	X	X	- Steel and cement	
	X	X	- Machine tool plant	
			- Other	
		X	2. Destroy dikes and levees	6
			3. Mine ports and coastal waters	7
	X	X	- Mine estuaries south of 20°	
		X	- Mine major ports and approaches, and estuaries north of 20°	
			4. Unrestricted LOC attacks	10
X	X	X	- Eliminate 10-mile Hanoi probibited area	
	X	X	- Reduce Haiphong restricted area to 4 miles	
		X	- Eliminate prohibited/restricted areas except Chicom zone	
	X	X	- Elements of 3 ports (Haiphong, Cam Pha and Hon Gai)	
		X	- 4 ports (Haiphong, Cam Pha, Hon Gai and Hanoi Port)	
	X	X	- Selected rail facilities	
	X	X	- Mine inland waterways south of 20°	
		X	- Mine inland waterways north of 20°	
	X	X	- 7 locks	
			5. Expand naval surface operations	12
X	X	X	- Fire at targets ashore and afloat south of 19°	
	X	X	- Expand to 20°	
		X	- Expand north of 20° to Chicom buffer zone	
			6. Destroy MIG airfields	14
X	X	X	- All unoccupied airfields	
	X	X	- 4 not used for international civil transportation	
		X	- 2 remaining airfields (Phuc Yen and Gia Lam)	
			7. SHINING BRASS ground operations in Laos	15
X	X	X	- Delegate State/DOD authority to CINCPAC/Vientiane	
	X	X	- Expand operational limits to 20 km into Laos, increase helo operations, authorize larger forces, increase frequency of operation	
		X	- Battalion-size forces; start guerrilla warfare	
X	X	X	8. Cause interdicting rains in or near Laos	16
			9. Miscellaneous	
X	X	X	- Base part of B-52 operations at U-Tapao, Thailand	
X	X	X	- Fire artillery from SVN against DMZ and north of DMZ	
	X	X	- Fire artillery from SVN against targets in Laos	
	X	X	- Ammunition dump 4 miles SW of Haiphong	
		X	- Air defense HQ and Ministry of Defense HQ in Hanoi	
			II. Actions in South Vietnam	
			A. Expand US forces and/or their role	17
			- Continue current force build-up	
X	X	X	- Accelerate current build-up (deploying 3 Army bns in 6/67)	
	X	X	- Deploy Marine brigade from Okinawa/Japan in 3/67	
		X	- Deploy up to 4 divisions and up to 9 air squadrons	
			B. Improve pacification	18

The discussion section of the paper dealt with each of the eight specific option areas noting our capability in each instance to inflict heavy damage or complete destruction to the facilities in question. The important conclusion in each instance was that elimination of the targets, individually or collectively, could not sufficiently reduce the flow of men and materiel to the South to undercut the Communist forces fighting the war. The inescapable fact which forced this conclusion was that North Vietnam's import potential far exceeded its requirements and could sustain considerable contraction without impairing the war effort. The point was dramatically made in the following table:

When Option 4 is taken together with Options 1-3, the import and need figures appear as follows:

NORTH VIETNAM'S POTENTIAL FOR OBTAINING IMPORTS BEFORE AID AFTER U.S. ATTACK
(tons per day)

	Potential Now	Potential After Attack
By sea	6,500	650
By Red River from China	1,500	150
By road from China	3,200	2,400
By rail from China	6,000	4,000
TOTAL	17,200	7,200

Without major hardship, the need for imports is as follows (tons per day):

Normal imports	4,200
If imports replace destroyed industrial production	1,400
If imports replace rice destroyed by leveee breaks	600-2,500
TOTAL	6,200-8,100 35/

With respect to crippling Hanoi's will to continue the war, the paper stated:

> Unless things were going very badly for them there [in the South], it is likely that the North Vietnamese would decide to continue the war despite their concern over the increasing destruction of their country, the effect of this on their people, and their increasing apprehension that the US would invade the North. 36/

The expected reaction of the Soviet Union and China to these escalatory options varied, but none was judged as unacceptable except in the case of mining the harbors. Here the Soviet Union would be faced with a difficult problem. The paper judged the likely Soviet reaction this way:

> ....To the USSR, the mining of the ports would be particularly challenging. Last year they moved some 530,000 tons of goods to North Vietnam by sea. If the ports remained closed, almost all of their deliveries -- military and civilian -- would be at the sufferance of Peiping, with whom they are having increasing difficulties. They would be severely embarrassed by their inability to prevent or counter the US move. It is an open question whether they would be willing to take the risks involved in committing their own ships and aircraft to an effort to reopen the ports.
>
> In these circumstances, the Soviets would at least send a token number of "volunteers" to North Vietnam if Hanoi asked for them, and would provide Hanoi with new forms of military assistance -- e.g., floating mines and probably cruise missiles (land-based or on Komar boats), which could appear as a direct response to the US mining and which would endanger our ships in the area.
>
> The Soviets would be likely to strike back at the US in their bilateral relations, severely reducing what remains of normal contacts on other issues. They would focus their propaganda and diplomatic campaign to get US allies in Europe to repudiate the US action. They would probably also make other tension-promoting gestures, such as pressure in Berlin. The situation could of course become explosive if the mining operations resulted in serious damage to a Soviet ship. 37/

This confirmed Ambassador Thompson's judgment of a few days before,

> Mining of Haiphong Harbor would provoke a strong reaction here and Soviets would certainly relate it to their relations with China....They would consider that we are quite willing to make North Vietnam entirely dependent upon CHINCOMs with all which that would imply. 38/

Thus, while considering a long list of possible escalations, it did not offer forceful arguments for any of them. The copy preserved in McNaughton's materials contains a final section entitled "Ways to Advance a Settlement." A pencil note, however, indicates that this section was not sent to State and presumably not to the President either.

At State, Bundy drafted some comments on the OSD paper which generally supported its analysis. With respect to the proposals for mining North Vietnamese waters, however, it made a significant distinction:

> ...we would be inclined to separate the mining of ports used by Soviet shipping from the mining of coastal waters where (we believe) most of the shipping, if not all, is North Vietnamese. Mining of the waterways would have a more limited effect on Hanoi will and capacity, but would also be much less disturbing to the Soviets and much less likely to throw Hanoi into the arms of China, or to induce the Soviets to cooperate more fully with the Chinese. 39/

The distinction is important because the President the next day did in fact approve the limited mining of internal waterways but deferred any decision on mining the ports. Beyond this, Bundy sought to reinforce the undesirability of striking the sensitive dyke and levee system and to emphasize that the Chinese buffer zone was a more important sanctuary (from the point of view of likely Soviet and/or Chinese reactions) than the Hanoi-Haiphong perimeters. 40/

Several other memos of the same period appear in the files, but it is unlikely they had any influence on the new targets the President was considering. Roger Fisher had sent McNaughton another of his periodic notes on "future Strategy." After rehearsing the failures of the bombing program he suggested that "...all northern bombing be restricted to a narrower and narrower belt across the southern part of North Vietnam until it merges into air support for an on-the-ground interdiction barrier." 41/ By thus concentrating and intensifying our interdiction efforts he hoped we might finally be able to choke off the flow of men and goods to the South.

A memo from the President's special military advisor, General Maxwell Taylor, on February 20 considered some of the difficulties of negotiations, in particular the sequence in which we should seek to arrange a ceasefire and a political settlement. He argued that it was in the U.S. interest to adopt a "fight and talk" strategy, in which the political issues were settled first and the cease-fire arranged afterwards, hopefully conducting the actual negotiations in secret while we continued to vigorously press the VC/NVA in combat. 42/ The President passed the memo on to the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Chairman of the JCS for their comment but since the question of negotiations was for the moment academic it probably had no bearing on the next bombing decisions. 43/

2. A "Little" Escalation

The President approved only a limited number of the measures presented to him, by and large those that would incur little risk of

counter-escalation. He authorized naval gunfire up to the 20th parallel against targets ashore and afloat, artillery fire across the DMZ, a slight expansion of operation in Laos, the mining of rivers and estuaries south of 20°, and new bombing targets for ROLLING THUNDER 54. The latter included the remaining thermal power plants except Hanoi and Haiphong, and a reiteration of authority to strike the Thai Nguyen Steel Plant and the Haiphong Cement Plant (initially given in RT 53 but targets not struck). 44/ The President was neither ready nor willing, however, to consider the mining of the ports nor, for the moment, the removal of the Hanoi sanctuary. A decision on basing B-52s in Thailand was also deferred for the time being.

CINCPAC promptly took steps to bring the newly authorized targets under attack. On February 24 U.S. artillery units along the DMZ began shelling north of the buffer with long-range 175mm. cannon. The same day the Secretary told a news conference that more targets in the North might be added to the strike list, thereby preparing the public for the modest escalation approved by the President two days before. On February 27 U.S. planes began the aerial mining of the rivers and coastal estuaries of North Vietnam below the 20th parallel. The mines were equipped with de-activation devices to neutralize them at the end of three months. Weather conditions, however, continued to hamper operations over North Vietnam and to defer sorties from several of the authorized targets that required visual identification weather conditions before strike approval could be given. The Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel complex, for example, was not struck until March 10. The slow squeeze was once more the order of the day with the emphasis on progressively destroying North Vietnam's embryonic industrial capability.

But the President intended that the pressure on the North be slowly increased to demonstrate the firmness of our resolve. Thus William Bundy in Saigon in early March told Thieu on behalf of the President that:

> GVN should have no doubt that President adhered to basic position he had stated at Manila, that pressure must continue to be applied before Hanoi could be expected to change its attitude, while at the same time we remained completely alert for any indication of change in Hanoi's position. If was now clear from December and January events that Hanoi was negative for the time being, so that we were proceeding with continued and somewhat increased pressures including additional measures against the North.

The President perceived the strikes as necessary in the psychological test of wills between the two sides to punish the North, in spite of the near-consensus opinion of his advisers that no level of damage or destruction that we were willing to inflict was likely to destroy Hanoi's

determination to continue the struggle. In a March 1st letter to Senator Jackson (who had publicly called for more bombing on February 27) he pointed to the DRV's violation of the two Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962 as the reason for the bombing, its specific purposes being:

> ...first...to back our fighting men and our fighting allies by demonstrating that the aggressor could not illegally bring hostile arms and men to bear against them from the security of a sanctuary.
>
> Second...to impose on North Viet-Nam a cost for violating its international agreements.
>
> Third...to limit or raise the cost of bringing men and supplies to bear against the South. 46/

The formulation of objectives for the bombing was almost identical two weeks later when he spoke to the Tennessee State Legislature:

> --To back our fighting men by denying the enemy a sanctuary;
> --To exact a penalty against North Vietnam for her flagrant violations of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962;
> --To limit the flow, or to substantially increase the cost of infiltration of men and materiel from North Vietnam. 47/

In both instances the President put the psychological role of the bombing ahead of its interdiction functions. There was little evidence to suggest, however, that Hanoi was feeling these pressures in the way in which Mr. Johnson intended them.

3. The Guam Conference and More Salami Slices

Sometime early in March the President decided to arrange a high level conference to introduce his new team for Vietnam (Ambassadors Bunker and Komer, General Abrams, et al.) to the men they were to replace and to provide them comprehensive briefings on the problems they would face. Later it was decided to invite Thieu and Ky to the conference as well. The conference was scheduled for March 20-21 on Guam and the President led a large high-level delegation from Washington. Two important events occurred just before the group gathered and in large degree provided the backdrop if not the entire subject matter of their deliberations. First, the South Vietnamese Constituent Assembly completed its work on a draft constitution on March 18 and Thieu and Ky proudly brought the document with them to present to the President for his endorsement. 48/ Not surprisingly the great portion of the conference was given over to discussions about the forthcoming electoral process envisaged in the new constitution through which legitimate government would once again be

restored to South Vietnam. The second significant development also occurred on the 18th when General Westmoreland sent CINCPAC a long cable requesting additional forces. 49/ His request amounted to little more than a restatement of the force requirements that had been rejected in November 1966 when Program #4 was approved. The proposal must have hung over the conference and been discussed during it by the Principles even though no time had been available before their departure for a detailed analysis.

The bombing program and the progress of the anti-infiltration barrier were also items on the Guam agenda but did not occupy much time since other questions were more pressing. Some handwritten "press suggestions" which McNaughton prepared for McNamara reflect the prevalent Guam concern with the war in the South. McNaughton's first point (originally numbered #4 but renumbered 1 in red pen) was, "Constant Strategy: A. Destroy Main Forces B. Provide Security C. Improve lot of people D. Press NVN (RT) E. Settle." 50/ As if to emphasize the preoccupation with the war in the South, the Joint Communique made no mention of the air war. But, if ROLLING THUNDER was only fourth priority in our "Constant Strategy," the Guam Conference nevertheless produced approval for two significant new targets -- the Haiphong thermal power plants. They were added to the authorized targets of RT 54 on March 22. A related action also announced on March 22 after discussion and Presidential approval at Guam was the decision to assign B-52s conducting ARC LIGHT strikes in North and South Vietnam to bases in Thailand as the JCS had long been recommending. Slowly the air war was inching its way up the escalatory ladder.

During the Guam Conference one of the more unusual, unexpected and inexplicable developments of the entire Vietnam war occurred. Hanoi, for reasons still unclear, decided to make public the exchange of letters between President Johnson and Ho during the Tet truce. The North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry released the texts of the two letters to the press on March 21 while the President, his advisers and the South Vietnamese leadership were all closeted in Guam reviewing the progress of the war. Hanoi must have calculated that it would embarrass the President, make the South Vietnamese suspicious of U.S. intentions, and enhance their own peaceful image. By admitting past contacts with the U.S., however, the DRV assumed some of the direct responsibility for the failure of peace efforts. Moreover, the President's letter was conciliatory and forthcoming whereas Ho's was cold and uncompromising. In any case, the disclosure did the President no real harm with public opinion, a miscalculation which must have disappointed Hanoi greatly. After their return to Washington McNaughton sent McNamara a memo with some State Department observations on other aspects of the disclosure:

Bill Bundy's experts read this into Ho Chi Minh's release of the Johnson-Ho exchange of letters: (a) Ho thereby "played the world harp," thereby "losing" in the Anglo-Saxon world; (b) to Ho's Hanoi public, he "told off the Americans," showing the hard line but simultaneously reiterating the Burchette line (which China did not like); (c) in the process of quoting the President's letter, Ho leaked the fact of previous exchanges, thereby admitting past contacts and preparing the public for future ones; and (d) Ho ignored the NLF. 51/

The most immediate and obvious effect of the disclosure, however, was to throw cold water on any hopes for an early break in the Washington-Hanoi deadlock.

Shortly after the President's return from the Pacific he received a memo from the Chairman of the JCS, General Wheeler, describing the current status of targets authorized under ROLLING THUNDER 54. While most of the targets authorized had been struck, including the Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel plant and its associated thermal power facility, bad weather was preventing the kind of sustained campaign against the approved industrial targets that the JCS would have liked. 52/ The Thai Nguyen complex, for instance, had been scheduled for attack 51 times by March 21, but only 4 of these could be carried out, the rest being cancelled because of adverse weather. Piecemeal additions to the authorized target list continued through the month of April. On April 8, ROLLING THUNDER program 55 was approved, adding the Kep airfield; the Hanoi power transformer near the center of town; and the Haiphong cement plant, POL storage, and ammunition dump to the target list along with more bridges, railroad yards and vehicle parts elsewhere in the country. 53/ The restrictions on the Hanoi and Haiphong perimeters were relaxed to permit the destruction of these new targets.

In spite of the approval of these new "high-value" industrial targets that the JCS and CINCPAC had lusted after for so long, the Chairman in his monthly progress report to the President in April could report little progress. Unusually bad weather conditions had forced the cancellation of large numbers of sorties and most of the targets had been struck insufficiently or not at all.

In addition to broadening the NVN target base, increased pressure must be attained by achieving greater effectiveness in destruction of targets, maintaining continuous harassment during periods of darkness and marginal attack weather, and generating surge strike capabilities during periods of visual attack conditions. In view of the increased hostility of NVN air environment, achievement of around-the-clock strike capability is imperative to effect maximum possible degradation of the NVN air defense system which, in turn, will

increase over-all attack effectiveness. As radar bombing/ pathfinder capabilities are expanded and techniques perfected, the opportunity to employ additional strike forces effectively in sustained operations will improve significantly. 55/

These problems did not deter them from recommending the approval of three additional tactical fighter squadrons (to be based at Nam Phong, Thailand) for the war in the North. 56/ The concept of operations under which these and other CINCPAC assigned aircraft were to operate was little more than a restatement of the goals set down the previous fall. The purpose was, "To make it as difficult and costly as possible for NVN to continue effective support of the VC and to cause NVN to cease direction of the VC insurgency." 57/ As usual, however, there was no effort to relate requested forces to the achievement of the desired goals, which were to stand throughout the war as wishes not objectives against which one effectively programmed forces.

On the same day the JCS endorsed Westy's force proposals CINCPAC's planes finally broke through the cloud cover and attacked the two thermal power generating facilities in Haiphong. The raids made world headlines. Two days later the specific go-ahead was given from Washington for strikes on the MIG airfields and on April 24th they too came under attack. At this point, with the JCS endorsement of Westmoreland's troop requests, a major debate over future Vietnam policy, in all its aspects, began within the Johnson Administration. It would continue through the month of May and into June, not finally being resolved until after McNamara's trip to Vietnam in July and the Presidential decisions on Program #5. But even while this major policy review was gearing up, the impetus for the salami-slice escalation of our assault on North Vietnam's industrial base produced yet another ROLLING THUNDER program. RT 56, whose principle new target was the thermal power plant located only 1 mile north of the center of Hanoi, became operational May 2. On May 5, at McNamara's request, General Wheeler sent the President a memo outlining the rationale behind the attack on the entire North Vietnamese power grid. In his words,

As you know, the objective of our air attacks on the thermal electric power system in North Vietnam was not...to turn the lights off in major population centers, but were [sic] designed to deprive the enemy of a basic power source needed to operate certain war supporting facilities and industries. You will recall that nine thermal power plants were tied together, principally through the Hanoi Transformer Station, in an electric power grid in the industrial and population complex in northeastern North Vietnam....These nine thermal power plants provided electric power needed to operate a cement plant, a steel plant, a chemical plant, a fertilizer plant, a machine tool plant, an explosives plant, a textile plant, the ports of Haiphong and Hon Gai, major military installations such as airfields, etc. The power grid

referred to above tied in the nine individual thermal electric power plants and permitted the North Vietnamese to switch kilowattage as required among the several consumers. All of the factories and facilities listed above contribute in one way or another and in varying degrees to the war effort in North Vietnam. For example, the steel plant fabricated POL tanks to supplement or replace fixed POL storage, metal pontoons for the construction of floating bridges, metal barges to augment infiltration capacity, etc.; the cement plant produced some 600,000 metric tons of cement annually which has been used in the rehabilitation of lines of communication. 58/

Wheeler went on to describe the "specific military benefits" derived from the attacks on the two Haiphong power plants,

> The two power plants in Haiphong had a total capacity of 17,000 kilowatts, some 9 per cent of the pre-strike national electric power capacity. Between them they supplied power for the cement plant, a chemical plant, Kien An airfield, Cat Bi airfield, the naval base and repair facilities, the Haiphong shipyard repair facilities and the electric power to operate the equipment in the port itself. In addition, the electric power generated by these two plants could be diverted through the electric grid, mentioned above, to other metropolitan and industrial areas through the Hanoi transformer station. All of the aforementioned industrial, repair, airbase, and port facilities contribute to the North Vietnamese war effort and, in their totality, this support is substantial. 59/

Striking the newly approved Hanoi power plant would derive the following additional military advantages, Wheeler argued:

> The Hanoi Thermal Power Plant has a 32,500 kilowatt capacity comprising 17 per cent of the pre-strike electric power production. Major facilities which would be affected by its destruction are the Hanoi Port Facility, the Hanoi Supply Depot, a machine tool plant, a rubber plant, a lead battery plant, the Van Dien Vehicle Repair Depot, an international telecommunications site, an international radio transmitter receiver site, the Bac Mai airfield, and the national military defense command center. All of these facilities contribute substantially to the North Vietnamese war effort. In addition, it should be noted a 35-kilovolt direct transmission line runs from the Hanoi Thermal Power Plant to Haiphong and Nam Dinh. We believe that, since the two Haiphong Thermal

Power Plants were damaged, the Hanoi Thermal Power Plant has been supplying 3,000 kilowatts of power to Haiphong over this direct transmission line; this quantity is sufficient to meet about 10 per cent of Haiphong's electric power requirements. 59a/

Exactly how reassuring this line of argument was to the President is impossible to say. In any case, the long-awaited attack on the Hanoi power facility was finally given the operational go-ahead on May 16, and on May 19 the strike took place. When it did the cries of civilian casualties were again heard long and loud from Hanoi. But the Hanoi power plant was the last major target of the U.S. "spring offensive" against North Vietnam's nascent industrial sector. The CIA on May 26 produced a highly favorable report on the effectiveness of the campaign against the DRV's electric power capacity. In summary it stated:

Air strikes through 25 May 1967 against 14 of the 20 JCS-targeted electric power facilities in North Vietnam have put out of operation about 165,000 kilowatts (kw) of power generating capacity or 87 percent of the national total. North Vietnam is now left with less than 24,000 kw of central power generating capacity.

Both Hanoi and Haiphong are now without a central power supply and must rely on diesel-generating equipment as a power source. The reported reserve power system in Hanoi consisting of five underground diesel stations has an estimated power generating capacity of only 5,000 kw, or less than ten percent of Hanoi's normal needs. 60/

The last phases of this attack on the North's electric power generating system in May 1967 were being carried out against a backdrop of very high level deliberations in Washington on the future course of U.S. strategy in the war. They both influenced and were in turn influenced by the course of that debate, which is the subject of the next section of this paper. The fact that this major assault on the modern sector of the North Vietnamese economy while highly successful in pure target-destruction terms, had failed to alter Hanoi's determined pursuit of the war would bear heavily on the consideration by the Principles of new directions for American policy.

C. The Question Again -- Escalate or Negotiate?

1. Two Courses - Escalate or Level Off

As already discussed, the JCS had transmitted to the Secretary of Defense on April 20 their endorsement of General Westmoreland's March troop requests (100,000 immediately and 200,000 eventually). In so doing the military had once again confronted the Johnson Administration with a difficult decision on whether to escalate or level-off the U.S. effort. What they proposed was the mobilization of the Reserves, a major new troop commitment in the South, an extension of the war into the VC/NVA sanctuaries (Laos, Cambodia, and possibly North Vietnam), the mining of North Vietnamese ports and a solid commitment in manpower and resources to a military victory. 61/ The recommendation not unsurprisingly touched off a searching reappriasal of the course of U.S. strategy in the war.

Under Secretary Katzenbach opened the review on May 24 in a memo to John McNaughton in which he outlined the problem and assigned the preparation of various policy papers to Defense, CIA, State and the White House. As Katzenbach saw it,

> Fundamentally, there are three jobs which have to be done:
>
> 1. Assess the current situation in Viet-Nam and the various political and military actions which could be taken to bring this to a successful conclusion;
>
> 2. Review the possibilities for negotiation, including an assessment of the ultimate U.S. position in relationship to the DRV and NLF; and
>
> 3. Assess the military and political effects of intensification of the war in South Vietnam and in North Viet-Nam. 62/

Katzenbach's memo asked Defense to consider two alternative courses of action: course A, the kind of escalation the military proposed including the 200,000 new troops; and course B, the leveling-off of the U.S. troop commitment with an addition of no more than 10,000 new men. Bombing strategies in the North to correlate with each course were also to be considered. Significantly, a territorially limited bombing halt was suggested as a possibility for the first time.

> Consider with Course B, for example, a cessation, after the current targets have been struck, of bombing North Vietnamese areas north of 20° (or, if it looked sufficiently important to maximize an attractive settlement opportunity, cessation of bombing in all of North Viet-Nam.) 63/

The White House was assigned a paper on the prospects and possibilities in the pacification program. State was to prepare a paper on U.S. settlement terms and conditions, and the CIA was to produce its usual estimate of the current situation.

With respect to the air war, the CIA had already to some extent anticipated the alternatives in a limited distribution memo in mid-April. 64/ Their judgment was that Hanoi was taking a harder line since the publication of the Johnson-Ho letters in March and would continue the armed struggle vigorously in the next phase waiting for a better negotiating opportunity. Three bombing programs were considered by the CIA. The first was an intensified program against military, industrial and LOC targets. Their estimate was that while such a course would create serious problems for the DRV the minimum essential flow of supplies into the North and on to the South would continue. No great change in Chinese or Soviet policies was anticipated from such a course of action. By adding the mining of the ports to this intensified air campaign, Hanoi's ability to support the war would be directly threatened. This would confront the Soviet Union with difficult choices, although the CIA expected that in the end the Soviets would avoid a direct confrontation with the U.S. and would simply step up their support through China. Mining of the ports would put China in "...a commanding political position, since it would have control over the only remaining supply lines to North Vietnam." 65/ If the mining were construed by Hanoi and/or Peking as the prelude to an invasion of the North, Chinese combat troops could be expected to move into North Vietnam to safeguard China's strategic southern frontier. As to the Hanoi leadership, the CIA analysis did not foresee their capitulating on their goals in the South even in the face of the closing of their ports. A third possibility, attacking the airfields, was expected to produce no major Soviet response and at most only the transfer of some North Vietnamese fighters to Chinese bases and the possible entry of Chinese planes into the air war.

With a full-scale debate of future strategy in the offing, Robert Komer decided to leave behind his own views on the best course for U.S. policy before he went to Saigon to become head of CORDS. Questioning whether stepped up bombing or more troops were likely to produce the desired results, Komer identified what he felt were the "Critical Variables Which Will Determine Success in Vietnam." 66/ He outlined them as follows:

> A. It is Unlikely that Hanoi will Negotiate. We can't count on a negotiated compromise. Perhaps the NLF would prove more flexible, but it seems increasingly under the thumb of Hanoi.
>
> B. More Bombing or Mining Would Raise the Pain Level but Probably Wouldn't Force Hanoi to Cry Uncle. I'm no expert on this, but can't see it as decisive. Could it

prevent Hanoi from maintaining substantial infiltration if it chose? Moreover, some facets of it contain dangerous risks.

C. Thus the Critical Variable is in the South! The greatest opportunity for decisive gains in the next 12-18 months lies in accelerating the erosion of the VC in South Vietnam, and in building a viable alternative with attractive power. Let's assume that the NVA could replace its losses. I doubt that the VC could. They are now the "weak sisters" of the enemy team. The evidence is not conclusive, but certainly points in this direction. Indeed, the NVA strategy in I Corps seems designed to take pressure off the VC in the South. 67/

This was the first time that Komer, whose preoccupation was pacification, had seriously questioned the utility of more bombing. Apparently the McNamara analysis was reaching even the more determined members of the White House staff.

A different view of the bombing was presented to the President, however, by General Westmoreland on April 27. He had returned from Vietnam to argue in favor of his troop requests and for a considerable expansion of the war, as well as to appear before Congress and in public to strengthen support for the President's war policy. In his conversation with the President on the 27th he stated, "I am frankly dismayed at even the thought of stopping the bombing program." 68/ General Wheeler in the same conversation, however, went even farther, taking the initiative to urge the closing of the ports as the next logical step against the DRV. But in addition he suggested that U.S. troops be authorized to extend the war into the Laotian and Cambodian sanctuaries and that we consider the "possible invasion of North Vietnam. We may wish to take offensive action against the DRV with ground troops." 69/ The President remained skeptical to say the least. When Westmoreland spoke to Congress the following day he mentioned the bombing only in passing as a reprisal for VC terror and depradation in the South.

Meanwhile, the Principles continued their deliberations. They met on May 1 although there is no record of what transpired in their discussions. The only available paper for the meeting is one that Bill Bundy wrote for Secretary Katzenbach. Bundy's paper offered a fairly optimistic view of the overall prospects for the coming six months:

Over-All Estimate. If we go on as we are doing, if the political process in the South comes off well, and if the Chinese do not settle down, I myself would reckon that by the end of 1967 there is at least a 50-50 chance that a favorable tide will be running really strongly in the South, and that Hanoi will be very discouraged.

Whether they will move to negotiate is of course a slightly different question, but we could be visibly and strongly on the way.

If China should go into a real convulsion, I would raise these odds slightly, and think it clearly more likely that Hanoi would choose a negotiating path to the conclusion. 70/

Much of Bundy's sanguine optimism was based on the convulsions going on in China. He estimated that the odds for another significant Chinese internal upheaval were at least 50-50, and that this would offset Hanoi's recent promise of additional aid from the Soviets. He argued that it should be the principle factor in the consideration of any additional step-up in the bombing, or the mining of Haiphong harbor. Specifically, he gave the following objections to more bombing:

Additional Action in the North. Of the major targets still not hit, I would agree to the Hanoi power station, but then let it go at that, subject only to occasional re-strikes where absolutely required. In particular, on the airfields, I think we have gone far enough to hurt and not far enough to drive the aircraft to Chinese fields, which I think could be very dangerous.

I would strongly oppose the mining of Haiphong at any time in the next nine months, unless the Soviets categorically use it to send in combat weapons. (It may well be that we should warn them quietly but firmly that we are watching their traffic into Haiphong very closely, and particularly from this standpoint.) Mining of Haiphong, at any time, is bound to risk a confrontation with the Soviets and to throw Hanoi into greater dependence on Communist China. These in themselves would be very dangerous and adverse to the whole notion of getting Hanoi to change its attitude. Moreover, I think they would somehow manage to get the stuff in through China no matter what we did to Haiphong. 71/

In addition to these considerations, however, Bundy was worried about the international implications of more bombing:

International Factors. My negative feeling on serious additional bombing of the North and mining of Haiphong is based essentially on the belief that these actions will not change Hanoi's position, or affect Hanoi's capabilities in ways that counter-balance the risks and adverse reaction in China and with the Soviets alone.

Nonetheless, I cannot leave out the wider international factors, and particularly the British and Japanese as bellwethers. Both the latter have accepted our recent bombings with much less outcry than I, frankly, would have anticipated. But if we keep it up at this pace, or step up the pace, I doubt if the British front will hold. Certainly we will be in a very bad Donnybrook next fall in the UN.

Whatever the wider implications of negative reactions on a major scale, the main point is that they would undoubtedly stiffen Hanoi, and this is always the gut question. 72/

With respect to negotiations, Bundy was guarded. He did not expect any serious moves by the other side until after the elections in South Vietnam in September. Thus, he argued against any new U.S. initiatives and in favor of conveying an impression of "steady firmness" on our part. It was precisely this impression that had been lacking from our behavior since the previous winter and that we should now seek to restore. This was the main point of his overall assessment of the situation, as the following summary paragraph demonstrates:

A Steady, Firm Course. Since roughly the first of December, I think we have given a very jerky and impatient impression to Hanoi. This is related more to the timing and suddenness of our bombing and negotiating actions than to the substance of what we have done. I think that Hanoi in any event believes that the 1968 elections could cause us to change our position or even lose heart completely. Our actions since early December may well have encouraged and greatly strengthened this belief that we wish to get the war over by 1968 at all costs. Our major thrust must be now to persuade them that we are prepared to stick it if necessary. This means a steady and considered program of action for the next nine months. 73/

An SNIE a few days later confirmed Bundy's views about the unlikelihood of positive Soviet efforts to bring the conflict to the negotiating table. It also affirmed that the Soviets would no doubt continue and increase their assistance to North Vietnam and that the Chinese would probably not impede the flow of materiel across its territory. 74/

Powerful and unexpected support for William Bundy's general viewpoint came at about this time from his brother, the former Presidential adviser to Kennedy and Johnson, McGeorge Bundy. In an unsolicited letter

to the President he outlined his current views as to further escalation of the air war (in the initiation of which he had had a large hand in 1965) and further troop increments for the ground war in the South:

> Since the Communist turndown of our latest offers in February, there has been an intensification of bombing in the North, and press reports suggest that there will be further pressure for more attacks on targets heretofore immune. There is also obvious pressure from the military for further reinforcements in the South, although General Westmoreland has been a model of discipline in his public pronouncements. One may guess, therefore, that the President will soon be confronted with requests for 100,000-200,000 more troops and for authority to close the harbor in Haiphong. Such recommendations are inevitable, in the framework of strictly military analysis. It is the thesis of this paper that in the main they should be rejected, and that as a matter of high national policy there should be a publicly stated ceiling to the level of American participation in Vietnam, as long as there is no further marked escalation on the enemy side.
>
> There are two major reasons for this recommendation: the situation in Vietnam and the situation in the United States. As to Vietnam, it seems very doubtful that further intensifications of bombing in the North or major increases in U.S. troops in the South are really a good way of bringing the war to a satisfactory conclusion. As to the United States, it seems clear that uncertainty about the future size of the war is now having destructive effects on the national will. 75/

Unlike the vocal critics of the Administration, Mac Bundy was not opposed to the bombing per se, merely to any further extension of it since he felt such action would be counter-productive. Because his views carry such weight, his arguments against extending the bombing are reproduced below in full:

> On the ineffectiveness of the bombing as a means to end the war, I think the evidence is plain -- though I would defer to expert estimators. Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues simply are not going to change their policy on the basis of losses from the air in North Vietnam. No intelligence estimate that I have seen in the last two years has ever claimed that the bombing would have this effect. The President never claimed that it would. The notion that this was its purpose has been limited to one school of thought and has never been the official Government position, whatever critics may assert.

I am very far indeed from suggesting that it would make sense now to stop the bombing of the North altogether. The argument for that course seems to me wholly unpersuasive at the present. To stop the bombing today would be to give the Communists something for nothing, and in a very short time all the doves in this country and around the world would be asking for some further unilateral concessions. (Doves and hawks are alike in their insatiable appetites; we can't really keep the hawks happy by small increases in effort -- they come right back for more.)

The real justification for the bombing, from the start, has been double -- its value for Southern morale at a moment of great danger, and its relation to Northern infiltration. The first reason has disappeared but the second remains entirely legitimate. Tactical bombing of communications and of troop concentrations -- and of airfields as necessary -- seems to me sensible and practical. It is strategic bombing that seems both unproductive and unwise. It is true, of course, that all careful bombing does some damage to the enemy. But the net effect of this damage upon the military capability of a primitive country is almost sure to be slight. (The lights have not stayed off in Haiphong, and even if they had, electric lights are in no sense essential to the Communist war effort.) And against this distinctly marginal impact we have to weigh the fact that strategic bombing does tend to divide the U.S., to distract us all from the real struggle in the South, and to accentuate the unease and distemper which surround the war in Vietnam, both at home and abroad. It is true that careful polls show majority support for the bombing, but I believe this support rests upon an erroneous belief in its effectiveness as a means to end the war. Moreover, I think those against extension of the bombing are more passionate on balance than those who favor it. Finally, there is certainly a point at which such bombing does increase the risk of conflict with China or the Soviet Union, and I am sure there is no majority for that. In particular, I think it clear that the case against going after Haiphong Harbor is so strong that a majority would back the Government in rejecting that course.

So I think that with careful explanation there would be more approval than disapproval of an announced policy restricting the bombing closely to activities that support the war in the South. General Westmoreland's speech to the Congress made this tie-in, but attacks on power plants really do not fit the picture very well. We are attacking them, I fear, mainly because we have "run out" of other targets. Is it a very good reason? Can anyone demonstrate that such targets have been very rewarding? Remembering the claims made for attacks on oil supplies, should we not be very skeptical of new promises? 76/

In a similar fashion Bundy developed his arguments against a major increase in U.S. troop strength in the South and urged the President not to take any new diplomatic initiatives for the present. But the appeal of Bundy's analysis for the President must surely have been its finale in which Bundy, acutely aware of the President's political sensitivities, cast his arguments in the context of the forthcoming 1968 Presidential elections. Here is how he presented the case:

> There is one further argument against major escalation in 1967 and 1968 which is worth stating separately, because on the surface it seems cynically political. It is that Hanoi is going to do everything it possibly can to keep its position intact until after our 1968 elections. Given their history, they are bound to hold out for a possible U.S. shift in 1969 -- that's what they did against the French, and they got most of what they wanted when Mendes took power. Having held on so long this time, and having nothing much left to lose -- compared to the chance of victory -- they are bound to keep on fighting. Since only atomic bombs could really knock them out (an invasion of North Vietnam would not do it in two years, and is of course ruled out on other grounds), they have it in their power to "prove" that military escalation does not bring peace -- at least over the next two years.. They will surely do just that. However much they may be hurting, they are not going to do us any favors before November 1968. (And since this was drafted, they have been publicly advised by Walter Lippmann to wait for the Republicans -- as if they needed the advice and as if it was his place to give it!)
>
> It follows that escalation will not bring visible victory over Hanoi before the election. Therefore the election will have to be fought by the Administration on other grounds. I think those other grounds are clear and important, and that they will be obscured if our policy is thought to be one of increasing -- and ineffective -- military pressure.
>
> If we assume that the war will still be going on in November 1968, and that Hanoi will not give us the pleasure of consenting to negotiations sometime before then what we must plan to offer as a defense of Administration policy is not victory over Hanoi, but growing success -- and self-reliance -- in the South. This we can do, with luck, and on this side of the parallel the Vietnamese authorities should be prepared to help us out (though of course the VC will do their damnedest against us.) Large parts of Westy's speech (if not quite all of it) were wholly consistent with this line of argument. 77/

His summation must have been even more gratifying for the beleaguered President. It was both a paean to the President's achievements in Vietnam and an appeal to the prejudices that had sustained his policy from the beginning:

> ...if we can avoid escalation-that-does-not-seem-to-work, we can focus attention on the great and central achievement of these last two years: on the defeat we have prevented. The fact that South Vietnam has not been lost and is not going to be lost is a fact of truly massive importance in the history of Asia, the Pacific, and the U.S. An articulate minority of "Eastern intellectuals" (like Bill Fulbright) may not believe in what they call the domino theory, but most Americans (along with nearly all Asians) know better. Under this Administration the United States has already saved the hope of freedom for hundreds of millions -- in this sense, the largest part of the job is done. This critically important achievement is obscured by seeming to act as if we have to do much more lest we fail. 78/

Whatever his own reactions, the President was anxious to have the reactions of others to Bundy's reasoning. He asked McNamara to pass the main portion of the memo to the Chiefs for their comment without identifying its author. Chairman Wheeler promptly replied. His memo to the President on May 5 rejected the Bundy analysis in a detailed listing of the military benefits of attacking the DRV power grid and in a criticism of Bundy's list of bombing objectives for failing to include punitive pressure as a prime motive. With respect to Bundy's recommendation against interdicting Haiphong Harbor, the General was terse and pointed:

> As a matter of cold fact, the Haiphong port is the single most vulnerable and important point in the lines of communications system of North Vietnam. During the first quarter of 1967 general cargo deliveries through Haiphong have set new records. In March 142,700 metric tons of cargo passed through the port; during the month of April there was a slight decline to 132,000 metric tons. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in April 31,900 metric tons of bulk foodstuffs passed through the port bringing the total of foodstuffs delivered in the first four months of 1967 to 100,680 metric tons as compared to 77,100 metric tons of food received during all of calendar 1966. These tonnages underscore the importance of the port of Haiphong to the war effort of North Vietnam and support my statement that Haiphong is the most important point in the entire North Vietnamese lines of communications system. Unless and until we find some means of obstructing and reducing the flow of war supporting material through Haiphong, the North

Vietnamese will continue to be able to support their war effort both in North Vietnam and in South Vietnam. 79/

But the lines were already clearly being drawn in this internal struggle over escalation and for the first time all the civilians (both insiders and significant outsiders) were opposed to the military proposals in whole or part. At this early stage, however, the outcome was far from clear. On the same day the Chairman criticized the Bundy paper, Roger Fisher, McNaughton's longtime advisor from Harvard, at the suggestion of Walt Rostow and Doug Cater, sent the President a proposal re-orienting the U.S. effort both militarily and diplomatically. The flavor of his ideas, all of which had already appeared in notes to McNaughton, can be derived from a listing of the headings under which they were argued without going into his detailed arguments. His analysis fell under the following six general rubrics:

1. Pursue an on-the-ground interdiction strategy (barrier);

2. Concentrate air attacks in the southern portion of North Vietnam;

3. Offer Hanoi some realistic "yes-able" propositions;

4. Make the carrot more believable;

5. Give the NLF a decidable question;

6. Give local Viet Cong leaders a chance to opt out of the war. 80/

The arguments to the President for applying the brakes to our involvement in this seemingly endless, winless struggle were, thus, being made from all sides, except the military who remained adamant for escalation.

2. The May DPM Exercise

The available documents do not reveal what happened to the option exercise that Katzenbach had launched on April 24. But at this point in the debate over future direction for U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, attention shifted to a draft memorandum for the President written by John McNaughton for McNamara's eventual signature. (A W. Bundy memo on May 30 suggests the Katzenbach exercise was overtaken by Defense's DPM effort.) The DPM at the Pentagon is more than a statement of the Secretary's views, however, it is an important bureaucratic device for achieving consensus (or at least for getting people's opinions recorded on paper). McNaughton began his DPM by stating that the question before the house was:

whether to continue the program of air attacks in the Hanoi-Haiphong area or for an indefinite period to concentrate all attacks on the lines of communication in the lower half of North Vietnam (south of 20°). 81/

Short of attacking the ports, which was rejected as risking confrontation with the USSR, the Memorandum said, there were few important targets left. The alternative of striking minor fixed targets and continuing armed reconnaissance against the transportation system north of 20° was relatively costly, risky, and unprofitable:

> We have the alternative open to us of continuing to conduct attacks between 20-23° -- that is, striking minor fixed targets (like battery, fertilizer, and rubber plants and barracks) while conducting armed reconnaissance against movement on roads, railroads and waterways. This course, however, is costly in American lives and involves serious dangers of escalation. The loss rate in Hanoi-Haiphong Route Package 6 [the northeast quadrant], for example, is more than six times the loss rate in the southernmost Route Packages 1 and 2; and actions in the Hanoi-Haiphong area involve serious risks of generating confrontations with the Soviet Union and China, both because they involve destruction of MIGs on the ground and encounters with the MIGs in the air and because they may be construed as a US intention to crush the Hanoi regime.
>
> The military gain from destruction of additional military targets north of 20° will be slight. If we believed that air attacks in that area would change Hanoi's will, they might be worth the added loss of American life and the risks of expansion of the war. However, there is no evidence that this will be the case, while there is considerable evidence that such bombing will strengthen Hanoi's will. In this connection, Consul-General Rice [of Hong Kong]...said what we believe to be the case -- that we cannot by bombing reach the critical level of pain in North Vietnam and that, "below that level, pain only increases the will to fight." Sir Robert Thompson, who was a key officer in the British success in Malaya, said...that our bombing, particularly in the Red River basin, "is unifying North Vietnam." 82/

Nor, the Memorandum continued, was bombing in northernmost NVN essential for the morale of SVN and US troops. General Westmoreland fully supported strikes in the Hanoi/Haiphong area and had even said, as noted before, that he was "frankly dismayed at even the thought of stopping the bombing program," but his basic requirement was for continuation of bombing in the "extended battle zone" near the DMZ.

The Memorandum went on to recommend what Roger Fisher had been suggesting, namely concentrating strikes in the lower half of NVN, without, however, turning the upper half into a completely forbidden sanctuary:

> We therefore recommend that all of the sorties allocated to the ROLLING THUNDER program be concentrated on the lines of communications -- the "funnel" through which men and supplies to the South must flow -- between 17-20° reserving the option and intention to strike (in the 20-30° area) as necessary to keep the enemy's investment in defense and in repair crews high throughout the country. 83/

The proposed change in policy was not aimed at getting NVN to change its behavior or to negotiate, and no favorable response from Hanoi should be expected:

> But to optimize the chances of a favorable Hanoi reaction, the scenario should be (a) to inform the Soviets quietly (on May 15) that within a few (5) days the policy would be implemented, stating no time limits and making no promises not to return to the Red River basin to attack targets which later acquired military importance, and then (b) to make an unhuckstered shift as predicted on May 20. We would expect Moscow to pass the May 15 information on to Hanoi, perhaps (but probably not) urging Hanoi to seize the opportunity to de-escalate the war by talks or otherwise. Hanoi, not having been asked a question by us and having no ultimatum-like time limit, might be in a better posture to react favorably than has been the case in the past. 84/

The Memorandum recommended that the de-escalation be explained as improving the military effectiveness of the bombing, in accordance with the interdiction rationale:

> Publicly, when the shift had become obvious (May 21 or 22), we should explain (a) that as we have always said, the war must be won in the South, (b) that we have never said bombing of the North would produce a settlement by breaking Hanoi's will or by shutting off the flow of supplies, (c) that the North must pay a price for its infiltration, (d) that the major northern military targets have been destroyed, and (e) that now we are concentrating on the narrow neck through which supplies must flow, believing that the concentrated effort there, as compared with a dispersed effort throughout North Vietnam, under present circumstances will increase the efficiency of our interdiction effort, and (f) that we may have to return to targets further north if military considerations require it. 85/

This McNaughton DPM on bombing was prepared as an adjunct to a larger DPM on the overall strategy of the war and new ground force deployments. Together they were the focus of a frantic weekend of work in anticipation of a White House meeting on Monday, May 8. That meeting would not, however, produce any positive decisions and the entire drafting exercise would continue until the following week when McNamara finally transmitted a draft memorandum to the President. Among those in the capital that weekend to advise the President was McGeorge Bundy with whom McNamara conferred on Sunday. 86/

Walt Rostow at the White House circulated a discussion paper on Saturday, May 6, entitled "U.S. Strategy in Viet Nam." Rostow's paper began by reviewing what the U.S. was attempting to do in the war: frustrate a communist takeover "by defeating their main force units; attacking the guerilla infrastructure; and building a South Vietnamese governmental and security structure...." 87/ The purpose of the air war in the North was defined as "To hasten the decision in Hanoi to abandon the aggression...," for which we specifically sought:

> (i) to limit and harass infiltration; and
>
> (ii) to impose on the North sufficient military and civil cost to make them decide to get out of the war earlier rather than later. 88/

Sensitive to the criticisms of the bombing, Rostow tried to dispose of certain of their arguments:

> We have never held the view that bombing could stop infiltration. We have never held the view that bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong area alone would lead them to abandon the effort in the South. We have never held the view that bombing Hanoi-Haiphong would directly cut back infiltration. We have held the view that the degree of military and civilian cost felt in the North and the diversion of resources to deal with our bombing could contribute marginally--and perhaps significantly--to the timing of a decision to end the war. But it was no substitute for making progress in the South. 89/

Rostow argued that while there were policy decisions to be made about the war in the South, particularly with respect to new force levels, there existed no real disagreement with the Administration as to our general strategy on the ground. Where contention did exist was in the matter of the air war. Here there were three broad strategies that could be pursued. Rostow offered a lengthy analysis of the three options which is included here in its entirety since to summarize it would sacrifice much of its pungency.

A. Closing the top of the funnel

Under this strategy we would mine the major harbors and, perhaps, bomb port facilities and even consider blockade. In addition, we would attack systematically the rail lines between Hanoi and mainland China. At the moment the total import capacity into North Viet Nam is about 17,200 tons per day. Even with expanded import requirement due to the food shortage, imports are, in fact, coming in at about 5700 tons per day. It is possible with a concerted and determined effort that we could cut back import capacity somewhat below the level of requirements; but this is not sure. On the other hand, it would require a difficult and sustained effort by North Viet Nam and its allies to prevent a reduction in total imports below requirements if we did all these things.

The costs would be these:

--The Soviet Union would have to permit a radical increase in Hanoi's dependence upon Communist China, or introduce minesweepers, etc., to keep its supplies coming into Hanoi by sea;

--The Chinese Communists would probably introduce many more engineering and anti-aircraft forces along the roads and rail lines between Hanoi and China in order to keep the supplies moving;

--To maintain its prestige, in case it could not or would not open up Hanoi-Haiphong in the face of mines, the Soviet Union might contemplate creating a Berlin crisis. With respect to a Berlin crisis, they would have to weigh the possible split between the U.S. and its Western European allies under this pressure against damage to the atmosphere of detente in Europe which is working in favor of the French Communist Party and providing the Soviet Union with generally enlarged influence in Western Europe.

I myself do not believe that the Soviet Union would go to war with us over Viet Nam unless we sought to occupy North Viet Nam; and, even then, a military response from Moscow would not be certain.

With respect to Communist China, it always has the option of invading Laos and Thailand; but this would not be a rational response to naval and air operations designed to strangle Hanoi. A war throughout Southeast Asia would not help Hanoi; although I do believe Communist China would

fight us if we invaded the northern part of North Viet Nam.

One can always take the view that, given the turmoil inside Communist China, an irrational act by Peiping is possible. And such irrationality cannot be ruled out.

I conclude that if we try to close the top of the funnel, tension between ourselves and the Soviet Union and Communist China would increase; if we were very determined, we could impose additional burdens on Hanoi and its allies; we might cut capacity below requirements; and the outcome is less likely to be a general war than more likely.

B. Attacking what is inside the funnel

This is what we have been doing in the Hanoi-Haiphong area for some weeks. I do not agree with the view that the attacks on Hanoi-Haiphong have no bearing on the war in the South. They divert massive amounts of resources, energies, and attention to keeping the civil and military establishment going. They impose general economic, political, and psychological difficulties on the North which have been complicated this year by a bad harvest and food shortages. I do not believe that they "harden the will of the North." In my judgment, up to this point, our bombing of the North has been a painful additional cost they have thus far been willing to bear to pursue their efforts in the South.

On the other hand:

--There is no direct, immediate connection between bombing the Hanoi-Haiphong area and the battle in the South;

--If we complete the attack on electric power by taking out the Hanoi station -- which constitutes about 80% of the electric power supply of the country now operating -- we will have hit most of the targets whose destruction imposes serious military-civil costs on the North.

-- With respect to risk, it is unclear whether Soviet warnings about our bombing Hanoi-Haiphong represent decisions already taken or decisions which might be taken if we persist in banging away in that area.

It is my judgment that the Soviet reaction will continue to be addressed to the problem imposed on Hanoi by us; that is, they might introduce Soviet pilots as they did in the Korean War; they might bring ground-to-ground missiles into North Viet Nam with the object of attacking our vessels at sea and

our airfields in the Danang area.

I do not believe that the continuation of attacks at about the level we have been conducting them in the Hanoi-Haiphong area will lead to pressure on Berlin or a general war with the Soviet Union. In fact, carefully read, what the Soviets have been trying to signal is: Keep away from our ships; we may counter-escalate to some degree; but we do not want a nuclear confrontation over Viet Nam.

C. Concentration in Route Packages 1 and 2

The advantages of concentrating virtually all our attacks in this area are three:

--We would cut our loss rate in pilots and planes;

--We would somewhat improve our harassment of infiltration of South Viet Nam;

--We would diminish the risks of counter-escalatory action by the Soviet Union and Communist China, as compared with courses A and B.

With this analysis of the pros and cons of the various options, Rostow turned to recommendations. He rejected course A as incurring too many risks with too little return. Picking up McNaughton's recommendation for concentrating the air war in the North Vietnamese panhandle, Rostow urged that it be supplemented with an open option to return to the northern "funnel" if developments warranted it. Here is how he formulated his conclusions:

With respect to Course B I believe we have achieved greater results in increasing the pressure on Hanoi and raising the cost of their continuing to conduct the aggression in the South than some of my most respected colleagues would agree. I do not believe we should lightly abandon what we have accomplished; and specifically, I believe we should mount the most economical and careful attack on the Hanoi power station our air tacticians can devise. Moreover, I believe we should keep open the option of coming back to the Hanoi-Haiphong area, dpending upon what we learn of their repair operations; and what Moscow's and Peiping's reactions are; especially when we understand better what effects we have and have not achieved thus far.

I believe the Soviet Union may well have taken certain counter-steps addressed to the more effective protection of

the Hanoi-Haiphong area and may have decided -- or could shortly decide -- to introduce into North Viet Nam some surface-to-surface missiles.

With respect to option C, I believe we should, while keeping open the B option, concentrate our attacks to the maximum in Route Packages 1 and 2; and, in conducting Hanoi-Haiphong attacks, we should do so only when the targets make sense. I do not expect dramatic results from increasing the weight of attack in Route Packages 1 and 2; but I believe we are wasting a good many pilots in the Hanoi-Haiphong area without commensurate results. The major objectives of maintaining the B option can be achieved at lower cost. 90/

Although he had endorsed a strike on the Hanoi power plant, he rejected any attack on the air fields in a terse, one sentence final paragraph, "Air field attacks are only appropriate to the kind of sustained operations in the Hanoi-Haiphong area associated with option A."

Two important members of the Administration, McNaughton and Rostow, had thus weighed in for confining the bombing to the panhandle under some formula or other. On Monday, May 8, presumably before the policy meeting, William Bundy circulated a draft memo of his own which pulled the problem apart and assembled the pieces in a very different way. Like the others, Bundy's draft started from the assumption that bombing decisions would be related to other decisions on the war for which a consensus appeared to exist: pressing ahead with pacification; continued political progress in the South; and continued pressure on the North. To Bundy's way of thinking there were four broad target categories that could be combined into various bombing options:

1. "Concentration on supply routes." This would comprise attacks on supply routes in the southern "bottleneck" areas of North Vietnam, from the 20th parallel south.

2. "Re-strikes." This would comprise attacks on targets already hit, including unless otherwise stated sensitive targets north of the 20th parallel and in and around Hanoi/Haiphong, which were hit in the last three weeks.

3. "Additional sensitive targets." North of the 20th parallel, there are additional sensitive targets that have been on our recent lists, including Rolling Thunder 56. Some are of lesser importance, some are clearly "extremely sensitive" (category 4 below), but at least three -- the Hanoi power station, the Red River bridge, and the Phuc Yen airfield -- could be said to round out the April program. These three are the essential targets included in this category 3.

4. "Extremely sensitive targets." This would comprise targets that are exceptionally sensitive, in terms of Chinese and/or Soviet reaction, as well as domestic and international factors. For example, this list would include mining of Haiphong, /'bombing of critical port facilities in Haiphong,' - pencilled in/ and bombing of dikes and dams not directly related to supply route waterways and/or involving heavy flooding to crops. 92/

Bundy suggested that by looking at the targetting problem in this way a series of options could be generated that were more sensitive to considerations of time-phasing. He offered five such options:

Option A would be to move up steadily to hit all the target categories, including the extremely sensitive targets.

Option B would be to step up the level a little further and stay at that higher level through consistent and fairly frequent re-strikes. Specifically, this would involve hitting the additional sensitive targets and then keeping all sensitive targets open to re-strike, although with individual authorization.

Option C would be to raise the level slightly in the near future by hitting the additional sensitive targets, but then to cut back essentially to concentration on supply routes. Re-strikes north of the 20th parallel would be very limited under this option once the additional sensitive targets had been hit, and would be limited to re-strikes necessary to eliminate targets directly important to infiltration and, as necessary, to keep Hanoi's air defense system in place.

Option D would be not to hit the additional sensitive targets, and to define a fairly level program that would concentrate heavily on the supply routes but would include a significant number of re-strikes north of the 20th parallel. Since these re-strikes would still be substantially less bunched than in April, the net effect would be to scale down the bombing slightly from present levels, and to hold it there.

Option E would be to cut back at once to concentration on supply routes. Re-strikes north of the 20th parallel would be limited to those defined under Option C. 93/

To crystallize more clearly in his readers' minds what the options implied in intensity compared with the current effort he employed a numerical analogy:

> To put a rough numerical index on these options, one might start by saying that our general level in the past year has been Force 4, with occasional temporary increases to Force 5 (POL and the December Hanoi strikes). On such a rough numerical scale, our April program has put us at Force 6 at present. Option A would raise this to 8 or 9 and keep it there, Option F would raise it to 7 and keep it there, Option C would raise it to 7 and then drop it to 3, Option D would lower it to 5 and keep it there, and Option E would lower it to 3 and keep it there. 94/

Bundy's analysis of the merits of the five options began with the estimate that the likelihood of Chinese intervention in the war was slight except in the case of option A, a probability he considered a major argument against it. He did not expect any of the courses of produce a direct Soviet intervention, but warned against the possibility of Soviet pressures elsewhere if option A were selected. He underscored a report from Ambassador Thompson that the Soviets had been greatly concerned by the April bombing program and were currently closeted in deliberations on general policy direction. Bombing of any major new targets in the immediate future would have an adverse effect on the Soviet leadership and was discouraged by Bundy. Option A was singled out for further condemnation based on the views of some China experts who argued that an intensive bombing program might be just what Mao needed to restore internal order in China and resolidify his control.

With respect to the effect of the bombing on North Vietnam, Bundy cited the evidence that strikes against the sensitive military targets were having only temporary and marginal positive benefits, and they were extremely costly in planes and pilots lost. By restricting the bombing to South of the 20th parallel as McNaughton had suggested, the military payoff might just be greater and the psychological strengthening of North Vietnamese will and morale less. The main factor in Hanoi attitudes, however, was the war in the South and neither a bombing halt nor an intensive escalation would have a decisive impact on it one way or the other. In Bundy's estimation Hanoi had dug in for at least another six months, and possibly until after the US elections in 1968. In the face of this the U.S. should try to project an image of steady, even commitment without radical shifts. This approach seemed to Bundy best suited to maximizing U.S. public support as well, since none of the courses would really satisfy either the convinced "doves" or the unflinching "hawks." The bombing had long since ceased to have much effect on South

Vietnamese morale, and international opinion would react strongly to any serious escalation. Closing out his analysis, Bundy argued for a decision soon, possibly before the upcoming one-day truce on Buddha's birthday, May 23, when the new program might be presented.

On the basis of this analysis of the pros and cons, Bundy concluded that options A and B had been clearly eliminated. Of the three remaining courses he urged the adoption of D, thus aligning himself generally with McNaughton and Rostow. The specific reasons he adduced for his recommendation were the following:

Option D Elaborated and Argued

The first element in Option D is that it would not carry the April program to its logical conclusion by hitting the Hanoi power station, the Red River bridge, and the Phuc Yen airfield, even once.

The argument against these targets is in part based on reactions already discussed. Although we do not believe that they would have any significant chance of bringing the Chinese into the war, they might have a hardening effect on immediate Soviet decisions, and could significantly aggravate criticism in the UK and elsewhere.

The argument relates above all to the precise nature and location of these targets. The Hanoi power station is only a half mile from the Russian and Chinese Embassies, and still closer to major residential areas. The Red River bridge is the very area of Hanoi that got us into the greatest outcry in December. In both cases, the slightest mistake could produce really major and evident civilian casualties and tremendously aggravate the general reactions we have already assessed.

As to the Phuc Yen airfield, we believe there is a significant chance that this attack would cause Hanoi to assume we were going to make their jet operational airfields progressively untenable. This could significantly and in itself increase the chances of their moving planes to China and all the interacting possibilities that then arise. We believe we have gone far enough to hurt them and worry them. Is it wise to go this further step?

The second element in this strategy is that it would level off where we are, but with specific provision for periodic re-strikes against the targets we have already hit. This has clear pros and cons.

Pros. Continued re-strikes would maintain the concrete results already attained--the lights would stay out in Haiphong for the most part.

Continued re-strikes would tend to keep the "hawks" under control. Indeed, without them, it would almost certainly be asked why we had ever hit the targets in the first place. This might conceivably happen without re-strikes, but would be at least doubtful.

Most basically, Hanoi and Moscow would be kept at least a little on edge. As we have noted earlier, fear of ultimate expansion of the war is an element that tends to impel the Soviets to maximize and use their leverage on Hanoi toward a peaceful settlement. 95/

This significant convergence of opinion on bombing strategy in the next phase among key Presidential advisers could not have gone unnoticed in the May 8 meeting, but there being no record of what transpired, the consensus can only be inferred from the fact that the 19 May DPM did incorporate a bombing recommendation along these lines. Intervening before then to reinforce the views of the civilian Principles were several CIA intelligence memos. Together they constituted another repudiation of the utility of the bombing. The summary CIA view of the effect of the bombing on North Vietnamese thinking was that:

Twenty-seven months of US bombing of North Vietnam have had remarkably little effect on Hanoi's over-all strategy in prosecuting the war, on its confident view of long-term Communist prospects, and on its political tactics regarding negotiations. The growing pressure of US air operations has not shaken the North Vietnamese leaders' conviction that they can withstand the bombing and outlast the US and South Vietnam in a protracted war of attrition. Nor has it caused them to waver in their belief that the outcome of this test of will and endurance will be determined primarily by the course of the conflict on the ground in the South, not by the air war in the North. 96/

As to the state of popular morale after two years of U.S. bombing, the CIA concluded that:

Morale in the DRV among the rank and file populace, defined in terms of discipline, confidence, and willingness to endure hardship, appears to have undergone only a small decline since the bombing of North Vietnam began.

* * * * *

With only a few exceptions, recent reports suggest a continued willingness on the part of the populace to abide by Hanoi's policy on the war. Evidence of determination to persist in support of the war effort continues to be as plentiful in these reports as in the past. The current popular mood might best be characterized, in fact, as one of resolute stoicism with a considerable reservoir of endurance still untapped. 97/

Even the extensive physical damage the bombing had done to North Vietnam could not be regarded as meaningfully reducing Hanoi's capacity to sustain the war:

Through the end of April 1967 the US air campaign against North Vietnam--Rolling Thunder--had significantly eroded the capacities of North Vietnam's limited industrial and military base. These losses, however, have not meaningfully degraded North Vietnam's material ability to continue the war in South Vietnam. 98/

Certain target systems had suffered more than others, particularly transportation and electric power, but throughput capacity for materiel had not been signficantly decreased. One of the fundamental reasons was the remarkable ability the North Vietnamese had demonstrated to recuperate quickly from the strikes:

North Vietnam's ability to recuperate from the air attacks has been of a high order. The major exception has been the electric power industry.

* * * * *

The recuperability problem is not significant for the other target systems. The destroyed petroleum storage system has been replaced by an effective system of dispersed storage and distribution. The damaged military targets systems--particularly barracks and storage depots--have simply been abandoned, and supplies and troops dispersed throughout the country. The inventories of transport and military equipment have been replaced by large infusions of military and economic aid from the USSR and Communist China. Damage to bridges and lines of communications is frequently repaired within a matter of days, if not hours, or the effects are countered by an elaborate system of multiple bypasses or pre-positioned spans. 99/

3. The May 19 DPM

By the 19th of May the opinions of McNamara and his key aides with respect to the bombing and Westy's troop requests had crystalized sufficiently that another Draft Presidential Memorandum was written. It was entitled, "Future Actions in Vietnam," and was a comprehensive treatment of all aspects of the war -- military, political, and diplomatic. It opened with an appraisal of the situation covering both North and South Vietnam, the U.S. domestic scene and international opinion. The estimate of the situation in North Vietnam hewed very close to the opinions of the intelligence community already referred to. Here is how the analysis proceeded:

C. North Vietnam

> Hanoi's attitude towards negotiations has never been soft nor open-minded. Any concession on their part would involve an enormous loss of face. Whether or not the Polish and Burchett-Kosygin initiatives had much substance to them, it is clear that Hanoi's attitude currently is hard and rigid. They seem uninterested in a political settlement and determined to match US military expansion of the conflict. This change probably reflects these factors: (1) increased assurances of help from the Soviets received during Pham Van Dong's April trip to Moscow; (2) arrangements providing for the unhindered passage of materiel from the Soviet Union through China; and (3) a decision to wait for the results of the US elections in 1968. Hanoi appears to have concluded that she cannot secure her objectives at the conference table and has reaffirmed her strategy of seeking to erode our ability to remain in the South. The Hanoi leadership has apparently decided that it has no choice but to submit to the increased bombing. There continues to be no sign that the bombing has reduced Hanoi's will to resist or her ability to ship the necessary supplies south. Hanoi shows no signs of ending the large war and advising the VC to melt into the jungles. The North Vietnamese believe they are right; they consider the Ky regime to be puppets; they believe the world is with them and that the American public will not have staying power against them. Thus, although they may have factions in the regime favoring different approaches, they believe that, in the long run, they are stronger than we are for the purpose. They probably do not want to make significant concessions, and could not do so without serious loss of face. 100/

When added to the continuing difficulties in bringing the war in the South under control, the unchecked erosion of U.S. public support for the war, and the smoldering international disquiet about the need

and purpose of such U.S. intervention, it is not hard to understand the DPM's statement that, "This memorandum is written at a time when there appears to be no attractive course of action." 101/ Nevertheless, 'alternatives' was precisely what the DPM had been written to suggest. These were introduced with a recapitulation of where we stood militarily and what the Chiefs were recommending. With respect to the war in the North, the DPM stated:

> Against North Vietnam, an expansion of the bombing program (ROLLING THUNDER 56) was approved mid-April. Before it was approved, General Wheeler said, "The bombing campaign is reaching the point where we will have struck all worthwhile fixed targets except the ports. At this time we will have to address the requirement to deny the DRV the use of the ports." With its approval, excluding the port areas, no major military targets remain to be struck in the North. All that remains are minor targets, restrikes of certain major targets, and armed reconnaissance of the lines of communication (LOCs) -- and, under new principles, mining the harbors, bombing dikes and locks, and invading North Vietnam with land armies. These new military moves against North Vietnam, together with land movements into Laos and Cambodia, are now under consideration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. 102/

The broad alternative courses of action it considered were two:

> COURSE A. Grant the request and intensify military actions outside the South -- especially against the North. Add a minimum of 200,000 men -- 100,000 (2-1/3 division plus 5 tactical air squadrons) would be deployed in FY 1968, another 100,000 (2-1/3 divisions and 8 tactical air squadrons) in FY 1969, and possibly more later to fulfill the JCS ultimate requirement for Vietnam and associated world-wide contingencies. Accompanying these force increases (as spelled out below) would be greatly intensified military actions outside South Vietnam -- including in Laos and Cambodia but especially against the North.
>
> COURSE B. Limit force increases to no more than 30,000; avoid extending the ground conflict beyond the borders of South Vietnam; and concentrate the bombing on the infiltration routes south of 20°. Unless the military situation worsens dramatically, add no more than 9 battalions of the approved program of 87 battalions. This course would result in a level of no more than 500,000 men (instead of the currently planned 470,000) on December 31, 1968. (See Attachment IV for details.) A part of this course would be a termination of bombing in the Red River basin unless military necessity required it, and a concentration of all sorties in North Vietnam on the

infiltration routes in the neck of North Vietnam, between 17° and 20°. 103/

For the purposes of this paper, it is not necessary to develop the entire DPM argumentation of the pros and cons of the respective courses of action. It will suffice to include the sections dealing with the air war elements of the two options. (It should be noted, however, that the air and ground programs were treated as an integrated package in each option.) This then was the way the DPM developed the analysis of the war segment of course of action A:

Bombing Purposes and Payoffs

Our bombing of North Vietnam was designed to serve three purposes:

--(1) To retaliate and to lift the morale of the people in the South who were being attacked by agents of the North.

--(2) To add to the pressure on Hanoi to end the war.

--(3) To reduce the flow and/or to increase the cost of infiltrating men and materiel from North to South.

We cannot ignore that a limitation on bombing will cause serious psychological problems among the men, officers and commanders, who will not be able to understand why we should withhold punishment from the enemy. General Westmoreland said that he is "frankly dismayed at even the thought of stopping the bombing program." But this reason for attacking North Vietnam must be scrutinized carefully. We should not bomb for punitive reasons if it serves no other purpose -- especially if analysis shows that the actions may be counterproductive. It costs American lives; it creates a backfire of revulsion and opposition by killing civilians; it creates serious risks; it may harden the enemy.

With respect to added pressure on the North, it is becoming apparent that Hanoi may already have "written off" all assets and lives that might be destroyed by US military actions short of occupation of annihilation. They can and will hold out at least so long as a prospect of winning the "war of attrition" in the South exists. And our best judgment is that a Hanoi prerequisite to negotiations is significant retrenchment (if not complete

stoppage of US military actions against them -- at the least, a cessation of bombing. In this connection, Consul-General Rice (Hong Kong 7581, 5/1/67) said that, in his opinion, we cannot by bombing reach the critical level of pain in North Vietnam and that, "below that level, pain only increases the will to fight." Sir Robert Thompson said to Mr. Vance on April 28 that our bombing, particularly in the Red River Delta, "is unifying North Vietnam."

With respect to interdiction of men and materiel, it now appears that no combination of actions against the North short of destruction of the regime or occupation of North Vietnamese territory will physically reduce the flow of men and materiel below the relatively small amount needed by enemy forces to continue the war in the South. Our effort can and does have severe disruptive effects, which Hanoi can and does plan on and pre-stock against. Our efforts physically to cut the flow meaningfully by actions in North Vietnam therefore largely fail and, in failing, transmute attempted interdiction into pain, or pressure on the North (the factor discussed in the paragraph next above). The lowest "ceiling" on infiltration can probably be achieved by concentration on the North Vietnamese "funnel" south of 20° and on the Trail in Laos.

But what if the above analyses are wrong? Why not escalate the bombing and mine the harbors (and perhaps occupy southern North Vietnam) -- on the gamble that it would constrict the flow, meaningfully limiting enemy action in the South, and that it would bend Hanoi? The answer is that the costs and risks of the actions must be considered.

The primary costs of course are US lives: The air campaign against heavily defended areas costs us one pilot in every 40 sorties. In addition, an important but hard-to-measure cost is domestic and world opinion: There may be a limit beyond which many Americans and much of the world will not permit the United States to go. The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1000 non-combatants a week, while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not a pretty one. It could conceivably produce a costly distortion in the American national consciousness and in the world image of the United States -- especially if the damage to North Vietnam is complete enough to be "successful."

The most important risk, however, is the likely Soviet, Chinese and North Vietnamese reaction to intensified US air attacks, harbor-mining, and ground actions against North Vietnam.

Likely Communist Reactions

At the present time, no actions -- except air strikes and artillery fire necessary to quiet hostile batteries across the border -- are allowed against Cambodian territory. In Laos, we average 5000 attack sorties a month against the infiltration routes and base areas, we fire artillery from South Vietnam against targets in Laos, and we will be providing 3-man leadership for each of 20 12-man US-Vietnamese Special Forces teams that operate to a depth of 20 kilometers into Laos. Against North Vietnam, we average 8,000 or more attack sorties a month against all worthwhile fixed and LOC targets; we use artillery against ground targets across the DMZ; we fire from naval vessels at targets ashore and afloat up to 19°; and we mine their inland waterways, estuaries...up to 20°.

Intensified air attacks against the same types of targets, we would anticipate, would lead to no great change in the policies and reactions of the Communist powers beyond the furnishing of some new equipment and manpower.* China, for example, has not reacted to our striking MIG fields in North Vietnam, and we do not expect them to, although there are some signs of greater Chinese participation in North Vietnamese air defense.

Mining the harbors would be much more serious. It would place Moscow in a particularly galling dilemma as to how to preserve the Soviet position and prestige in such a disadvantageous place. The Soviets might, but probably would not, force a confrontation in Southeast Asia -- where even with minesweepers they would be at as great a military disadvantage as we were when they blocked the corridor to Berlin in 1961, but where their vital interest, unlike ours in Berlin (and in Cuba), is not so clearly at stake. Moscow in this case should be expected to send volunteers, including pilots, to North Vietnam; to provide some new and better weapons and equipment;

---

* The U.S. Intelligence Board on May 5 said that Hanoi may press Moscow for additional equipment and that there is a "good chance that under pressure the Soviets would provide such weapons as cruise missiles and tactical rockets" in addition to a limited number of volunteers or crews for aircraft or sophisticated equipment. Moscow, with respect to equipment, might provide better surface-to-air missiles, better anti-aircraft guns, the YAK-28 aircraft, anti-tank missiles and artillery, heavier artillery and mortars, coastal defense missiles with 25-50 mile ranges and 2200-pound warheads, KOMAR guided-missile coastal patrol boats with 20-mile surface-to-surface missiles, and some chemical munitions. She might consider sending medium jet bombers and fighter bombers to pose a threat to all of South Vietnam.

to consider some action in Korea, Turkey, Iran, the Middle East or, most likely, Berlin, where the Soviets can control the degree of crisis better; and to show across-the-board hostility toward the US (interrupting any on-going conversations on ABMs, non-proliferation, etc.). China could be expected to seize upon the harbor-mining as the opportunity to reduce Soviet political influence in Hanoi and to discredit the USSR if the Soviets took no military action to open the ports. Peking might read the harbor-mining as indicating that the US was going to apply military pressure until North Vietnam capitulated, and that this meant an eventual invasion. If so, China might decide to intervene in the war with combat troops and air power, to which we would eventually have to respond by bombing Chinese airfields and perhaps other targets as well. Hanoi would tighten belts, refuse to talk, and persevere -- as it could without too much difficulty. North Vietnam would of course be fully dependent for supplies on China's will, and Soviet influence in Hanoi would therefore be reduced. (Ambassador Sullivan feels very strongly that it would be a serious mistake, by our actions against the port, to tip Hanoi away from Moscow and toward Peking.)

To US ground actions in North Vietnam, we would expect China to respond by entering the war with both ground and air forces. The Soviet Union could be expected in these circumstances to take all actions listed above under the lesser provocations and to generate a serious confrontation with the United States at one or more places of her own choosing. 104/

The arguments against Course A were summed up in a final paragraph:

Those are the likely costs and risks of COURSE A. They are, we believe, both unacceptable and unnecessary. Ground action in North Vietnam, because of its escalatory potential, is clearly unwise despite the open invitation and temptation posed by enemy troops operating freely back and forth across the DMZ. Yet we believe that, short of threatening and perhaps toppling the Hanoi regime itself, pressure against the North will, if anything, harden Hanoi's unwillingness to talk and her settlement terms if she does. China, we believe, will oppose settlement throughout. We believe that there is a chance that the Soviets, at the brink, will exert efforts to bring about peace; but we believe also that intensified bombing and harbor-mining, even if coupled with political pressure from Moscow, will neither bring Hanoi to negotiate nor affect North Vietnam's terms. 105/

With Course A rejected, the DPM turned to consideration of the levelling-off proposals of Course B. The analysis of the de-escalated bombing program of this option proceeded in this manner:

> The bombing program that would be a part of this strategy is, basically, a program of concentration of effort on the infiltration routes near the south of North Vietnam. The major infiltration-related targets in the Red River basin having been destroyed, such interdiction is now best served by concentration of all effort in the southern neck of North Vietnam. All of the sorties would be flown in the area between 17° and 20°. This shift, despite possible increases in anti-aircraft capability in the area, should reduce the pilot and aircraft loss rates by more than 50 per cent. The shift will, if anything, be of positive military value to General Westmoreland while taking some steam out of the popular effort in the North.
>
> The above shift of bombing strategy, now that almost all major targets have been struck in the Red River basin, can to military advantage be made at any time. It should not be done for the sole purpose of getting Hanoi to negotiate, although that might be a bonus effect. To maximize the chances of getting that bonus effect, the optimum scenario would probably be (1) to inform the Soviets quietly that within a few days the shift would take place, stating no time limits but making no promises not to return to the Red River basin to attack targets which later acquire military importance (any deal with Hanoi is likely to be midwifed by Moscow); (2) to make the shift as predicted, without fanfare; and (3) to explain publicly, when the shift had become obvious, that the northern targets had been destroyed, that that had been militarily important, and that there would be no need to return to the northern areas unless military necessity dictated it. The shift should not be huckstered. Moscow would almost certainly pass its information on to Hanoi, and might urge Hanoi to seize the opportunity to de-escalate the war by talks or otherwise. Hanoi, not having been asked a question by us and having no ultimatum-like time limit, would be in a better posture to answer favorably than has been the case in the past. The military side of the shift is sound, however, whether or not the diplomatic spill-over is successful. 106/

In a section dealing with diplomatic and political considerations, the DPM outlined the political view of the significance of the struggle as seen by the US and by Hanoi. It then developed a conception of larger US interests in Asia around the necessity of containing China. This larger interest required settling the Vietnam

war into perspective as only one of three fronts that required U.S. attention (the other two being Japan-Korea and India-Pakistan). In the overall view, the DPM argued, long-run trends in Asia appeared favorable to our interests:

> The fact is that the trends in Asia today are running mostly for, not against, our interests (witness Indonesia and the Chinese confusion); there is no reason to be pessimistic about our ability over the next decade or two to fashion alliances and combinations (involving especially Japan and India) sufficient to keep China from encroaching too far. To the extent that our original intervention and our existing actions in Vietnam were motivated by the perceived need to draw the line against Chinese expansionism in Asia, our objective has already been attained, and COURSE B will suffice to consolidate it! 107/

With this perspective in mind the DPM went on to reconsider and restate U.S. objectives in the Vietnam contest under the heading "Commitment and Hopes Distinguished":

> The time has come for us to eliminate the ambiguities from our minimum objectives -- our commitments -- in Vietnam. Specifically, two principles must be articulated, and policies and actions brought in line with them: (1) Our commitment is only to see that the people of South Vietnam are permitted to determine their own future. (2) This commitment ceases if the country ceases to help itself.
>
> It follows that no matter how much we might hope for some things, our commitment is not:
>
> -- to expel from South Vietnam regroupees, who are South Vietnamese (though we do not like them),
>
> -- to ensure that a particular person or group remains in power, nor that the power runs to every corner of the land (though we prefer certain types and we hope their writ will run throughout South Vietnam),
>
> -- to guarantee that the self-chosen government is non-Communist (though we believe and strongly hope it will be), and
>
> -- to insist that the independent South Vietnam remain separate from North Vietnam (though in the short-run, we would prefer it that way).

(Nor do we have an obligation to pour in effort out of proportion to the effort contributed by the people of South Vietnam or in the face of coups, corruption, apathy or other indications of Saigon failure to cooperate effectively with us.)

We are committed to stopping or off setting the effect of North Vietnam's application of force in the South, which denies the people of the South the ability to determine their own future. Even here, however, the line is hard to draw. Propaganda and political advice by Hanoi (or by Washington) is presumably not barred; nor is economic aid or economic advisors. Less clear is the rule to apply to military advisors and war materiel supplied to the contesting factions.

The importance of nailing down and understanding the implications of our limited objectives cannot be overemphasized. It relates intimately to strategy against the North, to troop requirements and missions in the South, to handling of the Saigon government, to settlement terms, and to US domestic and international opinion as to the justification and the success of our efforts on behalf of Vietnam. 108/

This articulation of American purposes and commitments in Vietnam pointedly rejected the high blown formulations of U.S. objectives in NSAM 288 ("an independent non-communist South Vietnam," "defeat the Viet Cong," etc.), and came forcefully to grips with the old dilemma of the U.S. involvement dating from the Kennedy era: only limited means to achieve excessive ends. Indeed, in the following section of specific recommendations, the DPM urged the President to, "Issue a NSAM nailing down US policy as described herein." 109/ The emphasis in this scaled-down set of goals, clearly reflecting the frustrations of failure, was South Vietnamese self-determination. The DPM even went so far as to suggest that, "the South will be in position /sic/, albeit imperfect, to start the business of producing a full-spectrum government in South Vietnam." 110/ What this amounted to was a recommendation that we accept a compromise outcome. Let there be no mistake these were radical positions for a senior U.S. policy official within the Johnson Administration to take. They would bring the bitter condemnation of the Chiefs and were scarcely designed to flatter the President on the success of his efforts to date. That they represented a more realistic mating of U.S. strategic objectives and capabilities is another matter.

The scenario for the unfolding of the recommendations in the DPM went like this:

(4) June: Concentrate the bombing of North Vietnam on physical interdiction of men and materiel. This would mean terminating, except where the interdiction objective clearly dictates otherwise, all bombing north of 20° and improving interdiction as much as possible in the infiltration "funnel" south of 20° by concentration of sorties and by an all-out effort to improve detection devices, denial weapons, and interdiction tactics.

(5) July: Avoid the explosive Congressional debate and US Reserve call-up implicit in the Westmoreland troop request. Decide that, unless the military situation worsens dramatically, US deployments will be limited to Program 4-plus (which, according to General Westmoreland, will not put us in danger of being defeated, but will mean slow progress in the South). Associated with this decision are decisions not to use large numbers of US troops in the Delta and not to use large numbers of them in grass-roots pacification work.

(6) September: Move the newly elected Saigon government well beyond its National Reconciliation program to seek a political settlement with the non-Communist members of the NLF--- to explore a ceasefire and to reach an accommodation with the non-Communist South Vietnamese who are under the VC banner; to accept them as members of an opposition political party, and, if necessary, to accept their individual participation in the national government -- in sum, a settlement to transform the members of the VC from military opponents to political opponents.

(7) October: Explain the situation to the Canadians, Indians, British, UN and others, as well as nations now contributing forces, requesting them to contribute border forces to help make the inside-South Vietnam accommodation possible, and -- consistent with our desire neither to occupy nor to have bases in Vietnam -- offering to remove later an equivalent number of U.S. forces. (This initiative is worth taking despite its slim chance of success.) 111/

Having made the case for de-escalation and compromise, the DPM ended on a note of candor with a clear statement of its disadvantages and problems:

The difficulties with this approach are neither few nor small: There will be those who disagree with the circumscription of the US commitment (indeed, at one time or another, one US voice or another has told the Vietnamese, third countries, the US Congress, and the public of "goals" or "objectives"

that go beyond the above bare-bones statement of our "commitment"); some will insist that pressure, enough pressure, on the North can pay off or that we will have yielded a blue chip without exacting a price in exchange for our concentrating on interdiction; many will argue that denial of the larger number of troops will prolong the war, risk losing it and increase the casualties of the Americans who are there; some will insist that this course reveals weakness to which Moscow will react with relief, contempt and reduced willingness to help, and to which Hanoi will react by increased demands and truculence; others will point to the difficulty of carrying the Koreans, Filipinos, Australians and New Zealanders with us; and there will be those who point out the possibility that the changed US tone may cause a "rush for the exists" in Thailand, in Laos and especially inside South Vietnam, perhaps threatening cohesion of the government, morale of the army, and loss of support among the people. Not least will be the alleged impact on the reputation of the United States and of its President. Nevertheless, the difficulties of this strategy are fewer and smaller than the difficulties of any other approach. 112/

McNamara showed the draft to the President the same day it was completed, but there is no record of his reaction. 113/ It is worth noting, however, that May 19 was the day that U.S. planes struck the Hanoi power plant just one-mile north of the center of Hanoi. That the President did not promptly endorse the McNamara recommendations as he had on occasions in the past is not surprising. This time he faced a situation where the Chiefs were in ardent opposition to anything other than a significant escalation of the war with a callup of reserves. This put them in direct opposition to McNamara and his aides and created a genuine policy dilemma for the President who had to consider the necessity of keeping the military "on-board" in any new direction for the U.S. effort in Southeast Asia.

4. JCS, CIA and State Reactions

In the two weeks after McNamara's DPM, the Washington paper-mill must have broken all previous production records. The JCS in particular literally bombarded the Secretary with memoranda, many of which had voluminous annexes. Their direct comments on the DPM did not come until ten days after it was transmitted to the President. Before then, however, aware of the McNamara proposals, they forwarded a number of studies each of which was the occasion to advance their own arguments for escalation.

On May 20, the Chiefs sent the Secretary two memos, one urging expansion of operations against North Vietnam (which they requested

he pass on to the President) and the other on worldwide force posture. 114/ In the former they argued that the objectives of causing NVN to pay an increasing price for support of the war in the South and interdicting such support had only been partially achieved, because the "incremental and restrained" application of air power had enabled NVN to "anticipate US actions and accomodate to the slow increase in pressure." They noted that NVN had greatly increased its imports in 1966 and that record tonnages were continuing in 1967, and said they were concerned about the possible introduction of new weapons which could improve NVN's air and coastal defenses and pose an offensive threat to friendly forces and installations in SVN. They called for an immediate expansion of the bombing

> ...to include attacks on all airfields, all port complexes, all land and sea lines of communication in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, and mining of coastal harbors and coastal waters. 115/

The intensified bombing should be initiated during the favorable May-September weather season, before the onset of poor flying conditions over NVN. The bombing should include "target systems whose destruction would have the most far-reaching effect on NVN's capability to fight," such as electric power plants, ports, airfields, additional barracks and supply depots, and transportation facilities. The 30-mile circle around Hanoi should be shrunk to 10 miles and the 10-mile circle around Haiphong should be reduced to 4. Armed reconnaissance should be authorized throughout NVN and adjacent coastal waters except in populated areas, the China buffer zone, and the Hanoi/Haiphong circles. Inland waterways should be mined all the way up to the China buffer zone. 116/

On May 24 General Wheeler provided his views on two alternative courses of action in response to a request from Vance: (1) add 250,000 troops in SVN and intensify the bombing against NVN, and (2) hold the troop increase to 70,000 more and hold the bombing below 20° unless required by military necessity -- or, "if necessary to provide an opportunity for a negotiated settlement," stop it altogether. In his memorandum to the SecDef, to which a lengthy Joint Staff study of the alternatives was attached, General Wheeler said that a partial or complete cessation of strikes against NVN would allow NVN to recoup its losses, expand its stockpiles, and continue to support the war from a sanctuary. This would be costly to friendly forces and prolong the war. It could be interpreted as a NVN victory -- an "aerial Dien Bien Phu." 117/

The Chairman recommended instead the adoption of the JCS program for the conduct of the war, which included air strikes to reduce external aid to NVN, destroy its in-country resources, and disrupt movement into the South. The strikes would be designed to "isolate the

Hanoi-Haiphong logistic base" by interdicting the LOCs and concurrently attacking the "remaining reservoir of war-supporing resources" and the flow of men and materials to the South. The import of war-sustaining material would be obstructed and reduced, movement on rails, roads, and inland waterways would be degraded, "air terminals" would be disrupted, storage areas and stockpiles would be destroyed, and movement South would be curtailed. The campaign would impair NVN's ability to control, direct, and support the insurgency in the South. NVN would be under increasing pressure to seek a political rather than a military solution to the war. 118/

At the end of May the Chiefs sent the Secretary their response to the DPM. The Chairman sent McNamara a memo with a line-in, line-out factual correction of the DPM that did not comment on policy. Its most significant change was to raise the total troop figure in option A (Westy's 4-2/3 Division request) from 200,000 to 250,000. 119/ On the 1st of June the Secretary received the Chiefs collective views on the substantive policy recommendations of the DPM. As might have been expected, they were the stiffest kind of condemnation of the proposals. The JCS complained that the DPM passed off option A and its supporting arguments as the views of the military when in fact they were a distortion of those views,

> Course A is an extrapolation of a number of proposals which were recommended separately but not in combination or as interpreted in the DPM. The combination force levels, deployments, and military actions of Course A do not accurately reflect the positions or recommendations of COMUSMACV, CINCPAC, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The positions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which provide a better basis against which to compare other alternatives, are set forth in JCSM-218-67, JCSM 286-67, and JCSM-288-67. 120/

While they may have been annoyed at what they felt was a misrepresentation of their views on the best course of action for the U.S., the Chiefs were outraged by the compromising of U.S. objectives in the DPM:

> Objectives. The preferred course of action addressed in the DPM (Course B) is not consistent with NSAM 288 or with the explicit public statements of US policy and objectives enumerated in Part I, Appendix A, and in Appendix B. The DPM would, in effect, limit US objectives to merely guaranteeing the South Vietnamese the right to determine their own future on the one hand and offsetting the effect of North Vietnam's application of force in South Vietnam on the other. The United States would remain committed to these two objectives only so long as the South Vietnamese

continue to help themselves. It is also noted that the DPM contains no statement of military objectives to be achieved and that current US national, military, and political objectives are far more comprehensive and far-reaching. Thus:

a. The DPM fails to appreciate the full implications for the Free World of failure to achieve a successful resolution of the conflict in Southeast Asia.

b. Modification of present US objectives, as called for in the DPM, would undermine and no longer provide a complete rationale for our presence in South Vietnam or much of our effort over the past two years.

c. The positions of the more than 35 nations supporting the Government of Vietnam might be rendered untenable by such drastic changes in US policy. 121/

The strategy the DPM had proposed under option B was completely anathema to their view of how the war should be conducted. After having condemned the ground forces and strategy of the DPM as a recipe for a protracted and indecisive conflict, the Chiefs turned their guns on the recommended constriction of the air war to the DRV panhandle:

Military Strategy for Air/Naval War in the North. The DPM stresses a policy which would concentrate air operations in the North Vietnamese "funnel" south of 20°. The concept of a "funnel" is misleading, since in fact the communists are supplying their forces in South Vietnam from all sides, through the demilitarized zone, Laos, the coast, Cambodia, and the rivers in the Delta. According to the DPM, limiting the bombing to south of 20° might result in increased negotiation opportunities with Hanoi. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that such a new self-imposed restraint resulting from this major change in strategy would most likely have the opposite effect. The relative immunity granted to the LOCs and distribution system outside the Panhandle would permit: (a) a rapid recovery from the damage sustained to date; (b) an increase in movement capability; (c) a reduced requirement for total supplies in the pipeline; (d) a concentration of air defenses into the Panhandle; and (e) a release of personnel and equipment for increased efforts in infiltration of South Vietnam. Also, it would relieve the Hanoi leadership from experiencing at first hand the pressures of recent air operations which foreign observers have reported. Any possible political advantages gained by confining our interdiction campaign to the Panhandle would be offset decisively by allowing North

Vietnam to continue an unobstructed importation of war material. Further, it is believed that such a drastic reduction in the scale of air operations against North Vietnam could only result in the strengthening of the enemy's resolve to continue the war. No doubt the reduction in scope of air operations would also be considered by many as a weakening of US determination and a North Vietnamese victory in the air war over northern North Vietnam. The combination of reduced military pressures against North Vietnam with stringent limitations of our operations in South Vietnam, as suggested in Course B, appears even more questionable conceptually. It would most likely strengthen the enemy's ultimate hope of victory and lead to a redoubling of his efforts. 122/

Completing their rejection of the DPM's analysis, the Chiefs argued that properly explained a mobilization of the reserves and a full U.S. commitment to winning the war would be supported by the American public and would bolster not harm U.S. prestige abroad. The Chiefs did not think the likelihood of a Chinese intervention in response to their proposed actions was high and they completely discounted a Soviet entry into the hostilities in any active role. Summing up their alarm at the complete turnabout in U.S. policy suggested by the DPM, the Chiefs stated:

> Most of the foregoing divergencies between the DPM and the stated policies, objectives, and concepts are individually important and are reason for concern. However, when viewed collectively, an alarming pattern emerges which suggests a major realignment of US objectives and intentions in Southeast Asia without regard for the long-term consequences. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are not aware of any decision to retract the policies and objectives which have been affirmed by responsible officials many times in recent years. Thus, the DPM lacks adeqaute foundation for further consideration. 123/

With the expectation that the implementation of course B would result in a prolongation of the war, a reinforcing of Hanoi's belief in ultimate victory, and greatly increased costs for the U.S. in lives and treasure, the Chiefs recommended that:

> a. The DPM NOT be forwarded to the President.
>
> b. The US national objective as expressed in NSAM 288 be maintained, and the national policy and objectives for Vietnam as publicly stated by US officials be reaffirmed.

c. The military objective, concept, and strategy for the conduct of the war in Vietnam as stated in JCSM-218-67 be approved by the Secretary of Defense.

They were evidently unaware that the President had already seen the DPM ten days before. 124/

At about this time, the latter part of May, CIA also produced an estimate of the consequences of several different U.S. actions, including de-escalating the bombing. The actions considered were essentially those of the DPM: increase U.S. troop levels in SVN by another 200,000; intensify the bombing against military, industrial, and transportation targets; intensify the bombing plus interdict the harbors; or level off rather than increase troop commitments; and reduce rather than intensify the bombing. 125/

The tone of this estimate was not quite as favorable to further bombing or quite as unfavorable to de-escalation as the January CIA analysis had been. The estimate said that NVN was counting upon winning in the South, and was willing to absorb considerable damage in the North so long as the prospects were good there. More intensive bombing was therefore not likely to be the decisive element in breaking Hanoi's will and was not likely to force Hanoi to change its attitude toward negotiations:

> Short of a major invasion or nuclear attack, there is probably no level of air or naval actions against North Vietnam which Hanoi has determined in advance would be so intolerable that the war had to be stopped. 126/

The pressure would be greater if, in addition, NVN's ports were closed. If, as was most likely, the USSR did not accept the challenge and NVN was forced to rely primarily on rail transport across China, and if, as a consequence, the situation in NVN gradually deteriorated, it was "conceivable" that NVN would choose to negotiate or otherwise terminate the war; but even this was unlikely unless the war in the South was also deteriorating seriously. 127/

As for reducing the bombing by restricting it to southern NVN, it would depend upon the circumstances:

> In some circumstances North Vietnam would attribute this to the pressure of international opinion and domestic criticism, and it would confirm the view that the US would not persist. This view might be dispelled if the US made it clear that the bombing was being redirected to raise the cost of moving men and supplies into the South; and even more if the US indicated it intended to increase US forces in the South and take other action to block or reduce infiltration from North Vietnam. 128/

William Bundy at State drafted comments on the DPM on May 30 and circulated them at State and Defense. In his rambling and sometimes contradictory memo, Bundy dealt mainly with the nature and scope of the U.S. commitment -- as expressed in the DPM and as he saw it. He avoided any detailed analysis of the two military options and focused his attention on the strategic reasons for American involvement; the objectives we were after; and the terms under which we could consider closing down the operation. His memo began with his contention that:

> The gut point can almost be summed up in a pair of sentences. If we can get a reasonably solid GVN political structure and GVN performance at all levels, favorable trends could become really marked over the next 18 months, the war will be won for practical purposes at some point, and the resulting peace will be secured. On the other hand, if we do not get these results from the GVN and the South Vietnamese people, no amount of US effort will achieve our basic objective in South Viet-Nam--a return to the essential provisions of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and a reasonably stable peace for many years based on these Accords.

It is this view of the central importance of the South that dominates the remainder of Bundy's memo. But his own thinking was far from clear about how the U.S. should react to a South Vietnamese failure for at the end of it he wrote:

> None of the above decides one other question clearly implicit in the DOD draft. What happens if "the country ceases to help itself." If this happens in the literal sense, if South Viet-Nam performs so badly that it simply is not going to be able to govern itself or to resist the slightest internal pressure, then we would agree that we can do nothing to prevent this. But the real underlying question is to what extent we tolerate imperfection, even gross imperfection, by the South Vietnamese while they are still under the present grinding pressure from Hanoi and the NLF.
>
> This is a tough question. What do we do if there is a military coup this summer and the elections are aborted? There would then be tremendous pressure at home and in Europe to the effect that this negated what we were fighting for, and that we should pull out.
>
> But against such pressure we must reckon that the stakes in Asia will remain. After all, the military rule, even in

peacetime, in Thailand, Indonesia, and Burma. Are we to walk away from the South Vietnamese, at least as a matter of principle, simply because they failed in what was always conceded to be a courageous and extremely difficult effort to become a true democracy during a guerrilla war? 130/

Bundy took pointed issue with the DPM's reformulation of U.S. objectives. Starting with the DPM's discussion of U.S. larger interests in Asia, Bundy argued that:

> In Asian eyes, the struggle is a test case, and indeed much more black-and-white than even we ourselves see it. The Asian view bears little resemblance to the breast-beating in Europe or at home. Asians would quite literally be appalled -- and this includes India -- if we were to pull out from Viet-Nam or if we were to settle for an illusory peace that produced Hanoi control over all Viet-Nam in short order.
>
> In short, our effort in Viet-Nam in the past two years has not only prevented the catastrophe that would otherwise have unfolded but has laid a foundation for a progress that now appears truly possible and of the greatest historical significance. 131/

Having disposed of what he saw as a misinterpretation of Asian sentiment and U.S. interests there, Bundy now turned to the DPM's attempt to minimize the U.S. commitment in Vietnam. He opposed the DPM language because in his view it dealt too heavily with our military commitment to get NVA off the South Vietnamese back, and not enough with the equally important commitment to assure that "the political board in South Vietnam is not tilted to the advantage of the NLF." 132/ Bundy's conception of the U.S. commitment was twofold:

> --To prevent any imposed political role for the NLF in South Vietnamese political life, and specifically the coalition demanded by point 3 of Hanoi's Four Points, or indeed any NLF part in government or political life that is not safe and acceptable voluntarily to the South Vietnamese Government and people.
>
> --To insist in our negotiating position that "regroupees," that is, people originally native to South Viet-Nam who went North in 1954 and returned from 1959 onward, should be expelled as a matter of principle in the settlement. Alternatively, such people could remain in South Viet-Nam if, but only if, the South Vietnamese Government itself was prepared to receive them back under a reconciliation concept, which would provide in essence that they must be prepared to accept peaceful

political activity under the Constitution (as the reconciliation appeal now does). This latter appears to be the position of the South Vietnamese Government, which--as Tran Van Do has just stated in Geneva--argues that those sympathetic to the Northern system of government should go North, while those prepared to accept the Southern system of government may stay in the South. Legally, the first alternative is sound, in that Southerners who went North in 1954 became for all legal and practical purposes Northern citizens and demonstrated their allegiance. But if the South Vietnamese prefer the second alternative, it is in fact exactly comparable to the regroupment provisions of the 1954 Accords, and can legally be sustained. But in either case the point is that the South Vietnamese are not obliged to accept as citizens people whose total pattern of conduct shows that they would seek to overthrow the structure of government by force and violence. 133/

The remainder of Bundy's comments were addressed to importance of this last point. The U.S. could not consider withdrawing its forces until not only the North Vietnamese troops but also the regroupees had returned to the North. Nowhere in his comments does he specifically touch on the merits of the two military options, but his arguments all seem to support the tougher of the two choices (his earlier support of restricting the bombing thus seems paradoxical). He was, it is clear, less concerned with immediate specific decisions on a military phase of the war than with the long term consequences of this major readjustment of American sights in Southeast Asia.

The only other reaction on the DPM from the State Department was a belated memo from Katzenbach to Vance on June 8. Katzenbach's criticisms were more focused on specific language and conclusions than Bundy's. In general they did not reject the analysis of the DPM, however. With respect to the bombing, Katzenbach observed that, "...we ought to consider concentrating on infiltration routes throughout North Viet-Nam and leaving 'strategic' targets, particularly those in urban areas alone." 134/ This departed slightly from the Bundy-Rostow-McNaughton thesis of confining the bombing to the panhandle infiltration network. As to the DPM's effort to circumscribe U.S. objectives in the war, Katzenbach achieved a new low in understatement, "I agree with the arguments for limited objectives. But these are not easy to define." 135/ In short, if the intent of the DOD draft had been to precipitate an Administration-wide debate on the fundamental issues of the U.S. involvement, it had certainly achieved its purpose.

5. The McNamara Bombing Options

Long before McNamara received these views from the Chiefs, CIA and State, however, he had requested comments from several quarters on two possible bombing programs. Perhaps reflecting a cool Presidential reaction to the DPM proposals, Secretary McNamara, on May 20, asked the JCS, the CIA, and the two military services involved in the ROLLING THUNDER program, the Air Force and the Navy, to study the question. He referred to the "controversy" surrounding the program, said that several alternatives had been suggested, and asked for an analysis of the two most promising ones:

> (1) Concentrate on LOCs in the Panhandle area, Route Packages 1, 2, and 3, and terminate bombing in the rest of North Vietnam unless there is reconstruction of important fixed targets destroyed by prior raids or unless new military actions appear; or
>
> (2) Terminate bombing against fixed targets not directly associated with LOCs in Route Packages 6a and 6b [the northeast quadrant] and simultaneously expand armed reconnaissance in Route Packages 6a and 6b by authorizing strikes against all LOCs except within 8 miles of the centers of Hanoi and Haiphong. This would undoubtedly require continuous strikes against MIG aircraft on all airfields. 136/

Under alternative (2) above, the Secretary provided two alternate assumptions: (a) that strikes against the ports and port facilities were precluded, and (b) that every effort was made to deny importation from the sea. 137/

The Secretary asked each addressee to analyze the two main alternatives plus any others they considered worth discussing. He asked, for each of the alternatives, the effect it would have on reducing the flow of men and material to SVN, on losses of pilots and aircraft, and on the risk of "increased military pressure" from the USSR or China. He also asked that the studies be carried out independently, and requested reports by 1 June. 138/

The CIA reply, a "Dear Bob" memo from Helms, arrived as requested on June 1st. In his cover memo Helms stated that the goal of interdicting supplies to the South was essentially beyond reach:

> In general, we do not believe that any of the programs presented in your memorandum is capable of reducing the flow of military and other essential goods sufficiently to affect the war in the South or to decrease Hanoi's determination to persist in the war. 139/

Based on the results of ROLLING THUNDER to date and on the nature of the logistic target system, CIA said, concentrating the bombing in southern NVN would undoubtedly increase the costs of maintaining the LOCs and degrade their capacity "somewhat further," but could not be expected to reduce the flow of men and materiel below present levels. This was because of the excess capacity of the road network and NVN's impressive ability to maintain and improve it. It cited the example of the traffic from NVN through Mu Gia pass into Laos. During the 1965-1966 dry season, truck traffic on the route averaged 28 trucks or about 85 tons of supplies a day, a level of traffic which used it to less than 20 percent of its then theoretical capacity of 450 tons a day, and, since the route had been improved, less than 10 percent of its present capacity of 740 tons a day. The rest of the road network had also been expanded in spite of the bombing. Some 340 miles of alternative routes were built in southern NVN during 1966 and more than 400 miles of new roads were constructed in Laos. Even if the bombing could reduce road capacities by 50 percent, the capacity remaining would still be at least five times greater than required to move supplies at the current rate. In summary:

> ...the excess capacity on the road networks in Route Packages I, II, and III provides such a deep cushion that it is almost certain that no interdiction program can neutralize the logistics target system to the extent necessary to reduce the flow of men and supplies to South Vietnam below their present levels. 140/

As to concentrating the bombing north instead of south of 20°, neither the open or the closed port variants "could obstruct or reduce North Vietnam's import of military or war-supporting materials sufficiently to degrade its ability to carry on the war." NVN now had the capacity to import about 14,000 tons of goods a day over its main rail, road, and inland water routes; and it currently imported about 5,300 tons a day. An optimum interdiction program against all means of land and water transportation could "at most" reduce transport capacity to about 3,900 tons a day, or about 25 percent below present levels. However, if NVN eliminated all but essential military and economic goods, it would need only about 3000 tons a day, a volume of traffic which could still be handled comfortably. 141/

The CIA also went into some detail on Soviet and Chinese responses to bombing north versus south of 20°. The Chinese would attribute any cutback to a lack of will in the face of rising domestic and international criticism and would continue to egg NVN on. The Soviets would construe it in this light, also, but would be relieved that the U.S. had broken the cycle of escalation, and if the U.S. accompanied the cutback with political initiatives toward negotiations might even press Hanoi to respond. As to Hanoi,

Whether or not Hanoi responded to these initiatives would depend on its view of the military outlook in the South, and on whether it believed that a move toward negotiation would bring success nearer. 142/

Bombing north of 20° without closing the ports would not bring on new or different Chinese or Soviet responses except for the attacks on airfields. These might lead to greater Chinese involvement, especially if NVN transferred air defense operations to bases in China. If the ports were closed, however, there would be a direct challenge to the USSR. While it was unlikely that the USSR (or China, for that matter) would undertake new military actions, it would make every effort to continue supplying NVN and would attempt to put maximum political pressures on the U.S. China's leverage with Hanoi would grow, and China would urge Hanoi to continue the war more vigorously than ever. 143/

The formal JCS response to the SecDef's questions on bombing north versus south of the 20th parallel, quite apart from troop levels, was submitted on 2 June. It was predictably cool toward restricting the bombing to southern NVN, a good deal warmer toward continuing the bombing in northern NVN, and warmest by far toward proceeding from there to close the ports. 144/

The JCS opposed any cutback on bombing north of the 20th parallel on grounds that it would decrease the effectiveness of interdiction and make things easier for NVN. It would reduce the distance over which the flow of men and supplies was subject to attack. It would provide NVN free and rapid access down to Thanh Hoa, decreasing transport time, rolling stock requirements, pipeline assets, and man-hours for moving supplies South. It would release resources currently required north of 20°. It would enable NVN to accelerate the import of weapons and munitions, strengthen the Panhandle defenses, and increase U.S. attrition. The U.S. action would be interpreted as yielding to pressure and weakening resolve; NVN would be sure to claim victory and press for greater concessions as a price for any settlement. 145/

The JCS also argued that terminating strikes against non-LOC targets in the north and switching to expanded armed reconnaissance there would have the disadvantage of not maintaining the level of damage achieved with respect to fixed installations and industry, but would have the advantages of adding to NVN's difficulties -- from interruptions of the LOCs, having to resort to inferior means of transport, shifting its management and labor resources, and the like. However, leaving the ports open would permit NVN to absorb the damage and adjust to the campaign. With the ports open, NVN could continue to handle imports even if the LOC strikes were successful. With the ports closed, on the other hand, sustained attack on the roads and railroads would become militarily

profitable, and the concurrent and sustained interdiction of imports would become possible. 146/

A cryptic pencil note on copy 4 of this JCSM initialled by McNaughton indicated, "all incorporated in my 6/3/67 draft," and listed "Main issues" as "(1) Total pressure (2) pilot losses (3) U.S. 'failure'." 147/ It is hard to know exactly what this could mean since the JCS position was certainly not being adopted by the Secretary. Moreover, there is no record of a 3 June draft. We will discuss a later draft below, but it does not endorse the JCS position.

The Secretary of the Navy responded to Secretary McNamara's questions with an attempt to construct models of the alternative north and south of 20° target systems and war game attacks against them. It concluded that an interdiction effort in southern NVN concentrated on specified areas where traffic was already constricted by the terrain would be more effective than the current program, "but by an uncertain increment over an undefinable base." U.S. losses would be lower initially, but would rise in time because NVN could be expected to redeploy anti-aircraft defenses south. The manpower strain on NVN would not be as at present, however, with the cessation of attacks on the high-value targets in the northern part of the country. 148/

The Navy analysis also concluded that a greater interdiction effort north of 20°, without closing the ports, could not be carried out with available resources "in a manner producing results better than the present effort." The program would create greater demand for repair and bypass construction, but it was not clear that it would have a major effect on NVN's capability to import goods and ship them to SVN. This alternative would be the most expensive in U.S. aircraft and aircrews and would provide the least return in reducing NVN supplies to SVN. 149/

Closing the ports in addition to stepping up the armed reconnaissance effort in northern NVN would have a substantial effect on imports at first but in time NVN could switch to other LOCs. The cost would be mainly in efficiency. Reducing imports below NVN's minimum requirements was probably beyond the current capability of the bombing campaign. 150/

The Air Force response to Secretary McNamara was given on 3 June. Cutting back the bombing to below the 20th parallel would permit NVN to increase the input of men and supplies at the top of the "funnel" with the same or less effort than it was now expending, and would result in a greater inflow into SVN. U.S. losses might go down temporarily, but NVN would shift its anti-aircraft resources southward, and losses would rise again. The cutback would reduce the risk of Chinese or Soviet involvement and might conceivably even start a process

of mutual de-escalation, but it was more likely to be taken as a sign of U.S. weakness and encourage Hanoi to take a still stronger stand. 151/

Expanded armed reconnaissance in northern NVN, especially if coupled with denying or inhibiting importation through Haiphong,

> ...would have a substantial effect on NVN economy and logistic net and would...force enough additional diversion of resources to reduce NVN infiltration and support. 152/

However, closure of Haiphong -- which might not shut off all access from the sea -- would carry unacceptable risks of wider war, an allout attack on the railroads and roads from China was preferable, and would still complicate NVN's logistic problems. Still more preferable, on balance, was maintaining the present level of operations:

> Because closure of Haiphong is probably not acceptable, what would otherwise be a reasonable price in terms of aircraft loss for greatly reducing the inflow along the northern roads and railroads becomes an unreasonable loss in the presence of a possible increase of sea import....This option is not, without Haiphong port denial, an optimum use of airpower. It is a war of attrition, forced by the risk of a wider war or other actions by the Soviets if we do try to close Haiphong. In that sense, it is analogous to the ground war in the South....153/

On June 9, Secretary of the Air Force Brown sent McNamara a supplemental memo in which he tried to make a case for interdiction bombing based on a statistical demonstration that it was the most important factor in explaining the difference between uninterdicted infiltration capability and actual infiltration. 154/

Thus, the responses to the SecDef's questions on bombing north versus south of the 20th parallel divided about evenly, with the JCS and the Air Force strongly opposed to a cutback to 20° and backing the more escalatory route, and the Navy and CIA concluding that interdiction either north or south was a difficult if not impossible goal but that a cutback would cost little.

6. The June 12th DPM

The Defense Department having fully explored the various air war options, attention within the Administration again focused on preparing a memorandum to the President, this time on strategy against North Vietnam alone. But other events and problems were intervening to consume the

time and energies of the Principles in early June. On June 5, the four-day Arab-Israeli War erupted to dominate all other problems during that week. The intensive diplomatic activity at the UN by the U.S. would heavily engage the President's attention and eventually lead to the Summit meeting with Soviet Premier Kosygin in Glassboro, N.J. later in the month. In the actual war in Vietnam, the one-day truce on Buddha's birthday, May 23rd, had produced such gross enemy violations that some intensification of the conflict ensued afterwards. Nevertheless in late May, Admiral Sharp was informed of the reimposition of the 10-mile prohibited zone around Hanoi. His response was predictable:

> We have repeatedly sought to obtain authority for a systematic air campaign directed against carefully selected targets whose destruction and constant disruption would steadily increase the pressure on Hanoi. It seems unfortunate that just when the pressure is increasing by virtue of such an air campaign, and the weather is optimum over northern NVN, we must back off. 155/

On June 11, however, the Kep airfield was struck for the first time with ten MIGs reportedly destroyed or damaged. Prior to that, on June 2, an unfortunate case of bad aiming had resulted in a Soviet ship, the Turkestan, being struck by cannon fire from a U.S. plane trying to silence a North Vietnamese AAA battery. The Soviets lodged a vigorous protest with the U.S., but we initially denied the allegation only to acknowledge the accident later (on June 20 to be exact just three days before the Glassboro meeting and presumably to improve its atmosphere).

In Washington, in addition to the time consuming Middle East crisis, Administration officials were still far from consensus on the question of whether to add another major increment to U.S. ground forces in South Vietnam and to call up the reserves to reconstitute depleted forces at home and elsewhere. Indeed, as we shall see, it appears that the troop question went unresolved longer than the air strategy problem. The issues must have been discussed in a general review of the Vietnam question at a meeting at State on June 8 in Katzenbach's office, but no record of the discussion was preserved. A two-page outline of positions entitled "Disagreements" and preserved in McNaughton's files does, however, give a very good idea of where the principle Presidential advisers stood on the major issues at that point:

DISAGREEMENTS -

1. Westmoreland-McNamara on whether Course A would end the war sooner.

2. Vance-CIA on the ability of NVN to meet force increases in the South.

3. Wheeler-Vance on the military effectiveness of cutting back bombing to below the 20th Parallel, and on whether it would save US casualties.

4. CIA believes that the Chinese might not intervene if an invasion of NVN did not seem to threaten the Hanoi regime. Vance states an invasion would cause Chinese intervention. Vance believes that the Chinese could decide to intervene if the ports were mined; CIA does not mention this possibility.

5. CIA and the Mission disagree with Vance on whether we have achieved the cross-over point and, more broadly, on how well the "big war" is going. One CIA analysis, contradicted in a latter [sic] CIA statement, expresses the view that the enemy's strategic position has improved over the past year.

6. CIA-INR on whether Hanoi seeks to wear us down (CIA) or seeks more positive victories in the South (INR).

7. INR believes that the bombing has had a greater effect than does CIA.

8. Vance and CIA say we have struck all worthwhile targets in NVN except the ports. Wheeler disagrees.

9. CIA cites inflationary pressures and the further pressure that would be caused by Course A. Vance says that these pressures are under control and could be handled if Course A were adopted.

10. Rostow believes that a call-up of reserves would show Hanoi that we mean business and have more troops coming--Vance believes that a reserve call-up would lead to divisive debate which would encourage Hanoi. Would not the call-up indicate that we had manpower problems?

11. Bundy-Vance disagreements on the degree to which we have contained China, whether our commitment ends if the SVNamese don't help themselves, the NLF role in political life, regroupees, and our and Hanoi's rights to lend support to friendly forces in SVN after a settlement. 156/

Another indication of what may have transpired in the June 8 meeting is an unsigned outline for a policy paper (probably done in Bundy's office) in McNaughton's files. This ambitious document suggests that U.S. goals in the conflict include leaving behind a stable, democratic government; leaving behind conditions of stable peace in Asia; persuading the DRV to give up its aggression; and neutralizing the internal security threat in the South. All this to be done without creating an American satellite, generating anti-American sentiment, destroying the social fabric in the South or alienating other countries. 157/ Strategies considered to achieve the objectives included the Westmoreland plan for 200,000 men with a reserve callup (10 disadvantages listed against it); limiting the increase to 30,000 men but without a reserve callup; "enough US forces to operate effectively against provincial main force units and to reinforce I Corps and the DMZ area," with a reserve callup; and no change from current force levels. Options against North Vietnam included: (A) expanded air attacks on military, industrial and LOC targets including mining the harbors; (B) stopping the bombing north of the 20th parallel except for restrikes; (C) invasion; and (D) the barrier. The section ends cryptically, "Our over-all strategy must consist of a combination of these." 158/ The last paragraph of the outline deals with the intended strategy against the North:

> ...the object is to cut the North off from the South as much as possible, and to shake Hanoi from its obdurate position. Concentrate on shaking enemy morale in both the South and North by limiting Hanoi's ability to support the forces in South Viet-Nam.
>
> a. A barrier, if it will work, or
>
> b. Concentrate bombing on lines of communication throughout NVN, thus specifically concentrating on infiltration but not running into the problem we have had and will have with bombing oriented towards 'strategic' targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area. By continuing to bomb throughout NVN in this manner we would indicate neither a lessening of will nor undue impatience. 159/

The broad outlines of the eventual decision on bombing that would emerge from this prolonged debate are contained in this cryptic outline in early June.

At Defense, McNaughton began once again to pull together a DPM for McNamara, this time devoted exclusively to the air war. A June 12 version preserved in McNaughton's files appears to be the final

form it took, although whether it was shown to the President is not clear. McNaughton's draft rejected the more fulsome expressions of the U.S. objective advanced by the Chiefs and Bundy in favor of following a more closely defined set of goals:

> The limited over-all US objective, in terms of the narrow US commitment and not of wider US preferences, is to take action (so long as they continue to help themselves) to see that the people of South Vietnam are permitted to determine their own future. Our commitment is to stop (or generously to offset when we cannot stop) North Vietnamese military intervention in the South, so that "the board will not be tilted" against Saigon in an internal South Vietnamese contest for control...The sub-objectives, at which our bombing campaign in the North has always been aimed, are these:
>
> --(1) To retaliate and to lift the morale of the people in the South, including Americans, who are being attacked by agents of the North;
>
> --(2) To add to the pressure on Hanoi to end the war;
>
> --(3) To reduce the flow and/or to increase the cost of infiltrating men and materiel from North to South. 160/

In light of these objectives, three alternative air war programs were examined in the memo. They were:

> ALTERNATIVE A. Intensified attack on the Hanoi-Haiphong logistical base. Under this Alternative, we would continue attacks on enemy installations and industry and would conduct an intensified, concurrent and sustained effort against all elements of land, sea and air lines of communication in North Vietnam -- especially those entering and departing the Hanoi-Haiphong areas. Foreign shipping would be "shouldered out" of Haiphong by a series of air attacks that close in on the center of the port complex. The harbor and approaches would be mined, forcing foreign shipping out into the nearby estuaries for offloading by lighterage. Intensive and systematic armed reconnaissance would be carried out against the roads and railroads from China (especially the northeast railroad), against coastal shipping and coastal transshipment locations, and against all other land lines of communications. The eight major operational airfields would be systematically attacked, and the deep-water ports of Cam Pha and Hon Gai would be struck or mined as required. ALTERNATIVE A could be pursued full-force between now and September (thereafter the onset of unfavorable weather conditions would seriously impair operations).

ALTERNATIVE B. Emphasis on the infiltration routes south of the 20th Parallel. Under this alternative, the dominant emphasis would be, not on preventing material from flowing into North Vietnam (and thus not on "economic pressure on the regime), but on preventing military men and materiel from flowing out of the North into the South. We would terminate bombing in the Red River basin except for occasional sorties (perhaps 3%) -- those necessary to keep enemy air defenses and damage-repair crews positioned there and to keep important fixed targets knocked out. The same total number of sorties envisioned under ALTERNATIVE A--together with naval gunfire at targets ashore and afloat and mining of inland waterways, estuaries and coastal waters -- would be concentrated in the neck of North Vietnam, between 17° and 20°, through which all land infiltration must pass and in which the "extended battle zone" north of the DMZ lies. The effort would be intensive and sustained, designed especially to saturate choke points and to complement similar new intensive interdiction efforts in adjacent areas in Laos and near the 17th Parallel inside South Vietnam.

ALTERNATIVE C. Extension of the current program. This alternative would be essentially a refinement of the currently approved program and therefore a compromise between ALTERNATIVE A and ALTERNATIVE b. Under it, while avoiding attacks within the 10-mile prohibited zone around Hanoi and strikes at or mining of the ports, we would conduct a heavy effort against all other land, sea, and air lines of communication. Important fixed targets would be kept knocked out; intensive, sustained and systematic armed reconnaissance would be carried out against the roads and railroads and coastal shipping throughout the country; and the eight major airfields would be systematically attacked. The total number of sorties would be the same as under the other two alternatives. 161/

The positions of the various members of the Defense establishment with respect to the three alternatives were:

Mr. Vance and I recommend ALTERNATIVE B.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend ALTERNATIVE A.

The Secretary of the Navy recommends ALTERNATIVE B.

The Secretary of the Air Force recommends ALTERNATIVE C modified to add some targets (especially LOC targets) to the present list and to eliminate others.

The Director of the CIA does not make a recommendation. The CIA judgment is that none of the alternatives is capable of decreasing Hanoi's determination to persist in the war or of reducing the flow of goods sufficiently to affect the war in the South. 162/

The arguments for and against the three alternatives were developed at considerable length in the memo. The summary gave the following rationale for the McNamara-Vance position:

In the memorandum, Mr. Vance and I:

--Oppose the JCS program (ALTERNATIVE A) on grounds that it would neither substantially reduce the flow of men and supplies to the South nor pressure Hanoi toward settlement, that it would be costly in American lives and in domestic and world opinion, and that it would run serious risks of enlarging the war into one with the Soviet Union and China, leaving us a few months from now more frustrated and with almost no choice but even further escalation.

--Oppose mere refinement of the present program (ALTERNATIVE C) on grounds that it would involve most of the costs and some of the risks of ALTERNATIVE A with less chance that ALTERNATIVE A of either interdicting supplies or moving Hanoi toward settlement.

--Recommend concentration of the bulk of our efforts on infiltration routes south of 20° (ALTERNATIVE B) because this course would interdict supplies as effectively as the other alternatives, would cost the least in pilots' lives, and would be consistent with effort to move toward negotiations. 163/

These views were stated in somewhat expanded form in in the concluding paragraphs of the DPM:

I am convinced that, within the limits to which we can go with prudence, "strategic" bombing of North Vietnam will at best be unproductive. I am convinced that mining the ports would not only be unproductive but very costly in domestic and world support and very dangerous -- running high risks of enlarging the war as the program is carried out, frustrated and with no choice but to escalate further. At the same time, I am doubtful that bombing the infiltration routes north or south of 20° will put a meaningful

ceiling on men or materiel entering South Vietnam. Nevertheless, I recommend ALTERNATIVE B (which emphasizes bombing the area between 17° and 20°) because (1) it holds highest promise of serving a military purpose, (2) it will cost the least in pilots' lives, and (3) it is consistent with efforts to move toward negotiations.

Implicit in the recommendation is a conviction that nothing short of toppling the Hanoi regime will pressure North Vietnam to settle so long as they believe they have a chance to sin the "war of attrition" in the South, a judgment that actions sufficient to topple the Hanoi regime will put us into war with the Soviet Union and China, and a belief that a shift to ALTERNATIVE B can be timed and handled in such a way as to gain politically while not endangering the morale of our fighting men. 164/

There is no evidence as to whether the President saw this memo or not. If he did, any decision on bombing was probably deferred to be made in conjunction with the decision on ground forces. Moreover, the middle of June was heavily taken up with the question of whether or not to meet Kosygin, and once that was decided with preparing for the confrontation. Therefore, no decision on bombing was forthcoming during June. What is significant is the coalescence of civilian opinion against the JCS recommended escalation.

7. The RT 57 Decision -- No Escalation

There is some evidence that in spite of the burden of other problems, some attention was also being devoted to the possibility of negotiations and U.S. positions in the event they should occur. 165/ Bundy had had an extensive interview with the recently defected Chargé of the Hungarian Embassy in Washington who had confirmed that at no time during any of the past peace efforts with the DRV had there been any North Vietnamese softening of its position. 166/ This view of the current situation was challenged, however, by INR in a report at mid-month. They noted that, "Several recent indicators suggest that Hanoi may again be actively reviewing the issue of negotiations. Some of the indicators show possible flexibility; others show continuing hardness." 167/ In retrospect these were hardly more than straws in the wind. In early July they would become more immediate, however, with a Canadian proposal for redemilitarization of the DMZ and a bombing halt (see below). The June review of the situation no doubt was done with a view to determining what possibilities might exist if the President met with Kosygin as he eventually did.

On June 17, Ambassador Bunker added his voice to the chorus already doubting the effectiveness of the bombing in interdicting the flow of North Vietnamese support for the war. In his first major pronouncement on the subject he told Rusk in an "eyes only" cable:

> Aerial bombardment has been helpful in greatly increasing the difficulties of infiltration by the NVN forces and in keeping them supplied. It has also destroyed or damaged a large amount of the NVN infrastructure. Aerial bombardment, however, though extremely important, has neither interdicted infiltration nor broken the will of the NVN and it is doubtful that it can accomplish either. 168/

Continuing his analysis, he stated:

> It seems apparent therefore that the crux of the military problem is to choke off NVN infiltration.
>
> * * * * *
>
> When the infiltration is choked off, it should be possible to suspend bombings at least for a period and thereby determine whether there is substance to the statement in many quarters that Hanoi would then come to negotiations. If the bombings were stopped it would at least call their bluff. 169/

In the remainder of this cable he advanced the arguments for an anti-infiltration barrier even in view of the political problems it would create. Disillusioned, like so many others, with the bombing, he pinned his hopes on this untried military alternative to "choke off the infiltration."

A few days later, CINCPAC, undoubtedly aware of the air war debate in Washington and the direction in which it was tending, sent a long cable to the Chiefs evaluating the results of recent months in the ROLLING THUNDER program, results which argued for intensification of the bombing he felt. Reviewing the history of the bombing since February, he noted the curtailment of sorties during the early spring because of bad weather but stated that, "Starting in late April and over a period of five weeks, the air campaign in the NE quadrant increased the level of damage in that area and the consequent stress on the Hanoi government more than during the entire previous ROLLING THUNDER program." 170/ In an apparent attempt to head off the arguments for limiting the bombing to below the 20th parallel, Admiral Sharp pointed out that the significant achievements in the NE quadrant in the previous two months had not been at the expense of sorties in the panhandle and, perhaps more importantly,

had experienced a declining aircraft loss rate compared with the previous year. The numbers of trucks, railroad cars, boats, etc., destroyed were offered as evidence of the effectiveness of bombing in interdicting the flow of supplies. No mention is made of the undiminished rate of that flow. The mining of the rivers south of 20° is also judged a success, although no evidence is offered to support the statement. After fulminating about the reimposition of the 10-mile restriction around Hanoi, CINCPAC notes the significant achievements of the last months -- all in terms of increased DRV defensive activity (MIG, SAM, AAA, etc.). In a peroration worthy of Billy Mitchell, CINCPAC summed up the achievements of the recent past and made the case for intensification:

> ...we believe that our targeting systems concept, our stepped up combat air effort over the Northeast and the continued high sortie rate applied against enemy infiltration is paying off. With the exception of RT 55 and RT 56, air power for the first time began to realize the sort of effectiveness of which it is capable. This effectiveness can be maximized if we can be authorized to strike the many important targets remaining.
>
> We are at an important point in this conflict. We have achieved a position, albeit late in the game, from which a precisely executed and incisive air campaign against all the target systems will aggregate significant interrelated effects against the combined military, political, economic, and psychological posture of North Vietnam. In our judgment the enemy is now hurting and the operations to which we attribute this impact should be continued with widest latitude in planning and execution in the months of remaining good weather. 171/

CINCPAC's arguments, however, were largely falling on deaf ears. The debate had resolved itself as between options B and C. On July 3, the energetic Secretary of the Air Force, Harold Brown, sent McNamara another long detailed memo supporting his preference for alternative C. Convinced that the bombing did have some utility in northern North Vietnam, Brown had sent supplementary memos to his 3 June basic reply on 9 and 16 June. His July memo compared the objectives of the two alternatives and noted that the only difference was that alternative C would somewhat impede the import of supplies into North Vietnam and would allot 20% of the available sorties north of 20° compared with 3% under alternative B. 172/ The principle arguments for maintaing the northern attack were: (1) the fact that a substantial erosion of interdiction effectiveness would occur if it was curtailed; (2) the political irreversibility of de-escalation (and the current lack of diplomatic

reason for such an initiative); and (3) the declining loss rates of aircraft and pilots in Route Packages 4-6. The appeal of Brown's analysis, however, for McNamara must have clearly been its reliance on statistical data -- hard facts. This is now Brown argued that ending the northern sorties would reduce interdiction effectiveness:

> ...the increase in weight of effort south of 20° from transferring 1500 sorties out of the area north of 20° is only about 21% (or about 13% increase of the total effort south of 20° and in Laos). Even if there is no law of diminishing returns south of 20°, for that overall increase to compensate the decrease in effect north of 20° would require that the former be presently five times as effective as the latter. I believe there would be diminishing returns south of 20°, because there are no targets south of 20° which are now not struck for lack of availability of sorties. North of 20° the question is a different one. The damage to LOCs can be increased by increasing the weight of effort (and this has been done in the past few months). What we have not been able to measure well is the incremental effort this forces on the North Vietnamese, or the extent to which they could and would use it to increase infiltration if they did not have to expend it on keeping supplies flowing to the 20° line.

> It can be argued that because the flow into SVN is a larger fraction of what passes through Route Packages I-III than it is of what passes through Route Packages IV-VI, an amount of materiel destroyed in the former area has more effect than the same amount destroyed in the latter. This is true, but to argue that sorties in the northern region are therefore less important overlooks the fact that this very gradient is established largely by the attrition throughout the LOC. In analogous transport or diffusion problems of this sort in the physical world (e.g., the diffusion of heat) it is demonstrable that interferences close to the source have a greater effect, not a lesser effect, than the same interferences close to the output. If the attacks on the LOCs north of 20° stopped, the flow of goods past 20° could easily be raised by far more than 20% and the 20% increase of attack south of 20° would nowhere near compensate for this.

> One interesting observation about the NE LOC is that the enemy has expended a significant percentage of his total imports in executing military defensive operations for the NVN heartland. From 1 January 1967 through 19 June 1967, he has launched 1062 SAM missiles in Route Package VI. A record total of 556 surface-to-air missiles were fired at

US aircraft during the period 1 May through 31 May. This one month expenditure equates to 2600 metric tons in missile hardware (consumables used in delivering missiles to launch pad not considered). MIG jet fuel consumption for a one-month period is estimated to be approximately 7,500 metric tons (resources expended to accomplish delivery not included). AAA munitions-firing equates to approximately 18,000 metric tons per month. Based on the CIA estimate of 5300 metric tons per day import rate, it is notable that the enemy is willing to use up to 15% of his total imports (by weight) in air defense. Most of this tonnage is used in defense of the industrial/economic structure in Route Packages V and VI. Even though 83% of all US attack sorties are flown in Route Packages I-IV, the enemy has not expended an equivalent amount of air defense consumables to protect this area. It can be assumed he would, which should add to the probability of increased losses to AAA/SA-2 south of 20°, if we greatly reduce attacks north of 20°. 173/

Brown's political point was familiar but had not been stated quite so precisely in this particular debate. Bombing was regarded by Brown as an indivisible blue chip to be exchanged in toto for some reciprocity by the North Vietnamese, a condition that did not seem likely in the present circumstances. Once stopped, the bombing would be extremely difficult to resume even if the DRV stepped up its infiltration and its half of the war generally. Moreover, the timing for such a halt was bad with the South Vietnamese elections only two months away.

With respect to the loss rates in the various parts of the country, Brown noted that losses in Route Packages IVA & B had declined dramatically over the preceding year, even though the DRV was expending far more resources to combat the sorties. If bombing were suspended north of 20° we could expect the DRV to redeploy much of its anti-aircraft resources into the panhandle thereby raising the currently low loss rates there. Since bombing effectiveness in the northern area was marginally more productive, the return pure aircraft loss overall would decline by such a geographical limitation of the air war. 174/

It is not clear what impact this line of analysis had on McNamara, but since he had previously gone on record in favor of alternative B, and no other new evidence or argumentation appears before the final decision in mid-July to adopt alternative C, it seems very likely that Brown's thinking swayed his oral recommendations to the President. Reinforcing Brown's analysis was the internal U.S. Government rejection

of a Canadian proposal to exchange a bombing halt for a redemilitarization of the DMZ. The Chiefs adamantly opposed the idea as a totally inequitable trade-off. We would sacrifice a valuable negotiating blue chip without commensurate gain (such as a cessation of DRV infiltration). 175/ With no other promising prospects for a diplomatic break-through, there was little reason on that score to suspend even a part of the bombing at that time.

The only other event that might have influenced the Secretary's thinking was his trip to Vietnam July 7-12. With a decision on the additional ground forces to be sent to Vietnam narrowing down, the President sent McNamara to Saigon to review the matter with General Westmoreland and reach agreement on a figure well below the 200,000 Westy had requested in March. As it turned out, the total new troops in Program #5 were about 25,000. In the briefings the Secretary received in Saigon, the Ambassador spoke briefly about the need for an effective interdiction system which he hoped we would find in the barrier. He reiterated most of the points he had made to Rusk by wire in June. 176/ CINCPAC's briefing on the air war began with the now standard self-justifications based on denied requests for escalation. The body of his presentation did contain some interesting new information, however. For instance, Admiral Sharp confirmed that the increased effort in the NE quadrant had not been at the expense of sorties elsewhere in North Vietnam or Laos. The decline in U.S. losses in the Red River valley was attributable in part to the declining effectiveness of North Vietnam's MIG, SA-2, and AAA defenses. This in turn was explained by better U.S. tactics, and, most importantly, new weapons and equipment like the WALLEYE guided bomb, the CBU-24 cluster bomb, the MK-36 Destructor and a much improved ECM capability. The rest of his presentation was given over to complaints about the unauthorized targets still on the JCS list and to the familiar muddled arguments for not stopping the northern bombing because it was pressuring Ho to behave as we wanted and because in some mysterious fashion it was interdicting infiltration, actual statistics in the South to the contrary notwithstanding. 177/

After 7th Air Force commander, General Momyer, had given a glowing detailed account of the success of the new tactics and weapons (a 4-fold increase in effectiveness against the NE RR in the previous year), and the 7th Fleet had described its air operations, CINCPAC summed up his arguments against any further limitations on the bombing. His closing point, on which he based recommendations, was that both sides were fighting both offensive and defensive wars. The DRV had the offensive initiative in the South but we were on the defensive. However,

> The opposite holds for the air war in the north. Here we hold the initiative. We are conducting a strategic offensive, forcing the enemy into a defensive posture. He is forced to react at places and times of our choosing. If

we eliminate the only offensive element of our strategy, I do not see how we can expect to win. My recommendations are listed below. You will recognize that they are essentially the same actions proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Close the Haiphong Harbor to deep water shipping by bombing and/or mining.

2. Destroy six basic target systems (electricity, maritime ports, airfields, transportation, military complexes, war supporing industry).

3. Conduct integrated attacks against entire target base, including interdiction in NVN and Laos.

NECESSARY CHANGES AND ADDITIONS TO RT OPERATING RULES

1. Delete Hanoi 10 NM prohibited area.

2. Reduce Hanoi restricted areasto 10 NM.

3. Reduce Haiphong restricted area to 4 NM.

4. Move the northern boundary of the special coastal armed recce area to include Haiphong area.

5. Authorize armed recce throughout NVN and coastal waters, (except populated areas, buffer zone, restricted areas).

6. Mine inland waterways to Chicom buffer zone as MK-36 destructors become available.

7. Extend Sea Dragon to Chicom buffer zone as forces become available.

8. Implement now to exploit good weather. 178/

McNamara's time in Vietnam, however, was mostly preoccupied with settling on the exact figure for troop increases. When he returned to Washington, he promptly met with the President and with his approval authorized the Program #5 deployments. He presumably also discussed with the President a decision on the next phase of the air campaign. There is no evidence of what he might have recommended at that stage. The decision was one that would have been made at the White House, so in any case the responsibility for it could be only partially his. Examination of the available documents does not reveal just how or when the decision on the

Secretary of Defense proposal was made, but it is clear what the decision was. It was to adopt alternative C -- i.e., push onward with the bombing program essentially as it had been, continuing the bit-by-bit expansion of armed reconnaissance and striking a few new fixed targets in each ROLLING THUNDER series, but still holding back from closing the ports and such sensitive targets as the MIG airfields.

The next ROLLING THUNDER series, No. 57, was authorized on 20 July. Sixteen fixed targets were selected, including one airfield, one rail yard, two bridges, and 12 barracks and supply areas, all within the Hanoi and Haiphong circles but not within the forbidden 10-mile inner circle around the center of Hanoi against which Admiral Sharp had sailed. Armed reconnaissance was expanded along 23 road, rail, and waterway segments between the 30-mile and the 10-mile circles around Hanoi. 179/

For the moment at least neither the hawks nor the doves had won their case. The President had decided merely to extend ROLLING THUNDER within the general outlines already established. In effect, the RT 57 was a decision to postpone the issue, insuring that the partisans would continue their fight. As for the President, he would not move decisively until the next year when outside events were heavily forcing his hand and a new Secretary of Defense had entered the debate.

V. THE LONG ROAD TO DE-ESCALATION -- AUGUST-DECEMBER 1967

After the decision on ROLLING THUNDER 57, the debate on the air war against North Vietnam, particularly the public debate, entered a last long phase of increasing acrimony on both sides. As he had been throughout the war, President Johnson was once again caught in the crossfire of his critics of the right and the left. The open-season on Presidential war policy began in August with the high intensity Senate Preparedness Subcommittee hearings where Senator Stennis and his colleagues fired the first shots. In September, the embattled President tried again for peace, capping his secret efforts with a new public offer to Hanoi in a speech in San Antonio. The attempt was unavailing and, under pressure from the military and the hawkish elements of public and Congressional opinion, the President authorized a selected intensification of the air war. The doves were not long in responding. In October they staged a massive demonstration and march on the Pentagon to oppose the war, there confronting specially alerted troops in battle gear. A month later, Senator McCarthy announced himself as a peace candidate for the Presidency to oppose Lyndon Johnson within his own party. By Christmas, however, the issue had subsided a bit. Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland had both returned home and spoken in public to defend the Administration's conduct of the war, and reports from the field showed a cautious optimism. The stage was thus set for the dramatic Viet Cong Tet offensive in January of the new year, an assault that would have a traumatic impact on official Washington and set in motion a re-evaluation of the whole American policy.

A. Senator Stennis Forces an Escalation

1. The Addendum to ROLLING THUNDER

Sometime after his return from Vietnam in late July, Secretary McNamara was informed by Senator Stennis that the Preparedness Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee intended to conduct extensive hearings in August into the conduct of the air war against North Vietnam. In addition to their intention to call the Secretary, they also indicated that they would hear from all the top military leaders involved in the ROLLING THUNDER program including USCINCPAC, Admiral Sharp. The subcommittee had unquestionably set out to defeat Mr. McNamara. Its members, Senators Stennis, Symington, Jackson, Cannon, Byrd, Smith, Thurmond, and Miller, were known for their hard-line views and military sympathies. They were defenders of "airpower" and had often aligned themselves with the "professional military experts" against what they considered "unskilled civilian amateurs." They viewed the restraints on bombing as irrational, the shackling of a major instrument which could help win victory. With

Vietnam blown up into a major war, with more than half a million U.S. troops and a cost of more than $2 billion a month, and with no clear end in sight, their patience with a restrained bombing program was beginning to wear thin. But more was involved than a disagreement over the conduct of the war. Some passionately held convictions had been belittled, and some members of the subcommittee were on the warpath. As the subcommittee subsequently wrote in the introduction to its report, explaining the reasons for the inquiry:

> Earlier this year many statements appeared in the press which were calculated to belittle the effectiveness of the air campaign over North Vietnam. Many of these statements alleged, or at least implied, that all military targets of significance had been destroyed, that the air campaign had been conducted as effectively as possible, and that continuation of the air campaign was pointless and useless--possibly even prolonging the war itself. At the same time reports were being circulated that serious consideration was being given in high places to a cessation of the air campaign over North Vietnam, or a substantial curtailment of it. Many of these reports were attributed to unnamed high Government officials.
>
> In view of the importance of the air campaign, on June 28, 1967, the subcommittee announced it would conduct an extensive inquiry into the conduct and effectiveness of the bombing campaign over North Vietnam. 1/

In July the President had decided against both an escalatory and a de-escalatory option in favor of continuing the prevailing level and intensity of bombing. However, the prospect of having his bombing policy submitted to the harsh scrutiny of the Stennis committee, taking testimony from such unhappy military men as Admiral Sharp, must have forced a recalculation on the President. It is surely no coincidence that on August 9, the very day the Stennis hearings opened, an addendum to ROLLING THUNDER 57 was issued authorizing an additional sixteen fixed targets and an expansion of armed reconnaissance. Significantly, six of the targets were within the sacred 10-mile Hanoi inner circle. They included the thermal power plant, 3 rail yards, and 2 bridges. Nine targets were located on the northeast rail line in the China buffer zone, the closest one 8 miles from the border, and consisted of 4 bridges and 5 rail yards/sidings; the tenth was a naval base, also within the China buffer zone. Armed reconnaissance was authorized along 8 road, rail, and waterway segments between the 10-mile and a 4-mile circle around Haiphong, and attacks were permitted against railroad rolling stock within the China buffer zone up to within 8 miles of the border. 2/ But the power of Congress was not to be denied. Where the military alone had tried unsuccessfully for so long to erode the Hanoi/Haiphong sanctuaries, the pressure implicit in the impending hearings, where military men would be asked to speak their minds to a

friendly audience, was enough to succeed -- at least for the moment.

Attacks against the newly authorized targets began promptly and continued through the two-week period of the Stennis hearings. On August 11 the Paul Doumer Rail and Highway Bridge, the principle river crossing in the direction of Haiphong located very near the center of Hanoi, was struck for the first time and two of its spans were dropped. Other important Hanoi targets were also struck on the 11th and 12th. The intensity of the strikes continued to mount, and on August 20, 209 sorties were launched, the highest number to date in the war. During that day and the succeeding two, heavy attacks continued against the Hanoi targets and within the China buffer zone. On the 21st in connection with these attacks a long feared danger of the northern air war became reality. Two U.S. planes strayed over the Chinese border and were shot down by Chinese MIGs. On August 19, at McNamara's direction, the JCS instructed CINCPAC to suspend operations within the ten-mile Hanoi perimeter from August 24 to September 4. 3/ The Stennis hearings were ending and a particularly delicate set of contacts with North Vietnam were under way in Paris (see below). The suspension was designed both to avoid provocation and to manifest restraint.

2. The Stennis Hearings

Meanwhile in Washington, the Stennis hearings opened on August 9 with Admiral U. S. Grant Sharp, USCINCPAC, as the first witness. In the following two weeks the subcommittee heard testimony from the entire senior echelon of U.S. military leaders involved in the air war, including the Joint Chiefs, CINCPAC, CINCPACFLT, CINCPACAF, and the commander and former deputy commander of the 7th Air Force in Saigon. The final witness on August 25 was Secretary McNamara who found himself pitted against the military men who had preceded him by the hostile members of the subcommittee as he sought to deflate the claims for U.S. air power. The hearings, released by the subcommittee only days after the testimony was completed, and given extensive treatment by the media, exposed to public view the serious divergence of views between McNamara and the country's professional military leaders. The subcommittee's summary report, which sided with the military and sharply criticized McNamara's reasoning, forced the Administration into an awkward position. 4/ Ultimately, the President felt compelled to overrule McNamara's logic in his own version of the matter. Once again the President was caught unhappily in the middle satisfying neither his critics of the right nor the left.

The subcommittee heard first from the military leaders involved in the air war. It was told that the air war in the North was an important and indispensable part of the U.S. strategy for fighting the war in the South. It was told that the bombing had inflicted extensive destruction and disruption on NVN, holding down the infiltration of men and supplies, restricting the level of forces that could be sustained in the South and reducing the ability of those forces to mount major

sustained combat operations, thus resulting in fewer U.S. casualties. It was told that without the bombing, NVN could have doubled its forces in the South, requiring as many as 800,000 additional U.S. troops at a cost of $75 billion more just to hold our own. It was told that without the bombing NVN could have freed 500,000 people who were at work maintaining and repairing the LOCs in the North for additional support of the insurgency in the South. It was told that a cessation of the bombing now would be "a disaster," resulting in increased U.S. losses and an indefinite extension of the war.

The subcommittee was also told that the bombing had been much less effective than it might have been -- and could still be -- if civilian leaders heeded military advice and lifted the overly restrictive controls which had been imposed on the campaign. The slow tempo of the bombing; its concentration for so long well south of the vital Hanoi/Haiphong areas, leaving the important targets untouched; the existence of sanctuaries; the failure to close or neutralize the port of Haiphong--these and other limitations prevented the bombing from achieving greater results. The "doctrine of gradualism" and the long delays in approving targets of real significance, moreover, gave NVN time to build up formidable air defenses, contributing to U.S. aircraft and pilot losses, and enabled NVN to prepare for the anticipated destruction of its facilities (such as POL) by building up reserve stocks and dispersing them.

When Secretary McNamara appeared before the subcommittee on August 25, he took issue with most of these views. He defended the bombing campaign as one which was carefully tailored to our limited purposes in Southeast Asia and which was therefore aimed at selected targets of strictly military significance, primarily the routes of infiltration. As he restated the objectives which the bombing was intended to serve:

> Our primary objective was to reduce the flow and/or to increase the cost of the continued infiltration of men and supplies from North to South Vietnam.
>
> It was also anticipated that these air operations would raise the morale of the South Vietnamese people who, at the time the bombing started, were under severe military pressure.
>
> Finally, we hoped to make clear to the North Vietnamese leadership that so long as they continued their aggression against the South they would have to pay a price in the North.
>
> The bombing of North Vietnam has always been considered a supplement to and not a substitute for an effective counter-insurgency land and air campaign in South Vietnam.

These were our objectives when our bombing program was initiated in February 1965. They remain our objectives today. 5/

Weighed against these objectives, the bombing campaign had been successful:

> It was initiated at a time when the South Vietnamese were in fear of a military defeat. There can be no question that the bombing raised and sustained the morale of the South Vietnamese at that time. It should be equally clear to the North Vietnamese that they have paid and will continue to pay a high price for their continued aggression. We have also made the infiltration of men and supplies from North Vietnam to South Vietnam increasingly difficult and costly. 6/

With respect to infiltration, the Secretary said, military leaders had never anticipated that complete interdiction was possible. He cited the nature of combat in SVN, without "established battle lines" and continuous large-scale fighting, which did not require a steady stream of logistical support and which reduced the amount needed. Intelligence estimated that VC/NVA forces in SVN required only 15 tons a day brought in from outside, "but even if the quantity were five times that amount it could be transported by only a few trucks." By comparison with that amount, the capacity of the transportation network was very large:

> North Vietnam's ability to continue its aggression against the South thus depends upon imports of war-supporting material and their transhipment to the South. Unfortunately for the chances of effective interdiction, this simple agricultural economy has a highly diversified transportation system consisting of rails and roads and waterways. The North Vietnamese use barges and sampans, trucks and foot power, and even bicycles capable of carrying 500-pound loads to move goods over this network. The capacity of this system is very large -- the volume of traffic it is now required to carry, in relation to its capacity, is very small....Under these highly unfavorable circumstances, I think that our military forces have done a superb job in making continued infiltration more difficult and expensive. 7/

The Secretary defended the targeting decisions which had been made in carrying out the program, and the "target-by-target analysis" which balanced the military importance of the target against the cost in U.S. lives and the risks of expanding the war. He argued that the target selection had not inhibited the use of airpower against targets of military significance. The target list in current use by the JCS

contained 427 targets, of which only 359 had been recommended by the Chiefs. Of the latter, strikes had been authorized against 302, or 85 percent. Of the 57 recommended by the JCS but not yet authorized, 7 were recognized by the JCS themselves as of little value to NVN's war effort, 9 were petroleum facilities holding less than 6 percent of NVN's remaining storage capacity, 25 were lesser targets in populated, heavily defended areas, 4 were more signficant targets in such areas, 3 were ports, 4 were airfields, and 5 were in the China buffer zone. Some of these targets did not warrant the loss of American lives; others did not justify the risk of direct confrontation with the Chinese or the Soviets; still others would be considered for authorization as they were found to be of military importance as compared with the potential costs and risks. 8/

The Secretary argued that those who criticized the limited nature of the bombing campaign actually sought to reorient it toward different -- and unrealizable objectives:

> Those who criticize our present bombing policy do so, in my opinion, because they believe that air attack against the North can be utilized to achieve quite different objectives. These critics appear to argue that our airpower can win the war in the South either by breaking the will of the North or by cutting off the war-supporting supplies needed in the south. In essence, this approach would seek to use the air attack against the North not as a supplement to, but as a substitute for the arduous ground war that we and our allies are waging in the South. 9/

First, as to breaking the will of the North, neither the nature of NVN's economy nor the psychology of its people or its leaders suggested that this could be accomplished by a more intensive bombing campaign. For one thing, it was difficult to apply pressure against the regime through bombing the economy:

> ...the economy of North Vietnam is agrarian and simple. Its people are accustomed to few of the modern comforts and conveniences that most of us in the Western World take for granted. They are not dependent on the continued functioning of great cities for their welfare. They can be fed at something approaching the standard to which they are accustomed without reliance on truck or rail transportation or on food processing facilities. Our air attack has rendered inoperative about 85 percent of the country's electric generating capacity, but it is important to note that the Pepco plant in Alexandria, Va., generates five times the power produced by all of

North Vietnam's power plants before the bombing. It appears that sufficient electricity for war-related activities and for essential services can be provided by the some 2,000 diesel-driven generating sets which are in operation. 10/

Second, the people were inured to hardship and by all the evidence supported the government:

> ...the people of North Vietnam are accustomed to discipline and are no strangers to deprivation and death. Available information indicates that, despite some war weariness, they remain willing to endure hardship and they continue to respond to the political direction of the Hanoi regime. There is little reason to believe that any level of conventional air or naval action short of sustained and systematic bombing of the population centers will deprive the North Vietnamese of their willingness to continue to support their government's efforts. 11/

Third, NVN's leaders were hard to crack, at least so long as their cause in the South was hopeful:

> There is nothing in the past reaction of the North Vietnamese leaders that would provide any confidence that they can be bombed to the negotiating table. Their regard for the comfort and even the lives of the people they control does not seem to be sufficiently high to lead them to bargain for settlement in order to stop a heightened level of attack.
>
> The course of the conflict on the ground in the south, rather than the scale of air attack in the north appears to be the determining factor in North Vietnam's willingness to continue. 12/

The second alternative aim might be to stop the flow of supplies to the South, either through an expanded campaign against the supply routes within NVN or by closing sea and land importation routes to NVN, or both. But it was doubtful whether heavier bombing of the LOCs could choke off the required flow:

> ...the capacity of the lines of communication and of the outside sources of supply so far exceeds the minimal flow necessary to support the present level of North

Vietnamese military effort in South Vietnam that the enemy operations in the south cannot, on the basis of any reports I have seen, be stopped by air bombardment--short, that is, of the virtual annihilation of North Vietnam and its people. 13/

Nor could bombing the ports and mining the harbors stop the infiltration of supplies into SVN. The total tonnage required in SVN (15 tons a day) could be quintupled and would still be dwarfed by NVN's actual imports of about 5800 tons a day and its even greater import capacity of about 14,000 tons a day. Even if Haiphong and the other ports were closed -- "and on the unrealistic assumption that closing the ports would eliminate seaborne imports" -- NVN could still import over 8400 tons a day by rail, road, and waterway. Even if the latter amount could be further cut by 50 percent through air attacks, NVN could still maintain 70 percent of its current imports, only a fraction of which -- 550 tons per day -- need be taken up with military equipment. In fact, however, eliminating Haiphong and the other ports would not eliminate seaborne imports. The POL experience had shown that NVN could revert to lightering and over-the-beach operations for unloading ocean freighters, and it could also make greater use of the LOCs from China, and still manage quite well.

Accordingly, the Secretary urged that the limited objectives and the restrained nature of the bombing campaign be maintained as is:

A selective, carefully targeted bombing campaign, such as we are presently conducting, can be directed toward reasonable and realizable goals. This discriminating use of air power can and does render the infiltration of men and supplies more difficult and more costly. At the same time, it demonstrates to both South and North Vietnam our resolve to see that aggression does not succeed. A less discriminating bombing campaign against North Vietnam would, in my opinion, do no more. We have no reason to believe that it would break the will of the North Vietnamese people or sway the purpose of their leaders. If it does not lead to such a change of mind, bombing the North at any level of intensity would not meet our objective. We would still have to prove by ground operations in the South that Hanoi's aggression could not succeed. Nor would a decision to close [the ports], by whatever means, prevent the movement in and through North Vietnam of the essentials to continue their present level of military activity in South Vietnam.

On the other side of the equation, our report to a less selective campaign of air attack against the North would

involve risks which at present I regard as too high to accept for this dubious prospect of successful results. 14/

The Secretary spent the day on the witness stand, answering questions, rebutting charges, and debating the issues. His use of facts and figures and reasoned arguments was one of his masterful performances, but in the end he was not persuasive. The subcommittee issued a report on 31 August which castigated the Administration's conduct of the bombing campaign, deferred to the authority of the professional military judgments it had heard, accepted virtually all the military criticisms of the program, and advocated a switch-over to escalating "pressure" concepts.

The Secretary had emphasized the inability of the bombing to accomplish much more, given the nature of U.S. objectives and of the difficult challenged presented by the overall military situation. The subcommittee disagreed:

> That the air campaign has not achieved its objectives to a greater extent cannot be attributed to inability or impotence of airpower. It attests, rather, to the fragmentation of our air might by overly restrictive controls, limitations, and the doctrine of 'gradualism' placed on our aviation forces which prevented them from waging the air campaign in the manner and according to the timetable which was best calculated to achieve maximum results. 15/

The Secretary had said there was no evidence of any kind to indicate that an accelerated campaign would have reduced casualties in the South; the subcommittee reported that the overwhelming weight of the testimony by military experts was to the contrary. The Secretary had minimized the importance of the 57 recommended targets which had not yet been approved, and implied that few if any important military targets remained unstruck; CINCPAC and the Chiefs said the 57 included many "lucrative" targets. The Secretary had discounted the value of closing Haiphong; all of the military witnesses said that this was feasible and necessary and would have a substantial impact on the war in the South. In all of these matters the subcommittee did not believe that the Secretary's position was valid and felt that the military view was sounder and should prevail:

> In our hearings we found a sharp difference of opinion between the civilian authority and the top-level military witnesses who appeared before the subcommittee over how and when our airpower should be employed against North Vietnam. In that difference we believe we also found the roots of the persistent deterioration of public confidence in our airpower, because the plain facts as they unfolded in the testimony demonstrated clearly that civilian authority consistently overruled the unanimous recommendations of

of military commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a systematic, timely, and hard-hitting integrated air campaign against the vital North Vietnam targets. Instead, and for policy reasons, we have employed military aviation in a carefully controlled, restricted, and graduated build-up of bombing pressure which discounted the professional judgment of our best military experts and substituted civilian judgment in the details of target selection and the timing of strikes. We shackled the true potential of airpower and permitted the buildup of what has become the world's most formidable antiaircraft defenses....

It is not our intention to point a finger or to second guess those who determined this policy. But, the cold fact is that this policy has not done the job and it has been contrary to the best military judgment. What is needed now is the hard decision to do whatever is necessary, take the risks that have to be taken, and apply the force that is required to see the job through....

As between these diametrically opposed views [of the SecDef and the military experts] and in view of the unsatisfactory progress of the war, logic and prudence requires that the decision be with the unanimous weight of professional military judgment....

It is high time, we believe, to allow the military voice to be heard in connection with the tactical details of military operations. 16/

3. The Fallout

This bombing controversy simmered on for the next few months and when a major secret peace attempt associated with the San Antonio formula failed, the President authorized most of the 57 unstruck targets the JCS had recommended and which the Stennis report had criticized the Administration for failing to hit. In addition, the Chairman of the JCS was thereafter asked to attend the Tuesday policy luncheon at the White House as a regular participant.

The Stennis hearings also created considerable confusion and controvery within the Pentagon over the target classification and recommendation system. The Senators had been at pains to try to establish whether targets recommended by the military were being authorized and struck or conversely to what extent the military was being ignored.

In trying to respond to the question McNamara discovered a great deal of fluidity in the number of targets on JCS lists over time, and in the priority or status assigned to them. He therefore set out to reconcile the discrepancies. The effort unearthed a highly complex system of classification that began with the military commands in the Pacific and extended through the Joint Staff to his own office. Part of the problem lay with the changing damage assessments and another part with differing categories at different echelons. To untangle the process, reconcile past discrepancies and establish a common basis for classification and recommendation, McNamara, Warnke, the ISA staff and the Joint Staff spent long hours in September and October in highly detailed target by target analysis and evaluation. After much wrangling they did achieve agreement on a procedure and set of rules that made it possible for everyone to work with the same data and understanding of the target system. The procedure they set up and the one that operated through the fall and winter until the March 31 partial suspension was described in a memo from Warnke to incoming Secretary Clark Clifford on March 5, 1968:

> Twice a month the Joint Staff has been revising the Rolling Thunder Target List for the bombing of North Vietnam. The revisions are forwarded to my office and reconciled with the prior list. This reconciliation summary is then forwarded to your office....
>
> Every Tuesday and Friday the Joint Staff has been sending me a current list of the authorized targets on the target list which have not been struck or restruck since returning to a recommended status. After our review, this list also is sent to your office....
>
> In the normal course of events, new recommendations by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for targets lying within the 10 and 4 mile prohibited circles around Hanoi and Haiphong, respectively, or in the Chinese Buffer Zone have been submitted both to the Secretary of Defense's office and to my office in ISA. ISA would then ensure that the State Department had sufficient information to make its recommendation on the new proposal. ISA also submitted its evaluation of the proposal to your office. On occasions the Chairman would hand-carry the new bombing proposals directly to the Secretary of Defense for his approval. Under those circumstances, the Secretary, if he were not thoroughly familiar with the substance of the proposal, would call ISA for an evaluation. State Department and White House approval also were required before the Chairman's office could authorize the new strikes. 17/

The Stennis report also raised a furor by exposing the policy rift within the Administration. In an attempt to dampen its effect the President called an unscheduled news conference on September 1 to deny differences among his advisors and to generally overrule his Secretary of Defense on the bombing. More stinging for McNamara, however, than this oral repudiation must have been the subsequent escalatory decisions against his advice. On September 10, for instance, North Vietnam's third port at Cam Pha, a target he had specifically counseled against in his testimony was struck for the first time. McNamara's year-end resignation seems in retrospect the only logical course for someone who found himself so far out of line with the direction of Administration policy.

B. The San Antonio Formula

1. Peace Feelers

In the midst of all this pressure on the President to raise the ante in the bombing, a countervailing opportunity for contact with the DRV on terms for peace developed in Paris. In mid-August a channel to the North Vietnamese through U.S. and French academics apparently opened up in Paris. Eager as always to test whether Hanoi had softened its position, the U.S. picked up the opportunity. As already noted, on 19 August a cessation of the attacks in the 10-mile Hanoi perimeter was ordered for a ten day period beginning on August 24. Sometime thereafter, what was regarded as a conciliatory proposal, embodying the language of the subsequent San Antonio speech, was apparently transmitted to the North Vietnamese. The unfortunate coincidence of heavy bombing attacks on Hanoi on August 21-23, just prior to the transmission of the message, coupled with the fact that the Hanoi suspension was to be of limited duration must have left the DRV leadership with the strong impression they were being squeezed by Johnsonian pressure tactics and presented with an ultimatum. Apparently, no reply from Hanoi had arrived by the 1st of September because the Hanoi suspension was extended for 72-hours, and then on 7 September the suspension was impatiently extended again pending a reply from North Vietnam. When the reply finally came, it was an emphatic rejection of the U.S. proposal. The U.S. sought to clarify its position and elicit some positive reaction from the Hanoi leadership but to no avail. The contacts in Paris apparently continued throughout September since the bombing restraint around Hanoi was not relaxed, but Hanoi maintained its charge that the circumstances in which the message was communicated placed it in the context of an ultimatum. 18/

2. The President's Speech and Hanoi's Reaction

With Hanoi complaining that the raids deflected from Hanoi were merely being retargeted against Haiphong, Cam Pha and other parts of the North and that the U.S. was escalating not de-escalating the air war, the President decided to make a dramatic public attempt to overcome

the communications barrier between the two capitals. In San Antonio, on September 29, the President delivered a long impassioned plea for reason in Hanoi. The central function of the speech was to repeat publicly the language of the negotiations proposal that had been transmitted in August. The President led up to it in melodramatic fashion:

> "'Why not negotiate now?' so many ask me. The answer is that we and our South Vietnamese allies are wholly prepared to negotiate tonight.
>
> "I am ready to talk with Ho Chi Minh, and other chiefs of state concerned, tomorrow.
>
> "I am ready to have Secretary Rusk meet with their Foreign Minister tomorrow.
>
> "I am ready to send a trusted representative of America to any spot on this earth to talk in public or private with a spokesman of Hanoi." 19/

Then he stated the U.S. terms for a bombing halt in their mildest form to date:

> As we have told Hanoi time and time and time again, the heart of the matter is this: The United States is willing to stop all aerial and naval bombardment of North Vietnam when this will lead promptly to productive discussions. We, of course, assume that while discussions proceed, North Vietnam would not take advantage of this bombing cessation or limitation. 20/

After the speech, the contacts in Paris presumably continued in an effort to illicit a positive response from Hanoi, but, in spite of the continued restraint around Hanoi, none was apparently forthcoming. The North Vietnamese objections to the proposal had shifted it seems from the circumstances of its delivery to the substance of the proposal itself. Instead of their earlier complaints about pressures and ultimata, they now resisted the "conditions" of the San Antonio formula -- i.e. the U.S. desire for advance assurance that "no advantage" would be taken if the bombing were halted. Continued U.S. probing for a response apparently reinforced the impression of "conditions." In any case, on October 3, the San Antonio formulation was emphatically rejected in the North Vietnamese party newspaper, Nham Dan, as a "faked desire for peace" and "sheer deception." This was apparently confirmed through the Paris channel in mid-October. In his press conference on October 12, Secretary Rusk as much as said so when, after quoting the President's offer, he stated:

A rejection, or a refusal even to discuss such a formula for peace, requires that we face some sober conclusions. It would mean that Hanoi has not abandoned its effort to seize South Vietnam by force. It would give reality and credibility to captured documents which describe a 'fight and negotiate' strategy by Vietcong and the North Vietnamese forces. It would reflect a view in Hanoi that they can gamble upon the character of the American people and of our allies in the Pacific. 22/

Final confirmation that the attempt to find a common ground on which to begin negotiations had failed came in an article by the Communist journalist Wilfred Burchette on October 20. Reporting from Hanoi the views of Pham Van Dong, Burchette stated that, "There is no possibility of any talks or even contacts between Hanoi and the U.S. government unless the bombardment and other acts of war against North Vietnam are definitively halted." 23/ But the American Administration had already taken a series of escalatory decisions under pressure from the military and the Stennis committee.

3. More Targets

The September-long restriction against striking targets within the ten mile Hanoi perimeter was imposed on the military command with no explanation of its purpose since apparently every effort was being made to maintain the security of the contacts in Paris. Thus, not surprisingly, CINCPAC complained about the limitation and regularly sought to have it lifted throughout the month. On September 11, General McConnell forwarded a request to the Secretary for a restrike of the Hanoi thermal power plant. 24/ On September 21, CINCPAC again reiterated his urgent request that the Hanoi ban be lifted. 25/ The day before he had also requested authority to strike the Phuc Yen air field. 26/ In sending his endorsement of these requests to McNamara, the acting Chairman, General Johnson, noted that there were fifteen lucrative targets within the prohibited Hanoi area including critical rail and highway bridges and the Hanoi power plant, the latter reportedly back to 50% of capability. 27/ McNamara replied tersely and simply, in his own hand, "The Hanoi restriction remains in effect so this strike has not been approved." 28/ The requested authorization to hit Phuc Yen air field was not a strike within the Hanoi ten mile zone but was militarily important because Phuc Yen was the largest remaining unstruck MIG field and a center of much of North Vietnam's air defense control. On September 26, it was approved for strike, but before one could be launched the authorization was rescinded on September 29, no doubt because of concern about upsetting the delicate Paris contacts. 29/

To these continuing pressures on the President from the JCS to remove the Hanoi restrictions were added at the end of September an

additional request from General Westmoreland bearing on the effort against North Vietnam. The enemy buildup in the DMZ area had become serious and to counter it an increasing number of B-52 strikes were being employed. Eventually this confrontation at the DMZ would involve the heavy artillery exchanges of the fall of 1967 and culminate in the protracted seige of Khe Sanh. For the moment, however, Westmoreland was seeking as a part of his DMZ reinforcement an augmentation in the monthly B-52 sortie authorization. His request was outlined by the Chiefs in a memo to Mr. Nitze on September 28. They indicated a capability to raise the sorties to 900 per month immediately and were studying the problem of raising them to 1200 as requested by Westy. The use of 2,000 lb. bombs was feasible and the Chiefs recommended it depending on their availability. 30/ McNamara gave his OK to the increase in a memo to the President on October 4, but indicated that the increase to 1200 per month could not be achieved before January or February 1968. 31/

Undaunted by repeated rebuffs, the Chiefs, under the temporary leadership of Army Chief of Staff, General Harold K. Johnson (General Wheeler had been stricken by a mild heart attack in early September and was away from his desk for a little over a month), continued to press for lifting the Hanoi restrictions and for permission to attack Phuc Yen. On October 4 they gave McNamara a package of papers on the current target list complete with draft execute messages lifting the Hanoi ban and authorizing Phuc Yen, both of which they recommended. 32/ Two days later a specific request to hit the Hanoi power plant was forwarded, noting the DIA estimate that the power plant was back to 75% of its original capacity. 33/ On October 7, CINCPAC sent the JCS a monthly summary of the ROLLING THUNDER program in September and used the opportunity once again to complain about the detrimental effects of maintaining the Hanoi restriction. Adverse weather because of the northeast Monsoon had severely curtailed the number of sorties flown to 8,540 compared with 11,634 in August. This had permitted a considerable amount of damage-recovery in North Vietnam. The maintenance of the Hanoi sanctuary only compounded the problem for the U.S. "This combination of circumstances provides the enemy the opportunity to repair rail lines, reconstruct downed bridges, and accommodate to much of the initial efforts to maintain pressure against the vital LOC network." 34/ In Admiral Sharp's view, countering these recovery efforts was of the first priority.

The following day he sent the Chiefs another message specifically requesting that the rescinded approval for strikes against Phuc Yen airfield be reinstated. Increased MIG activity against our jets over North Vietnam was cited as requiring the destruction of this last remaining major airfield. The crux of his argument, however, was the necessity of such a strike to the maintenance of pilot morale — a rationale entirely exempt from statistical analysis in OSD. He stated the case as follows:

The morale of our air crews understandably rose when briefed to strike Phuc Yen airfield and its MIG's -- A target which has continually jeopardized their well-being. The unexplained revocation of that authority coupled with the increasing numbers and aggressiveness of MIG-21 attacks cannot help but impact adversely on air crew morale. Air crews flying combat missions through the intense NVN defenses, air to air and ground to air, have demonstrated repeatedly their courage and determination to press home their attack against vital targets. Every effort should be made to reduce the hazard to them, particularly from a threat in which the enemy is afforded a sanctuary and can attack at his own choosing. 35/

With the failure of the peace initiative in Paris, these escalatory pressures could no longer be resisted. As it became evident that peace talks were not in the offing, the President approved six new targets on October 6 (including 5 in or near Haiphong). Secretary Rusk in his October 12 news conference strongly questioned the seriousness of North Vietnamese intent for peace and finally on October 20 the Paris contacts were closed in failure. The Tuesday lunch on October 24 would thus have to make important new bombing decisions. The day before, Warnke outlined current JCS recommendations for Secretary McNamara, including Phuc Yen. 36/ The White House meeting the following day duly approved Phuc Yen along with a restrike of the Hanoi power transformer and the temporary lifting of the Hanoi restrictions. 37/ On October 25, the MIGs at Phuc Yen were attacked for the first time and Hanoi was struck again after the long suspension.

The Tuesday luncheon at which the Phuc Yen decision was made was a regular decision-making forum for the air war and one that came to public attention as a result of the Stennis hearings. Indicative of the public interest in these gatherings is the following impressionistic account by CBS newsman Dan Rather of how they were conducted:

First Line Report, 6:55 a.m.
WTOP Radio, October 17, 1967

Dan Rather: This is Target Tuesday. Today President Johnson decides whether North Vietnam will continue to be bombed. If it is, how much and where. These decisions are made at which Washington insiders call, for short, the Tuesday lunch. This is the way it goes.

At about 1:00 in the afternoon Defense Secretary McNamara, Secretary of State Rusk, and Presidential Assistant Walter Rostow gather in the White House second floor sitting room. They compare notes briefly over Scotch or Fresca. President

Johnson walks in with Press Secretary George Christian. McNamara, Rusk, Rostow, Christian, and the President--they are the Tuesday lunch regulars. The principal cast for Target Tuesday.

Sometimes others join. Chairman of the Military Joint Chiefs, General Earle Wheeler, for example. He's been coming more often recently, ever since the Senate Subcommittee on Preparedness Committee griped about no military man being present many times when final bombing decisions were made. Central Intelligence Director Richard Helms seldom comes. Vice President Humphrey almost never.

Decision making at the top is an intimate affair. Mr. Johnson prefers it that way. He knows men talk more freely in a small group.

After a bit of chatter over drinks in the sitting room, the President signals the move to the dining room. It is semi-oval, with a huge chandelier, a mural around the wall-brightly colored scenes of Cornwallis surrendering his sword at Yorktown. The President sits at the head, of course. Sits in a high back stiletto swivel chair. Rusk is at his right, McNamara on his left, Rostow is at the other end. Christian and the extras, if any, in between. Lunch begins, so does the serious conversation. There is an occasional pause, punctuated by the whirl of Mr. Johnson's battery-powered pepper grinder. He likes pepper and he likes the gadget.

Around the table the President's attention goes, sampling recommendations, arguments, thoughts. It is now the time for a bombing pause. How about just a bombing reduction? Laos, Haiphong, Hanoi, everything around population centers, confined bombing to that tiny part of North Vietnam bordering the Demilitarized Zone. McNamara long has favored this. He thinks it worth a try. Rusk has been going for some indication--the slightest hint will do--that a bombing pause or reduction will lead to meaningful negotiations. Rostow, least known of the Tuesday lunch regulars, also is a hard-liner. He more than Rusk is a pour-it-on man. Christian doesn't say much. He is there to give an opinion when asked about press and public reaction. The military representative, when there is one, usually speaks more than Christian, but less than McNamara, Rusk, and Rostow.

McNamara is the man with the target list. He gives his recommendations. If bomb we must, these are the targets he suggests. His recommendations are based on, but by no means completely agree with those of the military Joint Chiefs.

Their recommendations, in turn, are based on those of field commanders. Field commanders are under instructions not to recommend certain targets in certain areas--Haiphong docks, the air defense command center in Hanoi, and so forth. There is much controversy and some bitterness about these off-limit targets. There have been fewer and fewer of them since July. Some new ones went off the list just last week.

The luncheon meeting continues over coffee until 3:00, 3:30, sometimes even 4:00. When it is over, the President goes for a nap. The bombing decisions have been made for another week.

In thinking about Target Tuesday and the White House luncheon where so many decisions are on the menu, you may want to consider the words of 19th Century writer F. W. Borum: "We make our decisions, and then our decisions turn around and make us."

Even before the Phuc Yen decision was taken, the Chiefs had sent McNamara for transmittal to the President a major memo outlining their overall recommendations for the air war as requested by the President on September 12. The President had asked to see a set of proposals for putting more pressure on Hanoi. On October 17 that was exactly what he got and the list was not short. The Chiefs outlined their understanding of the objectives of the war, the constraints within which the national authorities wished it to be fought, the artificial limitations that were impeding the achievement of our objectives and a recommended list of ten new measures against North Vietnam. Since the memo stands as one of the last major military arguments for the long-sought wider war against North Vietnam before the trauma of Tet 1968 and the subsequent U.S. de-escalation, and because of its crisp, terse articulation of the JCS point of view, it is included here in its entirety.

18 Oct 67 07 12

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

JCSM-555-67
17 October 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Increased Pressures on North Vietnam (U)

1. (U) Reference is made to:

a. NSAM 288, dated 17 March 1964, subject: "Implementation of South Vietnam Program (U)."

b. JCSM-982-64, dated 23 November 1964, subject: "Courses of Action in Southeast Asia (U)."

c. JCSM-811-65, dated 10 November 1965, subject: "Future Operations and Force Deployments with Respect to the War in Vietnam (U)."

2. (U) The purpose of this memorandum is to identify those military actions consistent with present policy guidelines which would serve to increase pressures on North Vietnam (NVN), thereby accelerating the rate of progress toward achievement of the US objective in South Vietnam.

3. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that NVN is paying heavily for its aggression and has lost the initiative in the South. They further consider that many factors--though not uniform nor necessarily controlling--indicate a military trend favorable to Free World Forces in Vietnam. South Vietnam, in the face of great difficulty, is making slow progress on all fronts--military, political, and economic. However, pace of progress indicates that, if acceleration is to be achieved, an appropriate increase in military pressure is required.

Copy 2 of 35 Copies each of 3 Pages series "A"

4. (S) Military operations in Southeast Asia have been conducted within a framework of policy guidelines established to achieve US objectives without expanding the conflict. Principal among these policy guidelines are:

a. We seek to avoid widening the war into a conflict with Communist China or the USSR.

b. We have no present intention of invading NVN.

c. We do not seek the overthrow of the Government of NVN.

d. We are guided by the principles set forth in the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962.

5. (TS) Although some progress is being made within this framework, the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the rate of progress has been and continues to be slow, largely because US military power has been restrained in a manner which has reduced significantly its impact and effectiveness. Limitations have been imposed on military operations in four ways:

a. The attacks on the enemy military targets have been on such a prolonged, graduated basis that the enemy has adjusted psychologically, economically, and militarily; e.g., inured themselves to the difficulties and hardships accompanying the war, dispersed their logistic support system, and developed alternate transport routes and a significant air defense system.

b. Areas of sanctuary, containing important military targets, have been afforded the enemy.

c. Covert operations in Cambodia and Laos have been restricted.

d. Major importation of supplies into NVN by sea has been permitted.

6. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that US objectives in Southeast Asia can be achieved within the policy framework set forth in paragraph 4, above, providing the level of assistance the enemy receives from his communist allies is not significantly increased and there is no diminution of US efforts. However, progress will continue to be slow so long as present limitations on military operations continue in effect. Further, at our present pace, termination of NVN's military effort is not expected

to occur in the near future. Set forth in the Appendix are those actions which can be taken in the near future within the present framework of policy guidelines to increase pressures on NVN and accelerate progress toward the achievement of US objectives. They require a relaxation or removal of certain limitations on operations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognize that expansion of US efforts entails some additional risk. They believe that as a result of this expansion the likelihood of overt introduction of Soviet Bloc/CPR combat forces into the war would be remote. Failure to take additional action to shorten the Southeast Asia conflict also entails risks as new and more efficient weapons are provided to NVN by the Soviet Union and as USSR/CPR support of the enemy increases.

7. (U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that they be authorized to direct the actions in the Appendix.

8. (S) This memorandum is intended to respond to the questions raised by the President at the White House luncheon on 12 September 1967; therefore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff request that this memorandum be submitted to the President.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Earle G. Wheeler

EARLE G. WHEELER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Attachment

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS WITHIN PRESENT GUIDELINES WHICH

ACTIONS	SPECIFIC ACTIONS
1. Remove restrictions on air campaign against all militarily significant targets in NVN (ROLLING THUNDER).	Eliminate Haiphong and Hanoi prohibited areas. Reduce Hanoi and Haiphong restricted areas to the city proper. Reduce CPR Buffer Zone to 10 miles. Conduct unrestricted attacks against IOC, rail lines, roads up to five miles from CPR border. Authorize CINCPAC strike and restrike prerogative for all targets outside of redefined restricted areas. Permit JCS to authorize strikes against targets in the redefined restricted areas on a case-by-case basis (to include Haiphong port).
2. Mine NVN deep water ports.	Establish, replenish as required, mine fields in approaches and harbors at Haiphong, Hon Gai and Cam Pha. Publish warning notice to mariners. Adjust/extend mine fields as necessary to prevent bypassing.
3. Mine inland waterways and estuaries in NVN north of 20° N.	Mine mouths of navigable NVN rivers. Mine navigable inland waterways throughout NVN to within 5 NM of CPR border (authority currently limited to those south of 20° N).
4. Extend naval surface operations (SEA DRAGON).	Conduct offensive naval surface force operations against NVN military/logistic watercraft and against suitable targets in NVN waters north of 20° N latitude to the redefined buffer zone (SEA DRAGON operations now limited to south of 20° N).
5. Use US SAMs (TALOS) from ships against combat aircraft.	Use sea-based SAM missiles against NVN aircraft both over water and in airspace over NVN.
6. Increase air interdiction in Laos and along NVN borders.	Selective bombing of Laotian waterways traffic (BENONG). Establish special saturation bombing interdiction air-strike zones in Laos, e.g., northwest of DMZ, Nape and Mu Gia Passes.
7. Eliminate operational restrictions on B-52s with regard to Laos.	Overflight of Laos, by day and night, by B-52s en route to or from targets in Vietnam or Laos. Daylight bombing attacks on Laos. Eliminate requirement for cover strikes in SVN when bombing targets in Laos.
8. Expand operations in Laos (PRAIRIE FIRE).	Increase authorized size of exploitation force.
9. Expand operations in Cambodia.	Expand current DAVIEL BOONE reconnaissance program by extending the area of operations for the full length of the SVN/Cambodia border; authorize use of helicopters; remove limitations on number of missions. Authorize DANIEL BOONE forces to conduct limited sabotage/destruction activity; authorize calling in tactical air strikes on enemy targets near the border.
10. Expand and continue NVN covert programs (FOOTBALL (II)).	Undertake actions to increase the credibility of a current notional resistance movement in NVN. Increase intelligence collection and covert physical destruction missions.

LIMITATIONS	RISKS/IMPACT
Greater destruction of NVN war-supporting facilities. Increased destruction of air defenses including airfields. Reduce logistic support of NVN/VC. More efficient use of available forces. Favorable impact on reducing friendly casualties, particularly in critical I Corps/DMZ area. Permits timely reaction against targets of opportunity.	Charges of escalation. Increased use of CPR airfields for storage or training, but not for combat missions. Increased CPR AAA and Engineer support in NVN.
Reduce import of war-supporting materials.	Soviet Union may cancel existing negotiations with the US and initiate propaganda campaign. Possible Soviet actions to increase tensions in other parts of the world but major confrontations would be unlikely. CPR would strengthen defensive posture and may increase military aid to NVN; unlikely to initiate offensive air or surface actions.
Interdict internal waterway LOCs. Destroy waterborne logistic craft and block channels. Require great NVN sweeping effort. Reduce POL and other cargo distribution.	No specific military reaction from communists. Some increased propaganda against US action.
Interdict coastal water traffic. Reduce use of land LOCs by harassing gunfire.	Possible naval and air reaction by NVN in northern waters. CPR or Soviets might provide additional patrol craft.
Increase destruction of enemy air forces. Inhibit enemy air operations.	NVN air and surface attack possible. USSR or CPR might provide NVN with coast defense missiles.
Increased interdiction of LOCs and reduction of supplies to NVA/VC.	No immediate reaction other than propaganda. No Laos reaction.
Greater operational efficiency and quicker reaction time for B-52s.	Possible political reactions.
Disrupt sanctuaries. Increased efficiency of interdiction. Reduce supplies to NVA/VC.	Possible increased NVA forces and activities in Laos.
Disrupt sanctuaries. Reduce supplies to NVA/VC. Improve intelligence. Discourage use of Cambodia as sanctuary for NVA VC forces. Provide self-defense of US forces.	Cambodia would protest expansion of operations to Cambodian soil and might seek to defend its territory. Adverse political reaction.
[illegible] aid in country. [illegible] divert resources to internal security.	NVN would accuse the United States of attempting to bring about downfall of Government of NVN.

Ten days after this joint memo from the Chiefs, General Wheeler sent the Secretary a proposal of his own for the expansion of the air war under a new ROLLING THUNDER program, number 58. 38/ Its most important proposal was the reduction of Hanoi-Haiphong restricted circles down to 3 and 1.5 n.m. respectively. With other specific targets requested for authorization (of which the most important was Gia Lam airfield), this new proposal would have opened up an additional 15 valid targets for attack on the authority of the field commander. On the basis of an ISA recommendation, the reduction of the restricted zones around the two cities was rejected on November 9, but some of the additional individual targets were added to the authorized list. Consistent with these little escalatory measures was McNamara's decision on November 6 to authorize the deployment to Southeast Asia of a squadron of the first six F-111A aircraft to enter the Air Force active inventory. 40/ Like so many other decisions with respect to this ill-fated aircraft, this one would come to an unhappy end too. One of the specific objectives of the Chairman's proposal for constricting the prohibited areas had been to attempt the isolation of Haiphong on the ground, thereby effectively cutting off seaborne imports from their destinations in the rest of North Vietnam and to the war in the South. An independent CIA analysis of the air war at about this same time, however, had stated:

> Even a more intense interdiction campaign in the North would fail to reduce the flow of supplies sufficiently to restrict military operations. Prospects are dim that an air interdiction campaign against LOC's leading out of Haiphong alone could cut off the flow of seaborne imports and isolate Haiphong. 41/

In late November the Chiefs sent the Secretary still another and far more detailed memo describing their plans for the conduct of all aspects of the war for the ensuing four months. In it they spelled out requests for expanding the air war against 24 new targets. They desired authorization once again to mine the harbors of Haiphong, Hon Gai, and Cam Pha noting that bad weather in the coming months would force curtailment of much normal strike activity in the Red River delta. The harbor mining was offered as the most effective means of shutting off supplies to the North. The CIA analysis previously referred to had, however, also rejected such mining proposals as unlikely to succeed in their objective of cutting off imports to support the war, although they would raise the costs to the DRV.

> Political considerations aside, the combined interdiction of land and water routes, including the mining of the water approaches to the major ports and the bombing of ports and transshipment facilities, would be the most effective

type of interdiction campaign. This program would increase the hardships imposed on North Vietnam and raise further the costs of the support of the war in the South. It would, however, not be able to cut off the flow of essential supplies and, by itself, would not be the determining factor in shaping Hanoi's outlook toward the war. 42/

In addition to mining the harbors, the Chiefs requested that the comprehensive prohibition of attacks in the Hanoi/Haiphong areas be removed with the expected increase in civilian casualties to be accepted as militarily justified and necessary. They suggested as an alternative a 3 n.m. "restricted" area for the very center of Hanoi and a similar zone of 1.5 n.m. for Haiphong. They also requested the expansion of SEADRAGON naval activity north of 21.30° all the way to the Chinese border, and authorization of all the remaining targets on the JCS ROLLING THUNDER list. 43/ In spite of all these requests for expansion of the war (as well as several others for expanding the ground war in South Vietnam and operations in Laos and Cambodia), the Chiefs avoided the kind of vaunted claims for success from such new steps that had characterized past recommendations. This time they cautiously noted, "...there are no new programs which can be undertaken under current policy guidelines which would result in a rapid or significantly more visible increase in the rate of progress in the near term." 44/

The Chiefs 24-target proposal was considered at the Tuesday lunch on December 5, but no action was taken. A memo from Warnke to McNamara gives a clue as to why, "I have been informed that Secretary Rusk will not be prepared to consider the individual merits of the 24 unauthorized targets proposed and discussed in the JCS Four Months Plan." 45/ On December 16, McNamara and Rusk did reach agreement on ten new targets from the 24 target list including seven within the 10-mile Hanoi radius and two within the 4-mile Haiphong perimeter. 46/ Disapproved were five Haiphong port targets and the mining proposal.

None of the increased war activity over North Vietnam which these decisions authorized, however, would be able to prevent the enemy's massive offensive the following January. The fact that the President had acceded to the wishes of the military and the political pressures from Congress on this vital issue at this point when all the evidence available to McNamara suggested the continuing ineffectiveness of the bombing must have been an important if not determining factor in the Secretary's decision in November to retire. For the moment, however, the escalation continued.

As always, the President moved cautiously in allowing some military expansion of the air war in the fall of 1967. By the end of October, 6 of the 7 MIG-capable airfields which Secretary McNamara had

taken a strong stand against in the Stennis hearings had been hit, and only 5 of the August list of 57 recommended targets (which had meanwhile grown to 70 as new recommendations were made) remained unstruck. Thus, except for the port of Haiphong and a few others, virtually all of the economic and military targets in NVN that could be considered even remotely significant had been hit. Except for simply keeping it up, almost everything bombing could do to pressure NVN had been done.

In early December Defense spokesmen announced that the U.S. bombing in North and South Vietnam together had just topped the total of 1,544,463 tons dropped by U.S. forces in the entire European Theater during World War II. Of the 1,630,500 tons dropped, some 864,000 tons were dropped on NVN, already more than the 635,000 tons dropped during the Korean War or the 503,000 tons dropped in the Pacific Theater during World War II. 47/

4. The Decibel Level Goes Up

The purely military problems of the war aside, the President was also experiencing great difficulty in maintaining public support for this conduct of the war in the fall of 1967.

With the apparent failure of the San Antonio formula to start negotiations, the acrimony and shrillness of the public debate over the war reached new levels. The "hawks" had had their day during the Stennis hearings and the slow squeeze escalation that followed the failure of the Paris contacts. Among the "doves" the new escalation was greeted by new and more forceful outcries from the critics of the war. On October 12, the very day that Rusk was castigating the North Vietnamese in his press conference for their stubbornness, thirty dovish Congressmen sent the President an open letter complaining about the inconsistency of the recent bombing targets and Secretary McNamara's testimony during the Stennis hearings:

> The bombing of targets close to the Chinese border, and of the port cities of Cam Pha and Haiphong conflicts with the carefully reasoned and factual analysis presented prior to those steps by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara on August 25, 1967. We refer particularly to the Secretary's contention that 'our resort to a less selective campaign of air attack against the North would involve risks which at present I regard as too high to accept for this dubious prospect of successful risks.' 48/

On the basis of McNamara's recommendations, the Congressmen urged the President to stop the bombing and start negotiations.

While this public identification of the inconsistency of the positions taken by various members of the Administration was embarrassing, a more serious problem was the massive anti-war demonstration organized in Washington on October 21. The leaders of the "New Left" assembled some 50,000 anti-war protestors in the Capitol on this October Saturday and staged a massive march on the Pentagon. While the "politics of confrontation" may be distasteful to the majority of Americans, the sight of thousands of peaceful demonstrators being confronted by troops in battle gear cannot have been reassuring to the country as a whole nor to the President in particular. And as if to add insult to injury, an impudent and dovish Senator McCarthy announced in November that he would be a candidate for the Democratic nomination for President. He stated his intention of running in all the primaries and of taking the Vietnam war to the American people in a direct challenge to an incumbent President and the leader of his own party.

To counter these assaults on his war policy from the left, the President dramatically called home Ambassador Bunker and General Westmoreland (the latter to discuss troop levels and requests as well) in November and sent them out to publicly defend the conduct of the war and the progress that had been achieved. Bunker spoke to the Overseas Press Club in New York on November 17 and stressed the progress that the South Vietnamese were making in their efforts to achieve democratic self-government and to assume a larger burden of the war. General Westmoreland addressed the National Press Club in Washington on November 21 and outlined his own four-phase plan for the defeat of the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese sponsors. He too dwelled on the progress achieved to date and the increasing effectiveness of the South Vietnamese forces. Neither discussed the air war in the North in any serious way, however, and that was the issue that was clearly troubling the American public the most.

C. New Studies

1. SEACABIN

In the early winter of 1967-68 several new studies of the bombing were completed within the Government and by contract researchers all of which had some bearing on the deliberations of February and March 1968 when the next major reassessment took place. The first of these was entitled SEACABIN, short for "Study of the Political-Military Implications in Southeast Asia of the Cessation of Aerial Bombardment and the Initiation of Negotiations." It was a study done by the Joint Staff and ISA to specifically address the question of what could be expected from a cessation of the bombing and the beginning of negotiations, a possibility that seemed imminent at the time of the President's San Antonio speech in September. As it turned out, the time was not ripe. The study, however, was an important effort by the Defense Department to anticipate such a contingency.

Summarizing its findings and conclusions, the SEACABIN report began with a general assessment of the role of the bombing in the war:

> Role of Bombardment. There are major difficulties and uncertainties in a precise assessment of the bombing program on NVN. These include inadequate data on logistic flow patterns, limited information on imports into NVN, season effects of weather, and the limitations of reconnaissance. But it is clear that the air and naval campaigns against NVN are making it difficult and costly for the DRV to continue effective support of the VC. Our operations have inflicted heavy damage on equipment and facilities, inhibited resupply, compounded distribution problems, and limited the DRV's capability to undertake sustained large-scale military operations in SVN. The economic situation in NVN is becoming increasingly difficult for the enemy. However, as a result of extensive diversion of manpower and receipt of large-scale military and economic assistance from communist countries, the DRV has retained the capability to support military operations in SVN at current levels.. A cessation of the bombing program would make it possible for the DRV to regenerate its military and economic posture and substantially increase the flow of personnel and supplies from NVN to SVN. 49/

Implications of a bombing halt were dealt with in terms of advantages to the DRV and risks to the U.S. In the former category, the SEACABIN Study Group concluded as follows:

> D. IMPLICATIONS OF A CESSATION OF BOMBARDMENT
>
> 6. For DRV: Potential Gains
>
> a. Potential DRV Responses. Following a cessation of bombardment in return for its acceptance of the President's offer, the DRV could choose among one of three potential alternative courses of action: (1) to pursue an immediate-pay-off, short-term strategy of advantage; (2) to enter discussions with no intention of settling, while pursuing either its present strategy, or a revised political/military strategy of gaining a long-term advantage in SVN; and (3) to negotiate meaningfully within the United States. Under all courses, the immediate action of the DRV would be to reconstitute its LOC, stockpile near its borders, and begin general reapirs of its war damage.

b. DRV Reaction Time and US Detection of Changes

(1) Under conditions of bombing, NVN units and infiltration groups have taken from only a few days up to eight months to infiltrate to a CTZ. US detection and identification may take up to six months, or longer, and confirmation even longer. Following cessation, infiltration rates would be brought closer to minimum time.

(2) Given its present capability to expand its training base by almost 100%, the DRV could achieve a significant increase in present pipeline level of infiltration in about 3 months following decision to expand its training base.

(3) The DRV could regenerate major segments of its economic infrastructure in 6 months, its LOC in NVN in 30-60 days, its logistic system in 12 months. Port congestion would be alleviated. Materiel transit time would be significantly reduced.

c. Capabilities Over Time

10-15 days:

-- reinforce NVA forces at DMZ with up to 5 division equivalents. Allied/enemy battalion ratios in I CTZ could shift from 1.7/1 to 0.9/1

--increase artillery bombardment from beyond DMZ, and reinforce AAA and SAM units.

30-60 days:

--Restore to operational use major ports and LOC within NVN, to include RR, highway, and combination RR/highway bridges; airfields; and over half of the vehicle repair facilities.

--Accomplish a restructuring (depots, shelters, alternate routes) of the logistic system within NVN to increase the flexibility of the LOC in Laos.

2-6 months:

--Achieve undetected a new position of military advantage in SVN, through increased infiltration, with at least two divisions in place in SVN, and three others in transit.

--Transfer to military service, from NVN LOC maintenance and construction, managerial and supervisory personnel to alleviate the apparent shortage of leaders.

d. DRV Constraints. These considerations probably would continue to constrain DRV's choices among options at cessation:

(1) Strategy of protracted war. The DRV would probably continue to put at risk in SVN only those minimum forces it considers necessary to prosecute its strategy of protracted war.

(2) Fear of US invasion.

(3) Desire to preserve appearance of VC primacy in SVN.

(4) Limitations on ability to transfer trained personnel and leadership to SVN because of possibility of US resumption of attacks on NVN.

(5) DRV may be miscalculating the progress of the war in SVN. 50/

Obviously these potential advantages to the DRV involved reciprocal risk for the U.S. in curtailing the bombing. As the SEACABIN group saw them they were the following:

7. For US: Potential Risk

a. To Operations in SVN. The most far-reaching risk is an increase in enemy combat strength that may well go undetected by the US/RVN/FWMAF. Additionally, the US position could be disadvantaged by:

(1) Movements of heavy artillery and AAA.

(2) Loss of US supporting fire at DMZ.

(3) Increased threat from DMZ and border area.

(4) Impairment of pacification program.

(5) Lowering of morale of US/RVN/FWMAF.

(6) Resulting pressures to cease bombing in Laos.

(7) Vulnerability of barrier system.

b. Possible Offset: Present bombardment forces could be reallocated to SVN and Laos missions.

c. Critical Times to Offset Risks. US should enter cessation resolved to limit the time for DRV response generally as follows:

--Discussions should begin within 30-60 days of cessation.

--Discussions should be productive within four months of cessation; i.e., actions are being taken or are agreed to be taken to reduce the threats posed by the NVN to the achievement of US/GVN military objectives in SVN. 51/

The international reaction to a bombing halt was expected to be entirely positive, hence not a problem for analysis. The study postulated that the DRV would seek to prolong the bombing halt but try to maintain a level of military activity below the provocative that would maintain its strengths in the war while trying to erode the U.S. position through protracted negotiations. In approaching a bombing halt, the U.S. could escalate before it, de-escalate before it, or maintain the current intensity of combat. The latter course was recommended as the best method of demonstrating continued U.S. resolution in anticipation of a dramatic act of restraint. With respect to the negotiations themselves, the SEACABIN Group cautioned against the U.S. being trapped in the kind of protracted negotiations we experienced in Korea while the enemy took military advantage of the bombing suspension. To guard against this, unilateral verification was essential through continued aerial surveillance. To round out their recommendations, the SEACABIN Group looked at the reasons and methods of resuming bombing if required.

H. THE RESUMPTION OF BOMBARDMENT

18. Resumption - When. The conditions under which the bombardment of NVN should be resumed cannot be determined in advance with assurance. However, the US/RVN should

probably resume bombardment whenever one or more of the following situations are perceived:

a. The security of US/RVN/FWMAF in northern I CTZ is threatened by enemy reinforcements.

b. No discussions are in prospect 30-60 days after cessation.

c. Discussions or negotiations are not productive of militarily significant DRV/NLF concessions within four months.

d. The DRV has infiltrated significant new forces into SVN -- the raising of the NVA force level in SVN by a division equivalent or more (over 10%) is judged to be sufficient provocation.

e. An enemy attack of battalion size or larger is initiated while a cease-fire is in effect.

19. Resumption - How. Actual resumption of bombardment of NVN should be preceded by a program of actions which:

a. Demonstrate (to those who are able to make an objective judgment) that the DRV is taking advantage of the cessation in a way which is exposing US/RVN/FWMAF and the people of SVN to substantially increased dangers.

b. To the maximum practicable extent, demonstrate or encourage the conclusion that the DRV is, in fact, the aggressor in SVN.

c. After the maximum political advantage has been derived from the above actions and in the absence of an acceptable response from NVN, resume aerial and naval bombardment of NVN without restrictions on any militarily significant targets. Attacks should be planned to achieve maximum impact and with due regard to the advantages of surprise. 52/

The ISA/Joint Staff analysis closed with an appraisal of the overall value of a bombing halt in the context of negotiations with the DRV. Summing up, they said,

21. On balance, that DRV response to the US offer which carries with it the greatest risk to the United

States militarily is an ambiguous response in which the DRV would appear to engage in productive talks in order to gain time to concurrently regenerate support facilities in NVN and gradually build up personnel strength and support bases in Laos, Cambodia and SVN, without overt and visible provocation. Once discussions were initiated and extended for 2-6 months, the DRV would expect world pressure to exercise a heavy restraint on resumption of bombardment -- in fact, to prevent it in the absence of a demonstrable provocation of considerable consequence.

22. US intelligence evaluations of the impact of bombardment on NVN are sufficiently uncertain as to cast doubt on any judgment that aerial and naval bombardment is or is not establishing some upper limit on the DRV's ability to support the war in SVN. The effect on NVN itself is equally uncertain. If NVN is being seriously hurt by bombardment, the price for cessation should be high. However, if NVN can continue indefinitely to accommodate to bombardment, negotiation leverage from cessation -- or a credible threat of resumption -- is likely to be substantially less. A penalty to the United States of underevaluating the impact of bombardment of NVN would be an unnecessarily weak negotiating stance. 53/

In their final paragraphs, the Study Group turned to the question of DRV good faith. The President's statement that bombing could halt and negotiations begin if we had assurances that the DRV would "not take advantage" of our restraint obliged us to look at which we would regard as a violation of that principle.

27. It has not been possible to detect and measure increased infiltration into SVN until 4-6 months have elapsed. If discussions following a cessation of bombardment are protracted, the enemy could take advantage of the opportunity for increased infiltration with confidence that detection would be so slow and uncertain that insufficient provocation could be demonstrated to justify termination of talks or resumption of bombardment. The following are minimum acceptable actions which operationally define "not take advantage."

a. Stop artillery fire from and over the DMZ into SVN prior to or immediately upon cessation.

b. Agree that for the DRV to increase over the current level the flow of personnel and materiel south of

19° N latitude would be to take advantage of cessation and that it will refrain from doing so.

c. Accept "open skies"over NVN upon cessation.

d. Withdraw from the DMZ within a specified time, say two weeks, after cessation.

28. Cessation of bombing of NVN for any protracted period while continuing the war in SVN would be difficult to reconcile with any increase in US casualties.

29. If the DRV/NLF act in good faith, formal negotiations toward a cessation of hostilities should begin within two months after a cessation of bombardment. Preliminary discussions lasting any longer than two months will require a resumption of bombardment or the application of other pressures as appropriate. 54/

As a document, the SEACABIN study was important because it represented a first major effort to pull together a positive DOD position on the question of a bombing halt. The analysis and recommendations were compromises to be sure, but they were formulations that gave the Administration room for maneuver in approaching the problem of negotiations. Probably most importantly they established a basis of cooperation and collaboration between the Joint Staff and ISA on this issue that would be useful during the crisis of the following March when a new direction was being sought for the whole U.S. effort in Vietnam.

In mid-December, the Chiefs themselves sent the Secretary a memo noting that the SEACABIN study was the product of staff work and did not necessarily reflect the views of the JCS. The Chiefs stressed again their belief in the effectiveness of the bombing in punishing North Vietnamese aggression, and recorded their opposition to a halt in the bombing as a means of starting negotiations. North Vietnamese performance on the battlefield and diplomatically clearly indicated their unwillingness to enter negotiations except as a means of handicapping American power. Such a bombing halt would also endanger the lives of U.S. troops. Thus, while the study had been a useful exercise, the Secretary was advised against any endorsement of a cessation of bombing. 55/

2. The JASON Study

While DOD was internally examining bombing suspension scenarios, IDA's JASON division had called together many of the people who had participated in the 1966 Summer Study for another look at the effectiveness of the bombing and at various alternatives that might get

better results. Their report was submitted in mid-December 1967 and was probably the most categorical rejection of bombing as a tool of our policy in Southeast Asia to be made before or since by an official or semi-official group. The study was done for McNamara and closely held after completion. It was completed after his decision to leave the Pentagon, but it was a powerful confirmation of the positions on the bombing that he had taken in the internal councils of the government over the preceding year.

The study evaluated the bombing in terms of its achievement of the objectives that Secretary McNamara had defined for it:

> Secretary McNamara on August 25, 1967 restated the objectives of the bombing campaign in North Victnam. These objectives are:
>
> 1. To reduce the flow and/or to increase the cost of the continued infiltration of men and supplies from North to South Vietnam.
>
> 2. To raise the morale of the South Vietnamese people who, at the time the bombing started, were under severe military pressure.
>
> 3. To make clear to the North Victnamese political leadership that so long as they continued their aggression against the South, they would have to pay a price in the North. 56/

Taking up the first of these stated objectives, the JASON study reached an emphatically negative conclusion about the results from ROLLING THUNDER:

> As of October 1967, the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam has had no measurable effect on Hanoi's ability to mount and support military operations in the South. North Vietnam supports operations in the South mainly by functioning as a logistic funnel and providing a source of manpower, from an economy in which manpower has been widely under-utilized. Most of the essential military supplies that the VC/NVA forces in the South require from external sources are provided by the USSR, Eastern Europe, and Communist China. Furthermore, the volume of such supplies is so low that only a small fraction of the capacity of North Vietnam's flexible transportation network is required to maintain that flow.
>
> In the face of Rolling Thunder strikes on NVN, the bombing of infiltration routes in Laos, the U.S. naval operations along the Vietnamese coast, and the tactical

bombing of South Vietnam, North Vietnam infiltrated over 86,000 men in 1966. At the same time, it has also built up the strength of its armed forces at home, and acquired sufficient confidence in its supply and logistic organization to equip VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam with a modern family of imported 7.62mm weapons which require externally supplied ammunition. Moreover, NVN has the potential to continue building the size of its armed forces, to increase the yearly total of infiltration of individual soldiers and combat units, and to equip and supply even larger forces in South Vietnam for substantially higher rates of combat than those which currently prevail.

Since the beginning of the Rolling Thunder air strikes on NVN, the flow of men and materiel from NVN to SVN has greatly increased, and present evidence provides no basis for concluding that the damage inflicted on North Vietnam by the bombing program has had any significant effect on this flow. In short, the flow of men and materiel from North Vietnam to the South appears to reflect Hanoi's intentions rather than capabilities even in the face of the bombing.

NVN's ability to increase the rate of infiltration of men and materiel into SVN is not currently limited by its supply of military manpower, by its LOC capabilities, by the availability of transport carriers, or by its access to materiels and supplies. The VC/NVA are effectively limited by constraints of the situation in the South -- including the capacity of the VC infrastructure and distribution system to support additional materiel and troops -- but even given these constraints could support a larger force in the South. The inference which we have drawn from these findings is that NVN determines and achieves the approximate force levels that they believe are needed to sustain a war of attrition for an extended period of time.

Despite heavy attacks on NVN's logistic system, manufacturing capabilities, and supply stores, its ability to sustain the war in the South has increased rather than decreased during the Rolling Thunder strikes. It has become increasingly less vulnerable to aerial interdiction aimed at reducing the flow of men and materiel from the North to the South because it has made its transportation system more redundant, reduced the size and increased the number of depots and eliminated choke points.

The bombing of North Vietnam has inflicted heavy costs not so much to North Vietnam's military capability or its infiltration system as to the North Vietnamese economy as a whole. Measurable physical damage now exceeds $370 million and the regime has had to divert 300,000 to 600,000 people (many on a part-time basis) from agricultural and other tasks to counter the bombing and cope with its effects. The former cost has been more than met by aid from other Communist countries. The latter cost may not be real, since the extra manpower needs have largely been met from what was a considerable amount of slack in NVN's under-employed agricultural labor force. Manpower resources are apparently still adequate to operate the agricultural economy at a tolerable level and to continue simultaneously to support the war in SVN and maintain forces for the defense of the North at current or increased levels.

Virtually all of the military and economic targets in North Vietnam that can be considered even remotely significant have been struck, except for a few targets in Hanoi and Haiphong. Almost all modern industrial output has been halted and the regime has gone over to decentralized, dispersed, and/or protected modes of producing and handling essential goods, protecting the people, and supporting the war in the South. NVN has shown that it can find alternatives to conventional bridges and they continue to operate trains in the face of air strikes.

NVN has transmitted many of the material costs imposed by the bombing back to its allies. Since the bombing began, NVN's allies have provided almost $600 million in economic aid and another $1 billion in military aid -- more than four times what NVN has lost in bombing damage. If economic criteria were the only consideration, NVN would show a substantial net gain from the bombing, primarily in military equipment.

Because of this aid, and the effectiveness of its countermeasures, NVN's economy continues to function. NVN's adjustments to the physical damage, disruption, and other difficulties brought on by the bombing have been sufficiently effective to maintain living standards, meet transportation requirements, and improve its military capabilities. NVN is now a stronger military power than before the bombing and its remaining economy is more able to withstand bombing. The USSR could furnish NVN with much more sophisticated weapon systems; these could further increase the military strength of NVN and lead to larger U.S. losses.57/

These conclusions were supported copiously in a separate volume of the study devoted specifically to such analysis. The second objective of the bombing, to raise South Vietnamese morale, had been substantially achieved. There had been an appreciable improvement in South Vietnamese morale immediately after the bombing began and subsequent buoyancy always accompanied major new escalations of the air war. But the effect was always transient, fading as a particular pattern of attack became a part of the routine of the war. There was no indication that bombing could ever constitute a permanent support for South Vietnamese morale if the situation in the South itself was adverse.

The third function of the bombing, as described by McNamara, was psychological -- to win the test of wills with Hanoi by showing U.S. determination and intimidating DRV leaders about the future. The failure of the bombing in this area, according to the JASON study, had been as signal as in purely military terms.

> The bombing campaign against NVN has not discernably weakened the determination of the North Vietnamese leaders to continue to direct and support the insurgency in the South. Shortages of food and clothing, travel restrictions, separations of families, lack of adequate medical and educational facilities, and heavy work loads have tended to affect adversely civilian morale. However, there are few if any reliable reports on a breakdown of the commitment of the people to support the war. Unlike the situation in the South, there are no reports of marked increases of absenteeism, draft dodging, black market operations or prostitution. There is no evidence that possible war weariness among the people has shaken the leadership's belief that they can continue to endure the bombing and outlast the U.S. and SVN in a protracted war of attrition.
>
> Long term plans for the economic development have not been abandoned but only set aside for the duration of the war. The regime continues to send thousands of young men and women abroad for higher education and technical training; we consider this evidence of the regime's confidence of the eventual outcome of the war.
>
> The expectation that bombing would erode the determination of Hanoi and its people clearly overestimated the persuasive and disruptive effects of the bombing and, correspondingly, underestimated the tenacity and recuperative capabilities of the North Vietnamese. That the bombing has not achieved anticipated goals reflects a general failure to appreciate the fact, well-documented in the historical

and social scientific literature, that a direct, frontal attack on a society tends to strengthen the social fabric of the nation, to increase popular support of the existing government, to improve the determination of both the leadership and the populace to fight back, to induce a variety of protective measures that reduce the society's vulnerability to future attack and to develop an increased capacity for quick repairs and restoration of essential functions. The great variety of physical and social countermeasures that North Vietnam has taken in response to the bombing is now well documented but the potential effectiveness of these countermeasures has not been adequately considered in previous planning or assessment studies. 58/

The JASON study took a detailed look at alternative means of applying our air power in an effort to determine if some other combination of targets and tactics would achieve better results. Nine different strategies were examined including mining the ports, attacking the dikes and various combinations of attack emphasis on the LOC systems. This was the emphatic conclusion: "We are unable to devise a bombing campaign in the North to reduce the flow of infiltrating personnel into SVN." 59/ All that could really be said was that some more optimum employment of U.S. air resources could be devised in terms of target damage and LOC disruption. None could reduce the flow even close to the essential minimum for sustaining the war in the South.

After having requested that some portions of the study be reworked to eliminate errors of logic, Mr. Warnke forwarded the final version to Secretary McNamara on January 3, 1968 with the information copies to Secretary Rusk, the Joint Chiefs and CINCPAC. In his memo he noted the similarity of the conclusions on bombing effectiveness to those reached not long before in the study by the CIA (see above). Specifically, Mr. Warnke noted that, "Together with SEA CABIN, the study supports the proposition that a bombing pause -- even for a significant period of time -- would not add appreciably to the strength of our adversary in South Vietnam." Thus was laid the analytical groundwork for the President's decision to partially curtail the bombing in March. 61/

3. Systems Analysis Study on Economic Effects

An unrelated but complementary study of the economic effects of the bombing on North Vietnam was completed by Systems Analysis right after the New Year and sent to the Secretary. It too came down hard on the unproductiveness of the air war, even to the point of suggesting that it might be counter-productive in pure economic terms. Enthoven's cover memo to McNamara stated,

...the bombing has not been very successful in imposing economic losses on the North. Losses in domestic production have been more than replaced by imports and the availability of manpower, particularly because of the natural growth in the labor force, has been adequate to meet wartime needs. It is likely that North Vietnam will continue to be able to meet extra manpower and economic requirements caused by the bombing short of attacks on population centers or the cities. 62/

The paper itself examined two aspects of the problem: the impact of the bombing on GNP and on labor supply/utilization. The most telling part of the analysis was the demonstration that imports had more than offset the cost of the war to the North in simple GNP terms as the following passage shows:

II. Effects on North Vietnam's Gross National Product

Prior to 1965, the growth rate of the North Vietnamese economy averaged 6% per year. It is estimated that this rate continued (and even increased slightly) during 1965 and 1966, the first two years of the bombing (Table 1). In 1967, however, domestically-produced GNP declined sharply to only $1,688 million -- a level roughly comparable to the prewar years of 1963 and 1964. The cumulative loss in GNP caused by the bombing in the last three years is estimated to be $294 million (Table 2).

To offset these losses, North Vietnam has had an increased flow of foreign economic aid. Prior to the bombing, economic aid to North Vietnam averaged $95 million annually. Since the bombing began, the flow of economic aid has increased to $340 million per year (Table 1). The cumulative increase in economic aid in the 1965-1967 period over the 1953-1964 average has been an estimated $490 million.

Thus, over the entire period of the bombing, the value of economic resources gained through foreign aid has been greater than that lost because of the bombing (Table 3). The cumulative foreign aid increase has been $490 million; losses have totaled $294 million.

In addition to the loss of current production, North Vietnam has lost an estimated $164 million in capital assets destroyed by the bombing. These capital assets include much of North Vietnam's industrial base - its manufacturing plants, power plants, and bridges.

It is not certain that Russia and China will replace North Vietnam's destroyed capital assets through aid programs, thus absorbing part of the bombing cost themselves. However, they could do so in a short period of time at relatively small cost; if economic aid remained at its wartime yearly rate of $340 million and half were used to replace capital stock, North Vietnam's losses could be replaced in a year. If the capital stock is replaced, the economic cost to North Vietnam of the bombing will be the cumulative loss of output from the time the bombing began until the capital stock is fully replaced. Even this probably overstates the cost, however. Even if the pre-bombing capital stock were only replaced, it would be more modern and productive than it otherwise would have been.

While the aggregate supply of goods in North Vietnam has remained constant, standards of living may have declined. The composition of North Vietnam's total supply has shifted away from final consumer goods toward intermediate products related to the war effort, i.e., construction and transportation.

Food supplies, vital to the health and efficiency of North Vietnam, have been maintained with only a slight decline. As shown in Table 4, the estimated North Vietnamese daily intake of calories has fallen from 1,910 in 1963 to 1,880 in 1967. Even considering that imported wheat and potatoes are not traditional table fare in North Vietnam, the North Vietnamese are not badly off by past North Vietnamese standards or the standards of other Asian countries.

The output of industrial and handicraft output declined 35% in 1967 (Table 1). Economic aid has probably not replaced all of this decline. With lower war priority, the supply of non-food consumer goods such as textiles and durables has probably declined more than the food supply.

Despite lower standards of living, the ability of North Vietnamese government to sustain its population at a level high enough to prevent mass dissatisfaction is evident. 63/

The analysis of the manpower question in the Systems Analysis paper revealed that there was as yet no real squeeze for the North Vietnamese because of population growth. In a word, the

bombing was unable to beat the birth rate. This is how Systems Analysis assessed the problem:

III. Effects on Total North Vietnamese Manpower Supply

In addition to the economic effects, the air war has drawn North Vietnamese labor into bomb damage repair, replacement of combat casualties, construction, transportation, and air defense. Over the last three years, these needs have absorbed almost 750,000 able-bodied North Vietnamese (Table 5).

But, again there are offsetting factors. First, over 90% of the increase in manpower has been provided by population growth (Table 5). Since the start of the bombing, 720,000 able-bodied people have been added to the North Vietnamese labor force.

Second, the bombing has increased not only the demand for labor but also the supply. The destruction of much of North Vietnam's modern industry has released an estimated 33,000 workers from their jobs. Similarly, the evacuation of the cities has made an estimated 48,000 women available for work on roads and bridges in the countryside. Both of these groups of people were available for work on war-related activity with little or no extra sacrifice of production; if they weren't repairing bomb damage, they wouldn't be doing anything productive.

Third, North Vietnam has been supplied with manpower as a form of foreign aid. An estimated 40,000 Chinese are thought to be employed in maintaining North Vietnam's road and rail network.

Finally, additional workers could be obtained in North Vietnam from low productivity employment. In less developed countries, agriculture typically employs more people than are really needed to work the land, even with relatively primitive production methods. Also, further mobilization may be possible through greater use of women in the labor force. The available statistics are not precise enough to identify the magnitude of this potential labor pool, but the estimates given in Table 6 show that even after two years of war the total North Vietnamese labor force is only 54% of its population - scarcely higher than it was in 1965.

In sum, the total incremental need for war-related manpower of roughly 750,000 people appears to have been offset (Table 5) with no particular strain on the population. Future manpower needs may outstrip North Vietnamese population growth, but the North Vietnamese government can import more manpower (though there may be limits to how many Chinese they want to bring into the country), use women and/or underemployed workers, and draw workers from productive employment, replacing their output with imports. Given these options, it appears that the North Vietnamese government is not likely to be hampered by aggregate manpower shortages. 64/

D. The Year Closes on a Note of Optimism

The negative analyses of the air war, however, did not reflect the official view of the Administration, and certainly not the view of the military at any level in the command structure at year's end. The latter had, for instance, again vigorously opposed any holiday truce arrangements, and especially the suspension of the air war against North Vietnam's logistical system. 65/ On this they had been duly overruled, the holiday pauses having become the standard SOP to domestic and international war protesters. The 1967 pauses produced, as expected, no major breakthrough towards peace between the belligerents through any of their illusive diplomatic points of contact.

What was absent of course for both sides was any fundamental reassessment that could move either or both to modify their positions on negotiations. The DRV was at the time in the midst of the massive preparations for the Tet offensive in January while the U.S. remained bouyed by the favorable reports from the field on seeming military progress in the last months of 1967. The missing ingredient for peace moves at that time was motivation on both sides. Each had reason to wait. When, just before Christmas, Pope Paul called on the U.S. to halt the bombing and the DRV to demonstrate restraint as a step towards peace he received a personal visit from President Johnson the following day (on return from a Presidential trip to Australia). The President courteously but firmly explained the U.S. policy to the Pope, "mutual restraint" was necessary before peace talks could begin.

Contributing to the firmness of the U.S. position were the optimistic reports from the field on military progress in the war. Both statistically and qualitatively, improvement was noted throughout the last quarter of the year and a mood of cautious hope pervaded the dispatches. Typical of these was Admiral Sharp's year end wrap-up cable. Having primary command responsibility for the air war, CINCPAC devoted a major portion of his message to the ROLLING THUNDER program in 1967, presenting as he did not only his view of accomplishments in the calendar year but also a rebuttal to critics of the concept and conduct of the air war.

Admiral Sharp outlined three objectives which the air campaign was seeking to achieve: disruption of the flow of external assistance into North Vietnam, curtailment of the flow of supplies from North Vietnam into Laos and South Vietnam, and destruction "in depth" of North Vietnamese resources that contributed to the support of the war. 66/ Acknowledging that the flow of fraternal communist aid into the North had grown every year of the war, CINCPAC noted the stepped up effort in 1967 to neutralize this assistance by logistically isolating its primary port of entry -- Haiphong. The net results, he felt, had been encouraging:

> The overall effect of our effort to reduce external assistance has resulted not only in destruction and damage to the transportation systems and goods being transported thereon but has created additional management, distribution and manpower problems. In addition, the attacks have created a bottleneck at Haiphong where inability effectively to move goods inland from the port has resulted in congestion on the docks and a slowdown in offloading ships as they arrive. By October, road and rail interdictions had reduced the transportation clearance capacity at Haiphong to about 2700 short tons per day. An average of 4400 short tons per day had arrived in Haiphong during the year. 67/

The assault against the continuing traffic of men and materiel through North Vietnam toward Laos and South Vietnam, however, had produced only marginal results. Success here was measured in the totals of destroyed transport, not the constriction of the flow of personnel and goods.

> Although men and material needed for the level of combat now prevailing in South Vietnam continue to flow despite our attacks on LOCs, we have made it very costly to the enemy in terms of material, manpower, management, and distribution. From 1 January through 15 December 1967, 122,960 attack sorties were flown in Rolling Thunder

route packages I through V and in Laos, SEA Dragon offensive operations involved 1,384 ship-days on station and contributed materially in reducing enemy seaborne infiltration in southern NVN and in the vicinity of the DMZ. Attacks against the NVN transport system during the past 12 months resulted in destruction of carriers cargo carried, and personnel casualties. Air attacks throughout North Vietnam and Laos destroyed or camaged 5,261 motor vehicles, 2,475 railroad rolling stock, and 11,425 watercraft from 1 January through 20 December 1967. SEA DRAGON accounted for another 1,473 WBLC destroyed or damaged from 1 January - 30 November. There were destroyed rail-lines, bridges, ferries, railroad yards and shops, storage areas, and truck parks. Some 3,685 land targets were struck by Sea Dragon forces, including the destruction or damage of 303 coastal defense and radar sites. Through external assistance, the enemy has been able to replace or rehabilitate many of the items damage or destroyed, and transport inventories are roughly at the same level they were at the beginning of the year. Nevertheless, construction problems have caused interruptions in the flow of men and supplies, caused a great loss of work-hours, and restricted movement particularly during daylight hours. 68/

The admission that transport inventories were the same at year's end as when it began must have been a painful one indeed for CINCPAC in view of the enormous cost of the air campaign against the transport system in money, aircraft, and lives. As a consolation for this signal failure, CINCPAC pointed to the extensive diversion of civilian manpower to war related activities as a result of the bombing.

A primary effect of our efforts to impede movement of the enemy has been to force Hanoi to engage from 500,000 to 600,000 civilians in full-time and part-time war-related activities, in particular for air defense and repair of the LOCs. This diversion of manpower from other pursuits, particularly from the agricultural sector, has caused a drawdown on manpower. The estimated lower food production yields, coupled with an increase in food imports in 1967 (some six times that of 1966), indicate that agriculture is having great difficulty in adjusting to this hanged composition of the work force. The cost and difficulties of the war to Hanoi have sharply increased, and only through the willingness of other communist countries to provide maximum replacement of goods and material has NVN managed to sustain its war effort. 69/

To these manpower diversions CINCPAC added the cost to North Vietnam in 1967 of the destruction of vital resources -- the third of his air war objectives:

C. Destroying vital resources:

> Air attacks were authorized and executed by target systems for the first time in 1967, although the attacks were limited to specific targets within each system. A total of 9,740 sorties was flown against targets on the ROLLING THUNDER target list from 1 January - 15 December 1967. The campaign against the power system resulted in reduction of power generating capability to approximately 15 percent of original capacity. Successful strikes against the Thai Nguyen iron and steel plant and the Haiphong cement plant resulted in practically total destruction of these two installations. NVN adjustments to these losses have had to be made by relying on additional imports from China, the USSR or the Eastern European countries. The requirement for additional imports reduces available shipping space for war supporting supplies and adds to the congestion at the ports. Interruptions in raw material supplies and the requirement to turn to less efficient means of power and distribution has degraded overall production.
>
> Economic losses to North Vietnam amounted to more than $130 million dollars in 1967, representing over one-half of the total economic losses since the war began. 70/

This defense of the importance and contribution of the air campaign to the overall effort in Vietnam was seconded by General Westmoreland later in January when he sent his year-end summary of progress to Washington. In discussing the efforts of his men on the ground in the South he described the bombing of the North as "indispensable" in cutting the flow of support and maintaining the morale of his forces. 71/ It is worth noting that COMUSMACV's optimistic assessment was dispatched just 4 days before the enemy launched his devastating Tet offensive, proving thereby a formidable capability to marshall men and materiel for massive attacks at times and places of his choosing, the bombing notwithstanding.

Less than a week later, Secretary McNamara appeared before Congress for the presentation of his last annual "posture" statement. These regular January testimonies had become an important forum in which the Secretary reviewed the events of the preceding year, presented the budget for the coming year and outlined the programs for the Defense establishment for the next five years. In all cases he had begun with a broad brush review of the international situation and in recent years

devoted a major portion of the review to the Vietnam problem. In his valedictory on February 1, 1968 (just after the beginning of Tet) he offered a far more sober appraisal of the effectiveness of the bombing than the military commanders in the field. In it he drew on much of the analysis provided to him the previous fall by the JASON and SEACABIN studies and his own systems analysts. His estimate of the bombing is perhaps the closest to being realistic ever given by the Administration and was a wise and tempered judgment to offer in the face of the enemy's impressive Tet attacks.

The air campaign against North Vietnam has included attacks on industrial facilities, fixed military targets, and the transportation system.

Attacks against major industrial facilities through 1967 have destroyed or put out of operation a large portion of the rather limited modern industrial base. About 70 percent of the North's electric generating capacity is currently out of operation, and the bulk of its fixed petroleum storage capacity has been destroyed. However, (imported diesel generators are probably producing sufficient electricity for essential services and, by dispersing their petroleum supplies, the North Vietnamese have been able to meet their minimum petroleum needs. Most, if not all, of the industrial output lost has been replaced by imports from the Soviet Union and China.

Military and economic assistance from other Communist countries, chiefly the Soviet Union, has been steadily increasing. In 1965, North-Vietnam received in aid a total of $420 million ($270 million military and $150 million economic); in 1966, $730 million ($455 million military and $275 million economic); and preliminary estimates indicate that total aid for 1967 may have reached $1 billion ($660 million military and $340 million economic). Soviet military aid since 1965 has been concentrated on air defense materiel -- SAM's, AAA guns and ammo, radars, and fighter aircraft.

Soviet economic assistance has included trucks, railroad equipment, barges, machinery, petroleum, fertilizer, and food. China has provided help in the construction of light industry, maintenance of the transportation system and improvements in the communications and irrigation systems, plus some 30,000 to 50,000 support troops for use in North Vietnam for repair and AAA defense.

Damage inflicted by our air attacks on fixed military targets has led to the abandonment of barracks and supply

and ammunition depots and has caused a dispersal of supplies and equipment. However, North Vietnam's air defense system continues to function effectively despite increased attacks on airfields, SAM sites, and AAA positions. The supply of SAM missiles and antiaircraft ammunition appears adequate, notwithstanding our heavy attacks, and we see no indication of any permanent drop in their expenditure rates.

Our intensified air campaign against the transportation system seriously disrupted normal operations and has increased the cost and difficulties of maintaining traffic flows. Losses of transportation equipment have increased, but inventories have been maintained by imports from Communist countries. The heavy damage inflicted on key railroad and highway bridges in the Hanoi-Haiphong areas during 1967 has been largely offset by the construction of numerous bypasses and the more extensive use of inland waterways.

While our overall loss rate over North Vietnam has been decreasing steadily, from 3.4 aircraft per 1,000 sorties in 1965 to 2.1 in 1966 and to 1.9 in 1967, losses over the Hanoi-Haiphong areas have been relatively high.

The systematic air campaign against fixed economic and military target systems leaves few strategically important targets unstruck. Other than manpower, North Vietnam provides few direct resources to the war effort, which is sustained primarily by the large imports from the Communist countries. The agrarian nature of the economy precludes an economic collapse as a result of the bombing. Moreover while we can make it more costly in time and manpower, it is difficult to conceive of any interdiction campaign that would pinch off the flow of military supplies to the south as long as combat requirements remain at anything like the current low levels. 72/

VI. THE CORNER IS TURNED -- JANUARY-MARCH 1968

The Johnson Administration began 1968 in a mood of cautious hope about the course of the war. Within a month those hopes had been completely dashed. In late January and early February, the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese supporters launched the massive Tet assault on the cities and towns of South Vietnam and put the Johnson Administration and the American public through a profound political catharsis on the wisdom and purpose of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the soundness of our policies for the conduct of the war. The crisis engendered the most soul-searching debate within the Administration about what course to take next in the whole history of the war. In the emotion laden atmosphere of those dark days, there were cries for large-scale escalation on the one side and for significant retrenchment on the other. In the end an equally difficult decision -- to stabilize the effort in the South and de-escalate in the North -- was made. One of the inescapable conclusions of the Tet experience that helped to shape that decision was that as an interdiction measure against the infiltration of men and supplies, the bombing had been a near total failure. Moreover, it had not succeeded in breaking Hanoi's will to continue the fight. The only other major justification for continuing the bombing was its punitive value, and that began to pale in comparison with the potential (newly perceived by many) of its suspension for producing negotiations with the DRV, or failing that a large propaganda windfall for the U.S. negotiating position. The President's dramatic decision at the end of March capped a long month of debate. Adding force to the President's announcement of the partial bombing halt was his own personal decision not to seek re-election.

A. The Crisis Begins

1. Public Diplomacy Gropes On

Following Ambassador Harriman's visit to Bucharest in November 1967 the next move in the dialogue of the deaf between Hanoi and Washington was a slightly new formulation of the North Vietnamese position by Foreign Minister Trinh on December 29. Speaking at a reception at the Mongolian Embassy he stated:

> After the United States has ended the bombing and all other acts of war, [North Vietnam] will hold talks with the United States on questions concerned.

By shifting his tense from the "could" of his 28 January 1967 statement to "will", Trinh had moved his position just slightly closer to that of the U.S. This statement was, no doubt, a part of a secret diplomatic dialogue, possibly through the Rumanians, that must have continued into the new year. The State Department readily acknowledged that Trinh's

statement was a "new formulation," but quickly pointed out that it had been prefaced by a reaffirmation of the four points and did not deal with the specifics of when, where and how negotiations would take place. 2/

Rusk's efforts to downplay the significance of the Trinh statement notwithstanding, it can be assumed that some U.S. response was sent to Hanoi. Reinforcing this impression is the fact that on January 3 bombing was again completely prohibited within 5 n.m. of both Hanoi and Haiphong for an indefinite period. 3/ (Some confusion may arise as to the various constraints that were placed on the bombing near the two major cities at different times and for different radii. "Prohibited" meant that no strikes had been or would be authorized; "restricted" meant that the area was generally off limits but that individual targets, on a case by case basis, might be approved by "highest authority" for a single attack. The 30 n.m. restricted zone around Hanoi and its 10 n.m. counterpart around Haiphong had existed since the beginning of the bombing in 1965. The prohibited zones were established in December 1966. In 1967 they had been 10 n.m. for Hanoi and 4 n.m. for Haiphong.) on January 16 when the White House Luncheon group met they authorized only two targets that McNamara and Rusk had not already agreed to in December and they specifically reaffirmed the prohibition around the two cities. 4/

The following day, the President, in his annual State of the Union address, softened somewhat the U.S. position in what may have been intended as a message to Hanoi. He called for "serious" negotiations rather than the "productive" talks he had asked for in the San Antonio speech. Unfortunately, he also stated that the North Vietnamese "must not take advantage of our restraint as they have in the past." 5/ Newsmen mistakenly took this for a hardening of the U.S. position by the President, an error Dean Rusk tried to dispel the following day. But, as on many occasions in the past, if this was intended as a signal to Hanoi it must have been a confusing one. Once again the problem of multiple audiences scrambled the communication. Not surprisingly then, on January 21, Nham Dan, the official North Vietnamese newspaper condemned the San Antonio formula as the "habitual trick" of the President who was attempting to impose "very insolent conditions" on Hanoi. The U.S. had no right to ask reciprocity for a cessation of the bombing since it was the aggressor. 6/

His intent having been misconstrued, the President used the next most convenient opportunity to convey his message -- the confirmation hearings of the Senate Armed Services Committee on the appointment of his close friend and advisor, Clark Clifford, to be Secretary of Defense. In the course of his testimony, Clifford replied to questions by Senator Strom Thurmond about the timing and conditions the Administration intended for a bombing halt. Here is the essential portion of that testimony:

SENATOR THURMOND:....This morning you testified about the large quantities of goods that were brought in during the cessation of bombing, and in view of your experience and your knowledge, and the statements you made this morning, I presume that you would not favor cessation of bombing where American lives would be jeopardized?

MR. CLIFFORD: I would not favor the cessation of bombing under present circumstances. I would express the fervent hope that we could stop the bombing if we had some kind of reciprocal word from North Vietnam that they wanted to sit down and, in good faith, negotiate.

I would say only that as I go into this task, the deepest desire that I have is to bring hostilities in Vietnam to a conclusion under those circumstances that permit us to have a dignified and honorable result that in turn will obtain for the South Vietnamese that goal which we have made such sacrifices to attain.

SENATOR THURMOND: When you spoke of negotiating, in which case you would be willing to have a cessation of bombing, I presume you would contemplate that they would stop their military activities, too, in return for a cessation of bombing.

MR. CLIFFORD: No, that is not what I said.

I do not expect them to stop their military activities. I would expect to follow the language of the President when he said that if they would agree to start negotiations promptly and not take advantage of the pause in the bombing.

SENATOR THURMOND: What do you mean by taking advantage if they continue their military activities?

MR. CLIFFORD: Their military activity will continue in South Vietnam, I assume, until there is a cease fire agreed upon. I assume that they will continue to transport the normal amount of goods, munitions, and men, to South Vietnam. I assume that we will continue to maintain our forces and support our forces during that period. So what I am suggesting, in the language of the President is, that he would insist that they not take advantage of the suspension of the bombing. 7/

Several days later, the Clifford testimony was confirmed by the State Department as the position of the U.S. Government. This, then, was the final public position taken by the Administration prior to the launching of the Tet offensive by the enemy on January 30. While it amounted to a further softening, it was still considerably short of the unconditional cessation the North Vietnamese were demanding. In the aftermath of the Tet attack, both sides would scale down their demands in the interests of opening a direct dialogue.

2. The Tet Offensive

As planned, the Allies began a 36-hour truce in honor of the Tet holidays on January 29. The order was shortly cancelled, however, because of fierce enemy attacks in the northern provinces. Then, suddenly on January 31, the Viet Cong and NVA forces launched massive assaults on virtually every major city and provincial capital, and most of the military installations in South Vietnam. In Saigon, attackers penetrated the new American Embassy and the Palace grounds before they were driven back. Whole sections of the city were under Viet Cong control temporarily. In Hué an attacking force captured virtually the entire city including the venerable Citadel, seat of the ancient capital of Vietnam and cultural center of the country. Everywhere the fighting was intense and the casualties, civilian as well as military, were staggering. Coming on the heels of optimistic reports from the field commands, this offensive caught official Washington off guard and stunned both the Administration and the American public. The Viet Cong blatantly announced their aim as the overthrow of the Saigon regime. But the Allied forces fought well and the main thrust of the attacks on Saigon, Danang, and elsewhere were blunted with the enemy suffering enormous casualties. Only in Hué did the communists succeed in capturing the city temporarily. There the fighting continued as the most costly of the war for nearly a month before the Viet Cong were finally rooted out of their strongholds.

The lesson of the Tet offensive concerning the bombing should have been unmistakably clear for its proponents and critics alike. Bombing to interdict the flow of men and supplies to the South had been a signal failure. The resources necessary to initiate an offensive of Tet proportions and sustain the casualties and munitions expenditures it entailed had all flowed south in spite of the heavy bombing in North Vietnam, Laos and South Vietnam. It was now clear that bombing alone could not prevent the communists from amassing the materiel, and infiltrating the manpower necessary to conduct massive operations if they chose. Moreover, Tet demonstrated that the will to undergo the required sacrifices and hardships was more than ample.

The initial military reaction in Washington appears to have been addressed to the air war. On February 3, the Chiefs sent the

Secretary a memo renewing their earlier proposal for reducing the restricted zone around Hanoi and Haiphong to 3 and 1.5 n.m. respectively, with field authority granted to make strikes as required outside. The memo opened with a reference to the Tet offensive: "Through his buildup at Khe Sanh and actions throughout South Vietnam during the past week, the enemy has shown a major capability for waging war in the South." 8/ In view of the evident ineffectiveness of the bombing in preventing the offensive, the succeeding sentence in the memo, providing the justification for the request, can only appear as a non sequitur: "The air campaign against NVN should be conducted to achieve maximum effect in reducing this enemy capability." 9/

The arguments against such authorization were formulated by ISA. Mr. Warnke observed that:

> In addition to the lines of communication that would be opened for attack by shrinking the control areas around Hanoi and Haiphong only a couple of fixed targets not previously authorized would be released for strike. These targets do not appear to have large civilian casualties or other political liabilities associated with them. A description of these targets is attached. (Tab B) The major effects thus would be (1) to open to armed recce attack the primary and secondary LOCs between the present "regular" 10 and 4 mile circles and the proposed 3 and 1-1/2 mile circles, and, if the Joint Staff interpretation is accepted, (2) to release for strike the previously authorized targets within the "special" 5 mile circles. 10/

Other considerations also argued in favor of deferring action on this proposal for the moment:

> I recommend that, if this proposal is accepted, the new circles be treated as containing areas where no strikes are to be made without new individual authorization. In any event, I believe the present restrictions should be continued pending the return of the 3 American PWs who have been designated by Hanoi for release. Our information is that these men will be picked up by 2 American pacifists who are leaving from Vientiane, Laos, for Hanoi on the next available flight. The next scheduled ICC flight to Hanoi is on 9 February. 11/

The issue was probably raised at the White House Luncheon on February 6, but the JCS proposal was not approved. Strikes against targets in Haiphong apparently were authorized, however, since the first such raids in over a month took place on February 10. These, however, were only the most immediate reactions to the trauma of Tet 1968. To be sure, as

time went on, the air war would be shoved aside somewhat by considerations of force augmentation in the south -- the principle concern after the massive Viet Cong attack. Bombing as an issue would more and more be considered in relation to the possibility of negotiations and the improvement of the U.S. diplomatic position. The failure of the bombing to interdict infiltration and break Hanoi's will meant that it could be militarily justified for the future only as a punitive measure. Nevertheless, many in the Pentagon would continue to advocate its expansion. As events moved forward this punitive value would gradually seem less and less important to the President compared with the potential of a bombing suspension (even partial) for producing serious peace negotiations and/or appeasing public opinion. For the moment, however, the Tet assault appeared only as a massive repudiation of U.S. peace overtures, hardly something to warrant a reduction in our side of the conflict.

On Sunday, February 4, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara appeared jointly on a special one-hour program of "Meet the Press" to answer questions primarily about the Tet offensive. When asked about the meaning of these new attacks for the diplomatic effort and the role of the bombing, Rusk replied as follows:

MR. SPIVAK. Secretary Rusk, may I ask you a question?

SECRETARY RUSK. Yes.

MR. SPIVAK. The President the other day asked this question, he said, what would the North Vietnamese be doing if we stopped the bombing and let them alone? Now there is some confusion about what we want them to do. What is it we want them to do today if we stop the bombing?

SECRETARY RUSK. Well, many, many months ago the President said almost anything as a step toward peace. Now I think it is important to understand the political significance of the events of the last 3 or 4 days in South Vietnam. President Johnson said some weeks ago that we are exploring the difference between the statement of their Foreign Minister about entering into discussions and his own San Antonio formula.

Now we have been in the process of exploring the problems that arise when you put those two statements side by side. Hanoi knows that. They know that these explorations are going on because they were a party to them. Secondly, we have exercised some restraint in our bombing in North Vietnam during this period of exploration, particularly in the immediate vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong. Again, Hanoi knows this. They also knew that the Tet cease-fire period was coming up.

MR. SPIVAK. Have we stopped the bombing there?

SECRETARY RUSK. No, we have not had a pause in the traditionally accepted sense but we have limited the bombing at certain points in order to make it somewhat easier to carry forward these explorations so that particularly difficult incidents would not interrupt them. We have not gone into a pause as that word is generally understood.

But they've also known that the Tet cease-fire was coming up. And they've known from earlier years that we've been interested in converting something like a Tet cease-fire into a more productive dialogue, into some opportunity to move toward peace.

Now in the face of all these elements they participated in laying on this major offensive. Now I think it would be foolish not to draw a political conclusion from this that they are not seriously interested at the present time in talking about peaceful settlement. Or in exploring the problems connected with the San Antonio formula. I remind those who don't recall that formula that it was that we would stop the bombing when it would lead promptly to productive discussions. And we assumed that they would not take advantage of this cessation of bombing while such discussions were going on.

Now it's hard to imagine a more reasonable proposal by any nation involved in an armed conflict than that. And I think we have to assume that these recent offensives in the south are an answer, are an answer, in addition to their public denunciation of the San Antonio formula.

MR. ABEL. Are you saying, Mr. Secretary, that we interpret this offensive as their rejection of the diplomatic overtures that have been made?

SECRETARY RUSK. Well, they have rejected the San Antonio formula publicly, simply on the political level. And I think it would be foolish for us not to take into account what they're doing on the ground when we try to analyze what their political position is. You remember the old saying that what you do speaks so loud I can't hear what you say. Now we can't be indifferent to these actions on the ground and think that these have no consequences from a political point of view. So they know where we live. Everything that we've said, our 14 points, 28 proposals to which we've said yes and to which they've

said no, the San Antonio formula, all these things remain there on the table for anyone who is interested in moving toward peace. They're all there. But they know where we live and we'd be glad to hear from them sometime at their convenience when they decide that they want to move toward peace.

MR. ABEL. I'm assuming, sir, that the San Antonio formula stands as our longer term position here.

SECRETARY RUSK. That is correct. 12/

These views of the Secretary of State were reinforced on February 8 when the North Vietnamese, obviously in the flush of their psychological victory, again broadcast a repudiation of the San Antonio formula. Meanwhile, they had been engaged in secret contacts with the U.S. through the Italian Foreign Office in Rome. On February 14, the Italians disclosed that two representatives from Hanoi had visited Rome on February 4 to meet Foreign Minister Fanfani "for talks about the Vietnam conflict and about possible hypotheses of a start of negotiations to settle it." 13/ Washington was fully informed, yet Rusk announced on the same day that all U.S. attempts to launch peace talks "have resulted in rejection" by Hanoi and that there was no indication she would restrain herself in exchange for a bombing halt. To this the President, at an unscheduled news conference two days later, added that Hanoi was no more ready to negotiate at that time than it had been three years previously. 14/ These reciprocating recriminations in the two capitals were the logical outcome of such dramatic events as the Tet offensive. They would, however, soon give way to cooler evaluations of the situation, presumably on both sides.

The primary focus of the U.S. reaction to the Tet offensive was not diplomatic, however. It was another reexamination of force requirements for avoiding defeat or disaster in the South. On February 9, McNamara asked the Chiefs to provide him with their views on what forces General Westmoreland would require for emergency augmentation and where they should come from. The Chiefs replied on February 12 to the startling effect that while the needs in South Vietnam were pressing, indeed perhaps urgent, any further reduction in the strategic reserve in the U.S. would seriously compromise the U.S. force posture worldwide and could not be afforded. They reluctantly recommended deferring the requests of General Westmoreland for an emergency augmentation. 15/ Rather, they proposed a callup of reserves to meet both the requirements of Vietnam augmentation in the intermediate future and to bring drawn-down forces in the strategic reserve up to strength. The tactic the Chiefs were using was clear: by refusing to scrape the bottom of the barrel any further for Vietnam they hoped to force the President to "bite the bullet" on the callup of the reserves -- a step they had long thought essential, and that they were determined would not now be avoided. Their views notwithstanding, the Secretary the next day ordered an emergency force of

10,500 to Vietnam immediately to reconstitute COMUSMACV's strategic reserve and put out the fire. 16/

With the decision to dispatch, among others, the remainder of the 82d Airborne Division as emergency augmentation and its public announcement, the policy process slowed down appreciably for the following ten days. The troops were loaded aboard the aircraft for the flight to Vietnam on February 14 and the President flew to Ft. Bragg to personally say farewell to them. The experience proved for him to be one of the most profoundly moving and troubling of the entire Vietnam war. The men, many of whom had only recently returned from Vietnam, were grim. They were not young men going off to adventure but seasoned veterans returning to an ugly conflict from which they knew some would not return. The film clips of the President shaking hands with the solemn but determined paratroopers on the ramps of their aircraft revealed a deeply troubled leader. He was confronting the men he was asking to make the sacrifice and they displayed no enthusiasm. It may well be that the dramatic decisions of the succeeding month and a half that reversed the direction of American policy in the war had their genesis in those troubled handshakes.

B. The "A to Z" Review

1. The Reassessment Begins

For roughly ten days, things were quiet in Washington. In Vietnam, the battle for the recapture of the Citadel in Hué raged on until the 24th of February before the last North Vietnamese defenders were overrun. As conditions in South Vietnam sorted themselves out and some semblance of normality returned to the command organizations, MACV began a comprehensive reassessment of his requirements. Aware that this review was going on and that it would result in requests for further troop augmentation, the President sent General Wheeler, the Chairman of the JCS to Saigon on February 23 to consult with General Westmoreland and report back on the new situation and its implication for further forces. Wheeler returned from Vietnam on the 25th and filed his report on the 27th. The substance of his and General Westmoreland's recommendations had preceded him to Washington, however, and greatly troubled the President. The military were requesting a major reinforcement of more than 3 divisions and supporting forces totalling in excess of 200,000 men, and were asking for a callup of some 280,000 reservists to fill these requirements and flesh out the strategic reserve and training base at home. 17/ The issue was thus squarely joined. To accept the military recommendations would entail not only a full-scale callup of reserves, but also putting the country economically on a semi-war footing, all at a time of great domestic dissent, dissatisfaction, and disillusionment about both the purposes and the conduct of the war. The President was understandably reluctant to take such action, the more so in an election year.

The assessments of North Vietnamese intention, moreover, were not reassuring. The CIA, evaluating a captured document, circulated a report on the same day as General Wheeler's report that stated:

> Hanoi's confident assessment of the strength of its position clearly is central to its strategic thinking. Just as it provided the rationale for the Communists' 'winter-spring campaign,' it probably will also govern the North Vietnamese response to the present tactical situation. If Hanoi believes it is operating from a position of strength, as this analysis suggests, it can be expected to press its military offensive--even at the cost of serious setbacks. Given their view of the strategic balance, it seems doubtful that the Communists would be inclined to settle for limited military gains intended merely to improve their bargaining position in negotiations. 18/

The alternatives for the President, therefore, did not seem very attractive. With such a major decision to make he asked his incoming Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, to convene a senior group of advisors from State, Defense, CIA, and the White House and to conduct a complete review of our involvement, re-evaluating both the range of aims and the spectrum of means to achieve them. The review was soon tagged the "A to Z Policy Review" or the "Clifford Group Review." 19/

2. The Clifford Group

The first meeting of the Clifford Group was convened in the Secretary's office at the Pentagon on Wednesday, February 28. Present were McNamara, General Taylor, Nitze, Fowler, Katzenbach, Walt Rostow, Helms, Warnke, and Phil Habib from Bundy's office. 20/ In the meeting, Clifford outlined the task as he had received it from the President and a general discussion ensued from which assignments were made on the preparation of studies and papers. The focus of the entire effort was the deployment requests from MACV. The general subjects assigned were recapitulated the following day by Bundy:

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

Subjects to be Considered

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

   Assignment: Defense - General Taylor - State - (Secretary)

2. What alternative courses are open to the enemy?

   Assignment: Defense and CIA

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

Series of papers on the following.

Military implications - JCS

Political implications - State

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

Budgetary results - Defense

Economic implications - Treasury

Congressional implications - Defense

Implications for public opinion - domestic and international - State.

4. Negotiation Alternatives

Assignment: State 21/

The papers were to be considered at a meeting to be held at Defense on Saturday, March 2 at 10:00 A.M. In fact, the meeting was later deferred until Sunday afternoon and the whole effort of the Task Force shifted to the drafting of a single Memorandum for the President with a recommended course of action and supporting papers. The work became so intensive that it was carried out in teams within ISA, one operating as a drafting committee and another (Mr. Warnke - ASD/ISA, Dr. Enthoven - ASD/SA, Dr. Halperin - DASD/ISA/PP, Mr. Steadman - DASD/EA & PR) as a kind of policy review board. Of the work done outside the Pentagon only the paper on negotiations prepared by Bundy at State and General Taylor's paper went to the White House. The other materials contributed by the CIA and State were fed into the deliberative process going on at the Pentagon but did not figure directly in the final memo. It would be misleading, however, not to note that the drafting group working within ISA included staff members from both the State Department and the White House, so that the final memo did represent an interagency effort. Nevertheless, the dominant voice in the consideration of alternatives as the working group progressed through three different drafts before the Sunday meeting was that of OSD. To provide some sense of the ideas being debated with respect to the air war and negotiations, relevant sections of a number of papers written during

those frantic days of late February-early March are included below, even though most of them never reached the President.

The CIA, responding to the requirements of the Clifford Group for an assessment of the current communist position and the alternatives open to them, sent several memos to the drafting committee before the Sunday meeting. On February 29, they argued that the VC/NVA could be expected to continue the harassment of the urban areas for the next several months in the hope of exacting a sufficient price from the U.S. and the GVN to force us to settle the war on their terms. But, no serious negotiation initiative was anticipated until the conclusion of the military phase:

> 4. Political Options. Until the military campaign has run its course and the results are fairly clear, it is unlikely that Hanoi will be seriously disposed to consider negotiations with the U.S. A negotiating ploy is possible, however, at almost any point in the present military campaign. It would be intentionally designed to be difficult for the US to reject. The purpose, however, would not be a serious intent to settle the war, but rather to cause new anxieties in Saigon, which might cause a crisis and lead to the collapse of the Thieu-Ky government.
>
> 5. As of now Hanoi probably foresees two alternative sets of circumstances in which a serious move to negotiate a settlement might be entertained:
>
> a. Obviously, if the military campaign is producing significant successes and the GVN is in serious disarray at some point Hanoi would probably give the US the opportunity to end the war. This might take the form of offering a general cease-fire followed by negotiations on terms which would amount to registering a complete Communist political success.
>
> b. If, on the other hand, the military campaign does not go well and the results are inconclusive, then Hanoi would probably change its military strategy to continue the struggle on a reduced level. 22/

To this assessment was added a somewhat more detailed estimate the following day addressed to several specific questions. Expanding on their memo of the previous day in response to a question about whether the North Vietnamese had abandoned the "protracted conflict" concept, the Agency concluded:

In our view the intensity of the Tet offensive and the exertions being made to sustain pressures confirms that Hanoi is now engaged in a major effort to achieve early and decisive results. Yet the Communists probably have no rigid timetable. They apparently have high hopes of achieving their objectives this year, but they will preserve considerable tactical flexibility. 23/

Again in more detail, they responded to a question about negotiations, a bombing suspension and terms of settlement:

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

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

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

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

11. Cessation of bombing and opening of negotiations without significant Communist concessions would be deeply disturbing to the Saigon government. There would be a real risk that the Thieu-Ky regime would collapse, and this would in fact be part of Hanoi's calculation in accepting negotiations. 24/

On March 2, the CIA made one additional input to the deliberations, this time on the question of Soviet and Chinese aid to North Vietnam. The intelligence offered was based on the report of a high-level defector and concluded with a disturbing estimate of how the Soviets would react to the closing of Haiphong harbor. In summary this is what the CIA expected in the way of international communist aid to Hanoi:

International Communist Aid to North Vietnam

Summary

The USSR continues to provide the overwhelming share of the increasing amounts of military aid being provided to North Vietnam and is willing to sustain this commitment at present or even higher levels. A recent high-level defector indicates that aid deliveries will increase even further in 1968. He also makes it clear that there is no quantitative limit to the types of the assistance that the USSR would provide with the possible exception of offensive weapons that would result in a confrontation with the U.S. He also reports that the USSR cannot afford to provide aid if it wishes to maintain its position in the socialist camp.

This source does not believe that the recent increase in aid deliveries reflects an awareness on the part of European Communist power that the Tet offensive was imminent.

The defector confirms intelligence estimates that the USSR has not been able to use its aid programs as a means of influencing North Vietnam's conduct of the war. In his opinion the Chinese are a more influential power.

Finally, the defector reports that the USSR will use force to maintain access to the port of Haiphong. The evidence offered to support this statement conflicts sharply with the present judgment of the intelligence community and is undergoing extremely close scrutiny. 25/

Bundy's office at State furnished a copious set of papers dealing with many aspects of the situation that are covered in greater detail in Task Force Paper IV.C.6. For our purposes I will consider only some of the judgments offered about Soviet, Chinese and other reactions to various courses of action against North Vietnam. The basic alternatives which were the basis of the appraisals of likely foreign reaction were drafted by Bundy and approved by Katzenbach as follows:

Option A

This would basically consist of accepting the Wheeler-Westmoreland recommendation aimed at sending roughly 100,000 men by 1 May, and another 100,000 men by the end of 1968.

This course of action is assumed to mean no basic change in strategy with respect to areas and places we attempt to hold. At the same time, the option could include some shift in the distribution of our increased forces, in the direction of city and countryside security and to some extent away from "search and destroy" operations away from populated areas.

The option basically would involve full presentation to the Congress of the total Wheeler/Westmoreland package, with all its implications for the reserves, tax increases, and related actions.

At the same time, there are sub-options with respect to the negotiating posture we adopt if we present such a total package. These sub-options appear to be as follows:

Option A-1: Standing pat on the San Antonio formula and on our basic position of what would be acceptable in a negotiated settlement.

Option A-2: Accompanying our presenting the announcement with a new "peace offensive" modifying the San Antonio formula or our position on a negotiated settlement, or both.

Option A-3: Making no present change in our negotiating posture, but making a strong noise that our objective is to create a situation from which we can in fact move into negotiations within the next 4 - 8 months if the situation can be righted.

Option B

The essence of this option would be a change in our military strategy, involving a reduction in the areas and places we sought to control. It might involve withdrawal from the western areas of I Corps and from the highland areas, for example. The objective would be to concentrate our forces, at whatever level, far more heavily on the protection of populated areas. Again, there are sub-options, roughly as follows:

Option B-1: Such a change in strategy, with no increase or minimal increase in forces.

Option B-2: Such a change in strategy accompanied by a substantial increase in forces, although possibly less than the totals indicated in the Wheeler-Westmoreland proposals.

Option C:

This might be called the "air power" or "greater emphasis on the North" option. It would appear to fit most readily with an Option B course of action in the South, but would mean that we would extend our bombing and other military actions against the North to try to strangle the war there and put greater pressure on Hanoi in this area. 26/

Three other options were also offered but carried no specific proposals for the air war or the negotiations track.

These generalized options took on more specific form when Bundy examined possible Soviet and Chinese reactions. Among the possible U.S. actions against North Vietnam, he evaluated mining the harbors, all-out bombing of the North, and invasion. These were the Soviet responses he anticipated:

3. Mining or Blockade of DRV Ports. This is a prospect the Soviets have dreaded. Mining, in particular, is a tough problem for them because it would not readily permit them to play on our own worries about escalation. They could attempt to sweep the mines which we would then presumably resow. They could somehow help the DRV in attacking US aircraft and ships engaged in the mining operation, even if this was occurring outside territorial waters, but such operations, apart from risking fire-fights with the US, do not seem very promising. Blockade, on the other hand, confronts the Soviets with the choice of trying to run it. They might decide to try it in the hope that we would stand aside. They would almost certainly authorize their ship captains to resist US inspection, capture or orders to turn around. What happens next again gets us into the essentially unknowable. In any case, however, it is unlikely that the Soviets would attempt naval or DRV-based air escorts for their ships. Naval escort would of course require the dispatch of vessels from Soviet home ports. On balance, but not very confidently, I would conclude that in the end the Soviets would turn their ships around, a highly repulsive possibility for

Moscow. Presumably, in such an event, they would seek to increase shipments via China, if China lets them. (Purely in terms of the military impact on the DRV, it should be understood that the bulk of Soviet military hardware goes to the DRV by rail and a blockade would therefore not in and of itself impede the flow of Soviet arms).

4. All-out US Bombing of the DRV. This one poses tougher problems for the Soviets and hence for any assessment of what they would do. Moscow has in the past shown some sensitivity to the consequences of such a US course. If the US program resulted in substantial damage to the DRV air defense system (SAMs, MIGs, AAA, radars, etc.) the Soviets will seek to replenish it as rapidly as possible via China and, assuming the Chinese will let them, i.e. permit trains to pass and planes to overfly and land en route. Soviet personnel can be expected to participate in the DRV air defense in an advisory capacity and in ground operations and the Soviets will presumably keep quiet about any casualties they might suffer in the process. It is likely, however, that this kind of Soviet involvement would increase up to and including, in the extreme, the overt dispatch, upon DRV request, of volunteers. (Moscow has long said it would do so and it is difficult to see how it could avoid delivering on its promise.) Such volunteers might actually fly DRV aircraft if enough DRV pilots had meanwhile been lost. Needless to say, once this stage is reached assessments become less confident, if only because the US Administration itself will have to consider just how far it wants to go in engaging the Soviets in an air battle in Vietnam. The Soviets for their part are not well situated to conduct a major air defense battle in Vietnam and there is the further question whether the Chinese would be prepared to grant them bases for staging equipment and personnel or for sanctuary. (On past form this seems unlikely, but this might change if the US air offensive produced decisive effects on the DRV's capacity to continue the war, in itself a dubious result.)

5. Invasion of the Southern DRV. In this case, the Soviets would continue and, if needed, step up their hardware assistance to the DRV. If the fighting remained confined to the Southern part of the DRV and did not threaten the viability of the DRV regime, there would probably not be additional Soviet action, though conceivably some Soviet personnel might show up in advisory capacities, especially

if new and sophisticated Soviet equipment were being supplied. If the invasion became a general assault on the DRV, an overt DRV call for volunteers might ensue and be acted on. At this point of course the Chinese would enter into the picture too and we are in a complex new contingency. In general, it is hard to visualize large numbers of Chinese and Soviet forces (transported through China) fighting side by side against us in Vietnam and I would assume that what we would have would be largely a US landwar against the DRV-China.

6. Matters would become even stickier if the US offensive led to repeated damage to Soviet ships in DRV ports. (There are roughly eleven Soviet ships in these ports on any one day). The Soviets might arm their vessels and authorize them to fire at US planes. Once again, when this point has been reached we are in a new contingency, although the basic fact holds that the Soviets are not well situated, geographically and logistically, for effective military counter-action in the DRV itself. 27/

China's expected reactions to these three possible courses of action were quite different in view of the lower level of its economic and military support, the existence of ample land LOCs to China, etc. Here is how Bundy foresaw Chinese responses:

3. Mining and/or Blockading of Haiphong

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

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

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

5. US Invasion of North Vietnam

Chinese reaction would depend on the scale of US moves, on North Vietnamese intentions and on Peking's view of US objectives. If it became evident that we were not aiming for a rapid takeover of North Vietnam but intended chiefly to hold some territory in southern areas to inhibit Hanoi's actions in South Vietnam and to force it to quit fighting, we would expect China to attempt to deter us from further northward movement and to play on our fears of a Sino-US conflict, but not to intervene massively in the war. Thus, if requested by Hanoi, Peking would probably be willing to station infantry north of Hanoi to attach some ground forces to North Vietnamese units further south, and to contribute to any "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. 28/

Probably more influential than these State Department Views on international communist reactions was a cable from Ambassador Thompson in Moscow offering his personal assessment of the Soviet mood and what we might expect from various US decisions. The cable was addressed to Under Secretary Katzenbach, but there is little doubt it made its way to the White House in view of Thompson's prestige and the importance of his post. For these reasons it is included here in its entirety.

General Maxwell Taylor, like Bundy, sought to place the alternatives available to the U.S. into some sort of framework and to package the specific actions and responses to the situation the U.S. might take so as to create several viable options for consideration by the group. The memo he drafted on alternatives was more important finally than the one done by Bundy since Taylor sent a copy of it directly to the President in his capacity as Special Military Advisor, as well as giving it to the Clifford Group. With his background as a military man, past Chairman of the JCS, and former Ambassador to Saigon Taylor's views carry special weight in any deliberation. His memo was sent to the White House even before the DPM the Clifford Group was working on and is therefore included in part here. Taylor wisely began by reconsidering the objectives of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, both past and potential. They were, as he saw it, four:

Alternative Objectives of U.S. Policy in South Viet-Nam

2. The overall policy alternatives open to the U.S. have always been and continue to be four in number. The first is the continued pursuit of our present objective which has been defined in slightly different terms but always in essentially the same sense by our political leaders. For the purpose of this paper, I am taking the statement of President Johnson in his speech at Johns Hopkins University in April, 1965: "Our objective is the independence of South Viet-Nam and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves, only that the people of South Viet-Nam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way."

3. We have sometimes confused the situation by suggesting that this is not really our objective, that we have other things in mind such as the defeat of the "War of Liberation" technique, the containment of Red China, and a further application of the Truman Doctrine to the resistance of aggression. However, it is entirely possible to have one or more of these collateral objectives at the same time since they will be side effects of the attainment of the basic objective cited above.

4. Of the other three possible objectives, one is above and two are below the norm established by the present one. We can increase our present objective to total military victory, unconditional surrender, and the destruction of the Communist Government in North Viet-Nam. Alternatively, we can lower our objective to a compromise resulting in something less than an independent Viet-Nam free from attack or we can drop back further and content ourselves with punishing the aggressor to the point that we can withdraw, feeling that the "War of Liberation" technique has at least been somewhat discredited as a cheap method of Communist expansion.

5. We should consider changing the objective which we have been pursuing consistently since 1954 only for the most cogent reasons. There is clearly nothing to recommend trying to do more than what we are now doing at such great cost. To undertake to do less is to accept needlessly a serious defeat for which we would pay dearly in terms of our world-wide position of leadership, of the political stability of Southeast Asia, and of the credibility of our pledges to friends and allies.

6. In summary, our alternatives are to stay with our present objective (stick it out), to raise our objective (all out), to scale down our objective (pull back), or to abandon our objective (pull out). Since there is no serious consideration being given at the moment to adding to or subtracting from the present objective, the discussion in this paper is limited to considerations of alternative strategies and programs to attain the present objective. 29/

With this review of the possible objectives and his own statement of preference, Taylor turned to the possible responses to General Westmoreland's troop request and the ramifications of each. Here he devoted himself more to trying to develop the multiplicity of considerations that needed to be weighed in each instance than to passionate advocacy of one or another course. At the end of his memo he considered the political implications of various options with special attention to the problem of negotiations with Hanoi -- a subject with which he had long been preoccupied. He concluded by packaging the various military, political and diplomatic courses of action into three alternative programs. Here is how he reasoned:

b. As the purpose of our military operations is to bring security to South Viet-Nam behind which the GVN can restore order and normalcy of life and, at the same time, to convince Hanoi of the impossibility of realizing its goal of a Communist-controlled government imposed upon South Viet-Nam, we have to consider the political effect of our military actions both on Saigon and on Hanoi. With regard to Saigon, a refusal to reinforce at this time will bring discouragement and renewed suspicion of U.S. intentions; in Hanoi, an opposite effect. On the other hand, a large reinforcement may lessen the sense of urgency animating the Vietnamese Government and result in a decrease of effort; in Hanoi, it may cause them to undertake further escalation.

c. Our decision on reinforcement inevitably will raise the question of how to relate this action to possible negotiations. Anything we say or do with regard to negotiations causes the sharpest scrutiny of our motives on the part of our Vietnamese allies and we should be very careful at this time that we do not give them added grounds for suspicion. If it appears desirable for us to make a new negotiation overture in connection with reinforcement, it will need careful preliminary discussion with the GVN authorities.

d. The following political actions are worth considering in connection with our decision on reinforcement:

(1) A renewed offer of negotiation, possibly with a private communication that we would suspend the bombing for a fixed period without making the time limitation public if we were assured that productive negotiations would start before the end of the period.

(2) A public announcement that we would adjust the bombing of the North to the level of intensity of enemy ground action in the South.

(3) As a prelude to sharply increased bombing levels, possibly to include the closing of Haiphong, a statement of our intentions made necessary by the enemy offensive against the cities and across the frontiers.

(4) Announcement of the withdrawal of the San Antonio formula in view of the heightened level of aggression conducted by North Viet-Nam.

(5) Keep silent.

The foregoing is merely a tabulation of possible political actions to consider in chossing the military alternative. In the end, military and political actions should be blended together into an integrated package.

e. The choice among these political alternatives will depend largely on our decision with regard to reinforcements for General Westmoreland. However, the present military situation in South Viet-Nam argues strongly against a new negotiation effort (d. (1)) and any thought of reducing the bombing of the North. If we decide to meet General Westmoreland's request, we could underline the significance of our action by d. (3). In any case, we would appear well-advised to withdraw from the San Antonio formula (d. (4)).

13. From the foregoing considerations, there appear to be at least three program packages worth serious consideration. They follow:

Package A

a. No increase of General Westmoreland's forces in South Viet-Nam.

b. New strategic guidance.

c. Build-up of Strategic Reserve.

d. No negotiation initiative.

e. Withdrawal of San Antonio formula.

f. Pressure on GVN to do better.

Package B

a. Partial acceptance of General Westmoreland's recommendation.

b. New strategic guidance.

c. Build-up of Strategic Reserve.

d. No negotiation initiative.

e. Withdrawal of San Antonio formula.

f. Pressure on GVN to do better.

Package C

a. Approval of General Westmoreland's full request.

b. New strategic guidance.

c. Build-up of Strategic Reserve.

d. No negotiation initiative.

e. Withdrawal of San Antonio formula and announcement of intention to close Haiphong.

f. Pressure on GVN to do better.

g. Major effort to rally the homefront.

M. D. T. 30/

While these papers were all being written outside the Pentagon, the Clifford working roup under the direction of Assistant Secretary Warnke had worked feverishly on several succeeding drafts of a Memorandum for the President including various combinations of tabs and supporting material. The intent of the group was to produce a memo that made a specific recommendation on a course of action rather than presenting a number of alternatives with their pros and cons. The process required the reconciling of widely divergent views or the exclusion of those that were incompatible with the thrust of the recommendation. With respect to the war in the South the memo in its late-stage form on March 3 proposed a sweeping change in U.S. ground strategy based on a decision not to substantially increase U.S. forces as General Westmoreland and the Chiefs desired. In essence, the draft memo recommended the adoption of a strategy of population protection along a "demographic frontier" in South Vietnam and the abandonment of General Westmoreland's hitherto sacrosanct large unit "search and destroy" operations. The portion of the paper devoted to the air war recommended no escalation above current levels. It specifically turned back proposals for reducing the Hanoi-Haiphong restricted perimeters, closing Haiphong harbor, and bombing population centers as all likely to be unproductive or worse. The section in question argued as follows:

SIGNIFICANCE OF BOMBING CAMPAIGN IN NORTH TO OUR OBJECTIVES IN VIETNAM

The bombing of North Vietnam was undertaken to limit and/or make more difficult the infiltration of men and supplies in the South, to show them they would have to pay a price for their continued aggression and to raise the morale in South Vietnam. The last two purposes obviously have been achieved.

It has become abundantly clear that no level of bombing can prevent the North Vietnamese from supplying the necessary forces and materiel necessary to maintain their military operations in the South. The recent Tet offensive has shown that the bombing cannot even prevent a significant increase in these military operations, at least on an intermittent basis.

The shrinking of the circles around Hanoi and Haiphong will add to North Vietnam's costs and difficulty

in supplying the NVA/VC forces. It will not destroy their capability to support their present level of military activity. Greater concentration on the infiltration routes in Laos and in the area immediately North of the DMZ might prove effective from the standpoint of interdiction.

Strikes within 10 miles of the center of Hanoi and within four miles of the center of Haiphong have required initial approval from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and, finally, the President. This requirement has enabled the highest level of government to maintain some control over the attacks against targets located in the populous and most politically sensitive areas of North Vietnam. Other than the Haiphong Port, no single target within these areas has any appreciable significance for North Vietnam's ability to supply men and material to the South. If these areas of control were reduced to circles having a radii of 3 miles from the center of Hanoi and 1-1/2 miles of the center of Haiphong, some minor fixed targets not previously authorized would be released for strike. More significant is the fact that the lines of communication lying within the area previously requiring Washington approval would be open for attack by shrinking the control areas around Hanoi and Haiphong. The question would simply be whether it is worth the increase in airplane and pilot losses to attack these lines of communication in the most heavily defended part of North Vietnam where our airplane loss ratio is highest.

The remaining issue on interdiction of supplies has to do with the closing of the Port of Haiphong. Although this is the route by which some 80% of North Vietnamese imports come into the country, it is not the point of entry for most of the military supplies and ammunition. These materials predominantly enter via the rail routes from China.

Moreover, if the Port of Haiphong were to be closed effectively, the supplies that now enter Haiphong could, albeit with considerable difficulty, arrive either over the land routes or by lighterage, which has been so successful in the continued POL supply. Under these circumstances, the closing of Haiphong Port would not prevent the continued supply of sufficient materials to maintain North Vietnamese military operations in the South.

Accordingly, the only purpose of intensification of the bombing campaign in the North and the addition of further targets would be to endeavor to break the will of the North Vietnamese leaders. CIA forecasts indicate little if any chance that this would result even from a protracted bombing campaign directed at population centers.

A change in our bombing policy to include deliberate strikes on population centers and attacks on the agricultural population through the destruction of dikes would further alienate domestic and foreign sentiment and might well lose us the support of those European countries which now support our effort in Vietnam. It could cost us Australian and New Zealand participation in the fighting.

Although the North Vietnamese do not mark the camps where American prisoners are kept or reveal their locations, we know from intelligence sources that most of these facilities are located in or near Hanoi. Our intelligence also indicates that many more than the approximately 200 pilots officially classified by us as prisoners of war may, in fact, be held by North Vietnam in these camps. On the basis of the debriefing of the three pilots recently released by Hanoi, we were able to identify over 40 additional American prisoners despite the fact that they were kept in relative isolation. Heavy and indiscriminate attacks in the Hanoi area would jeopardize the lives of these prisoners and alarm their wives and parents into vocal opposition. Reprisals could be taken against them and the idea of war crimes trials would find considerable acceptance in countries outside the Communist bloc.

Finally, the steady and accelerating bombing of the North has not brought North Vietnam closer to any real move toward peace. Apprehensions about bombing attacks that would destroy Hanoi and Haiphong may at some time help move them toward productive negotiations. Actual destruction of these areas would eliminate a threat that could influence them to seek a political settlement on terms acceptable to us. 31/

The Clifford Group principals convened on the afternoon of Sunday, March 3, to consider this draft memo. Mr. Warnke read the memo, completed only shortly before the meeting, to the assembled group. The ensuing discussion apparently produced a consensus that abandoning the initiative completely as the draft memo seemed to imply could leave allied forces and the South Vietnamese cities themselves more, not less, vulnerable. With respect to the bombing, opinion was sharply divided. General Wheeler advocated the reduction of the restricted zones around Hanoi and Haiphong and an expansion of naval activity against North Vietnam. The Chiefs had apparently abandoned for the moment efforts to secure authority for mining the approaches to the ports, although this alternative was considered in the State drafts. ISA on the other hand sharply opposed any expansion of the air war but particularly in Route Packages 6A and 6B which a recent Systems Analysis study had shown to be especially unproductive as an anti-infiltration measure. 32/ As for negotiations, all were agreed that not much could be expected in the near future from Hanoi and that there was no reason to modify the current U.S. position. The conclusion of the long meeting was to request Warnke's working group to write an entirely new draft memo for the President that: (a) dealt only with the troop numbers issue, recommending only a modest increase; (b) called for more emphasis on the RVNAF contribution to the war effort; (c) called for a study of possible new strategic guidance; (d) recommended against any new initiative on negotiations; and (e) acknowledged the split in opinion about bombing policy by including papers from both sides. Thus, after five days of exhausting work, the working group started over again and produced a completely fresh draft for the following day.

3. The March 4 DPM

The new DPM was completed on Monday and circulated for comment but later transmitted to the President without change by Secretary Clifford. In its final form this DPM represented the recommendations of the Clifford Group. The main proposals of the memo were those mentioned above. The specific language of the cover memo with respect to bombing and negotiations was the following:

> 5. No new peace initiative on Vietnam. Re-statement of our terms for peace and certain limited diplomatic actions to dramatize Laos and to focus attention on the total threat to Southeast Asia. Details in Tab E.
>
> 6. A general decision on bombing policy, not excluding future change, but adequate to form a basis for discussion with the Congress on this key aspect. Here your advisers are divided:

a. General Wheeler and others would advocate a substantial extension of targets and authority in and near Hanoi and Haiphong, mining of Haiphong, and naval gunfire up to a Chinese Buffer Zone;

b. Others would advocate a seasonal step-up through the spring, but without these added elements. 33/

The two detailed tabs to the memo of special interest to this study were "E" and "F" dealing with negotiations and bombing respectively. The negotiations paper was written by Bundy and was a lengthy argument for doing nothing we had not already done. Its central message was contained in a few paragraphs near the middle of the paper:

As to our conditions for stopping the bombing and entering into talks, we continue to believe that the San Antonio formula is "rock bottom." The South Vietnamese are in fact talking about much stiffer conditions, such as stopping the infiltration entirely. Any move by us to modify the San Antonio formula downward would be extremely disturbing in South Vietnam, and would have no significant offsetting gains in US public opinion or in key third countries. On the contrary, we should continue to take the line that the San Antonio formula laid out conditions under which there was a reasonable prospect that talks would get somewhere and be conducted in good faith. Hanoi's major offensive has injected a new factor, in which we are bound to conclude that there is no such prospect for the present.

Moreover, we should at the appropriate time -- probably not in a major statement, but rather in response to a question -- make the point that "normal" infiltration of men and equipment from the North cannot mean the much increased levels that have prevailed since October. We do not need to define exactly what we would mean by "normal" but we should make clear that we do not mean the levels since San Antonio was set out.

Apart from this point on our public posture, we should be prepared -- in the unlikely event that Hanoi makes an affirmative noise on the "no advantage" assumption -- go go back at them through some channel and make this same point quite explicit.

In short, our public posture and our private actions should be designed to:

a. Maintain San Antonio and our general public willingness for negotiations.

b. Add this new and justified interpretation of San Antonio so that in fact we would not be put on the spot over the next 2-4 months.

c. Keep sufficient flexibility so that, if the situation should improve, we could move during the summer if we then judged it wise. 54/

This position represented the widely held belief at the time that the question of negotiations, in spite of continuing contacts through third parties, was no less moribund than it had been at any time in the previous year. The San Antonio formula was regarded as eminently reasonable and DRV failure to respond to it was interpreted as evidence of their general disinterest in negotiations at the time. In that context, and in the wake of the ferocious attacks in South Vietnam, new initiatives could only be construed by Hanoi as evidence of allied weakness. Hence, no new offers were recommended.

As already noted, the Clifford Group was split on the issue of bombing policy, therefore, two papers on the subject were included. The first had been written by the Joint Staff and was submitted by General Wheeler. It advocated reduction of the Hanoi/Haiphong perimeters, the extension of naval operations and authority to use sea-based surface-to-air missiles against North Vietnamese MIGs. The cover memo for this tab noted that: "In addition General Wheeler would favor action to close the Port of Haiphong through mining or otherwise. Since this matter has been repeatedly presented to the President, General Wheeler has not added a specific paper on this proposal." 35/ The General had apparently gotten the word that closing the ports just wasn't an action the President was going to consider, even in this "comprehensive" review. The JCS bombing paper began with a discussion of the history of the air war and offered some explanations for its seeming failure to date:

1. The air campaign against North Vietnam is now entering the fourth year of operations. Only during the latter part of the past favorable weather season of April through October 1967, however, has a significant weight of effort been applied against the major target systems. During this period, even though hampered by continuous and temporarily imposed constraints, the air campaign made a marked impact on the capability of North Vietnam to prosecute the war. Unfortunately, this impact was rapidly overcome. The constraints on operations and the change in the monsoon weather provided North Vietnam with numerous opportunities to recuperate from the effects of the air strikes. Facilities were rebuilt and reconstituted and dispersal of the massive material aid from communist countries continued...

2. There is a distinct difference between the North Vietnam that existed in early 1965 and the North Vietnam of today. The difference is a direct result of the material aid received from external sources and the ability to accommodate to limited and sporadic air strikes. The Hanoi regime throughout the air campaign has not shown a change in national will, but outwardly displays a determination to continue the war. The viability of the North Vietnam military posture results from the availability of adequate assets received from communist countries which permits defense of the homeland and support of insurgency in the South. 36/

To make the air campaign effective in its objectives in the months ahead, the Chiefs recommended modification of the existing regulations. The campaign they had in mind and the changes in present policy required for it were as follows:

4. A coordinated and sustained air campaign could hamper severely the North Vietnam war effort and the continued support of aggression throughout Southeast Asia. An integrated interdiction campaign should be undertaken against the road, rail and waterway lines of communication with the objective of isolating the logistics base of Hanoi and Haiphong from each other and from the rest of North Vietnam. To achieve this objective, the following tasks must be performed employing a properly balanced weight of effort:

a. Destroy war supporting facilities as well as those producing items vital to the economy.

b. Attack enemy defenses in order to protect our strike forces, destroy enemy gun crews and weapons, and force the expenditure of munitions.

c. Conduct air attacks throughout as large an area and as continuously as possible in order to destroy lines of communication targets and associated facilities, dispersed material and supplies and to exert maximum suppression of normal activities because of the threat.

d. Attack and destroy railroad rolling stock, vehicles and waterborne logistics craft throughout as large an area as possible, permitting minimum sanctuaries.

5. Targeting criteria for the effective accomplishment of a systematic air campaign would continue to preclude the attack of population as a target, but accept

greater risks of civilian casualties in order to achieve the stated objective. The initial changes in operating authorities necessary to the initiation of an effective air campaign are:

a. Delete the 30/10NM Hanoi Restricted/Prohibited Area and establish a 3NM Hanoi Control Area (Map, TAB).

b. Delete the 10/4NM Haiphong Restricted/Prohibited Area and establish a 1.5NM Haiphong Control Area (Map, TAB).

c. Delete the Special Northeast Coastal Armed Reconnaissance Area. 37/

As explanations of how the removal of these restrictions would achieve the desired results, the Chiefs gave the following arguments:

6. The present Restricted Areas around Hanoi and Haiphong have existed since 1965. The Prohibited Areas were created in December 1966. Numerous strikes, however, have been permitted in these areas over the past two and one-half years, e.g., dispersed POL, SAM and AAA sites, SAM support facilities, armed reconnaissance of selected LOC and attacks of LOC associated targets, and attack of approved fixed targets. The major political requirements for having established control areas in the vicinity of Hanoi and Haiphong are to provide a measure of control of the intensity of effort applied in consonance with the national policy of graduated pressures and to assist in keeping civilian casualties to a minimum consistent with the importance of the target. These requirements can still be satisfied in the control areas are reduced to 3NM and 1.5NM around Hanoi and Haiphong, respectively. These new control areas will contain the population centers, but permit operational commanders the necessary flexibility to attack secondary, as well as primary, lines of communication to preclude NVN from accommodating to the interdiction of major routes. A reduction of the control areas would expose approximately 140 additional miles of primary road, rail and waterway lines of communication to armed reconnaissance, as well as hundreds of miles of secondary lines of communication, dependent upon NVN reactions and usage. Additional military targets would automatically become authorized for air strikes under armed reconnaissance operating authorities. This would broaden the target base, spread the defenses, and thus add to the cumulative effects of the interdiction program as well as reducing risk of

aircraft loss. At the present time, the air defense threat throughout all of the northeast area of NVN is formidable. It is not envisioned that aircraft will conduct classifical low level armed reconnaissance up and down the newly exposed lines of communication until the air defense threat is fairly well neutralized. Attacks of LOC or LOC associated targets and moving targets in these areas will continue to be conducted for the time being using dive bombing, or "fixed target" tactics as is currently employed throughout the heavily defended northeast. Consequently, the risk to aircraft and crews will not be increased. In fact these new operating areas should assist in decreasing the risks. New targets within the control areas will continue to be approved in Washington.

7. There have been repeated and reliable intelligence reports that indicate civilians not engaged in essential war supporting activities have been evacuated from the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong. Photographic intelligence, particularly of Haiphong, clearly shows that materials of war are stockpiled in all open storage areas and along the streets throughout almost one-half of the city. Rather than an area for urban living, the city has become an armed camp and a large logistics storage base. Consequently, air strikes in and around these cities endanger personnel primarily engaged directly or indirectly in support of the war effort.

8. The special coastal armed reconnaissance area in the Northeast has limited attacks on NVN craft to those within 3 NM of the NVN coast or coastal islands. This constraint has provided another sanctuary to assist NVN in accommodating to the interdiction effort. To preclude endangering foreign shipping the requirement is imposed on strike forces to ensure positive identification prior to attack. Identification can be accomplished beyond an arbitrary 3 NM line as well as within it, and deny the enemy a privileged area. 38/

To complement the expanded strike program lifting these restrictions envisaged, the Chiefs asked for the expansion of the SEA DRAGON naval activities against coastal water traffic from 20° to the Chinese border, thereby opening up the possibility of attacks against some of the traffic moving supplies in and near the ports. Furthermore they desired permission to use sea-based SAMs, particularly the 100-mile range TALOS, against MIGs north of 20°. In concluding their discussion of the need for these new authorizations, the Chiefs were careful to hedge about

what results might be expected immediately. It was pointed out that adverse weather would continue to inhibit operations for several months and partially offset the new measures.

13. Authorization to conduct a campaign against North Vietnam employing air and naval forces under the proposed operating authorities should have a significant impact on the ability of NVN to continue to prosecute insurgency. It is not anticipated that this impact will be immediately apparent. Unfavorable weather, while partially offset by the expanded use of naval forces, will preclude air strike forces from applying the desired pressures at the most advantageous time and place. The cumulative effects of the air strikes and naval bombardment will gradually increase to significant proportions as erosion of the distribution system progresses. In addition to the material effects against NVN's capability to wage war, approval of the proposed operating authorities and execution of the campaign envisioned will signal to NVN and the remainder of the world the continued US resolve and determination to achieve our objectives in Southeast Asia. 39/

The ISA memo on bombing policy, drafted in Warnke's own office, tersely and emphatically rejected all of these JCS recommendations for expanding the air war, including mining the harbor approaches. The case against further extension of the bombing was made as follows:

The Campaign Against North Vietnam: A Different View

Bombing Policy

It is clear from the TET offensive that the air attack on the North and the interdiction campaign in Laos have not been successful in putting a low enough ceiling on infiltration of men and materials from the North to the South to prevent such a level of enemy action. We do not see the possibility of a campaign which could do more than make the enemy task more difficult. Bombing in Route Packages 6A and 6B is therefore primarily a political tool.

The J.C.S. recommend a substantial reduction in previous political control over the attacks in the Haiphong and Hanoi areas. Except for General Wheeler, we do not recommend such a reduction.

It is not until May that more than four good bombing days per month can be anticipated. The question arises as

to how best to use those opportunities. We believe the political value of the attacks should be optimized. We believe the political value of the attacks should be optimized. The effective destruction of clearly important military and economic targets without excessive population damage would seem indicated. Excessive losses in relation to results would have an adverse political effect. The air fields (perhaps including Gia Lam) would meet the criteria. The Hanoi power plant would probably meet the criteria. There are few other targets of sufficient importance, not already authorized, to do so.

In particular, this view opposes the proposal to define only 3-mile and 1-1/2-mile "closed areas" around Hanoi and Haiphong respectively. Individual targets within Hanoi and Haiphong and between the 10- and 3-mile circles for Hanoi and the 4 and 1-1/2 mile-circles for Haiphong, should be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the above criteria. However, blanket authority for operations up to the 3-mile and 1-1/2-mile circles, respectively, appears to take in only small targets hving no appreciable military significance; on the other hand, experience has indicated that systematic operations particularly against road and rail routes simply and slightly to the repair burdens, while at the same time involving substantial civilian casualties in the many suburban civilian areas located along these routes.

In addition, a picture of systematic and daily bombing this close to Hanoi and Haiphong seems to us to run significant risks of major adverse reactions in key third nations. There is certainly some kind of "flash point" in the ability of the British Government to maintain its support for our position, and we believe this "flash point" might well be crossed by the proposed operations, in contrast to operations against specified targets of the type that have been carried out in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas in the past.

Mining of Haiphong

We believe it to be agreed that substantial amounts of military-related supplies move through the Port of Haiphong at present. Nevertheless, it is also agreed that this flow of supplies could be made up through far greater use of the road and rail lines running through China, and through lightering and other emergency techniques

at Haiphong and other ports. In other words, even from a military standpoint the effect of closing the Port of Haiphong would be to impose an impediment only for a period of time, and to add to difficulties which Hanoi has shown in the past it can overcome. Politically, moreover, closing the Port of Haiphong continues to raise a serious question of Soviet reaction. Ambassador Thompson, Governor Harriman, and others believe that the Soviets would be compelled to react in some manner -- at a minimum through the use of minesweepers and possibly through protective naval action of some sort. Again, we continue to believe that there is some kind of "flash point" both in terms of these likely actions and their implications for our relation with the Soviets in other matters, and for such more remote -- but not inconceivable -- possibilities as Soviet compensating pressure elsewhere, for example against Berlin. Even a small risk of a significant confrontation with the Soviets must be given major weight against the limited military gains anticipated from this action.

Finally, by throwing the budden of supply onto the rail and road lines through China, the mining of Haiphong would tend to increase Chinese leverage in Hanoi and would force the Soviets and the Chinese to work out cooperative arrangements for their new and enlarged transit. We do not believe this would truly drive the Soviets and Chinese together, but it would force them to take a wider range of common positions that would certainly not be favorable to our basic interests.

Expanded Naval Operations (SEA DRAGON)

These operations, expanded north along the coast to Haiphong and to other port areas, would include provision for avoiding ocean-going ships, while hitting coast-wise shipping assumed to be North Vietnamese.

We believe this distinction will not be easy to apply without error, and that therefore the course of action involves substantial risks of serious complications with Chinese and other shipping. In view of the extensive measures already authorized further south, we doubt if the gains to be achieved would warrant these risks.

Surface-to-Air Missiles

As in the past, we believe this action would involve substantial risk of triggering some new form of North

Vietnamese military action against the ships involved. Moreover, another factor is whether we can be fully certain of target identification. The balance on this one is extremely close, but we continue to question whether expected gains would counter-balance the risks. 40/

It is interesting that the entire discussion of bombing on both sides in the DPM is devoted to various kinds of escalation. The proposal that was eventually to be adopted, namely cutting back the bombing to the panhandle only, was not even mentioned, nor does it appear in any of the other drafts or papers related to the Clifford Group's work. The fact may be misleading, however, since it apparently was one of the principle ideas being discussed and considered in the forums at various levels. It is hard to second-guess the motivation of a Secretary of Defense, but, since it is widely believed that Clifford personally advocated this idea to the President, he may well have decided that fully countering the JCS recommendations for escalation was sufficient for the formal DPM. To have raised the idea of constricting the bombing below the 19th or 20th parallel in the memo to the President would have generalized the knowledge of such a suggestion and invited its sharp, full and formal criticism by the JCS and other opponents of a bombing halt. Whatever Clifford's reasons, the memo did not contain the proposal that was to be the main focus of the continuing debates in March and would eventually be endorsed by the President.

C. The President Weighs the Decision

1. More Meetings and More Alternatives

The idea of a partial bombing halt was not new within the Administration. It had been discussed in some form or other as a possible alternative at various times for more than a year. (In the DPM of May 20, 1967, McNamara had formally proposed the idea to the President.) It was brought up anew early in the Clifford Group deliberations and, while not adopted in the final report, became the main alternative under consideration in the continuing meetings of the various groups that had been formed for the Clifford exercise. As indicated previously, Secretary Clifford reportedly suggested personally to the President the idea of cutting back the bombing to the North Vietnamese panhandle. The first appearance of the idea in the documents in March is in a note from Clifford to Wheeler on the 5th transmitting for the latter's exclusive "information" a proposed "statement" drafted by Secretary Rusk. The statement, which was given only the status of a "suggestion" and therefore needed to be closely held, announced the suspension of the bombing of North Vietnam except in the "area associated with the battle zone." It was presumably intended for Presidential delivery. Attached to the draft statement, which shows Rusk himself as the draftee, was a list of explanatory reasons and conditions for its adoption. Rusk noted that bad weather in northern North

Vietnam in the next few months would severely hamper operations around Hanoi and Haiphong in any event and the proposal did not, therefore, constitute a serious degradation of our military position. It was to be understood that in the event of any major enemy initiative in the south, either against Khe Sanh or the cities, the bombing would be resumed. Further, Rusk did not want a major diplomatic effort mounted to start peace talks. He preferred to let the action speak for itself and await Hanoi's reaction. Finally, he noted that the area still open to bombing would include everything up to and including Vinh (just below 19°) and there would be no limitations on attacks in that zone. 41/ Clifford's views of the proposal and its explanation do not appear in his note. It can be inferred, however, that he endorsed the idea. In any case, by the middle of March the question of a partial bombing halt became the dominant air war alternative under consideration in meetings at State and Defense. It is possible that the President had already indicated to Clifford and Rusk enough approval of the idea to have focused the further deliberative efforts of his key advisors on it.

On March 8, Bundy sent a TS-NODIS memo to CIA Director Helms requesting a CIA evaluation of four different bombing options and troop deployment packages, none of which, however, included even a partial bombing halt. Indicating that he had consulted with Secretary Rusk and Walt Rostow before making his request, he noted the CIA papers already discussed in this study but expressed a need for one overall summary paper. The options he wanted evaluated were:

> A. An early announcement of reinforcements on the order of 25,000 men, coupled with reserve calls and other measures adequate to make another 75,000 men available for deployment by the end of the year if required and later decided. The bombing would be stepped up as the weather improved, and would include some new targets, but would not include the mining of Haiphong or major urban attacks in Hanoi and Haiphong.
>
> B. A similar announcement of immediate reinforcement action, coupled with greater actions than in A to raise our total force strength, making possible additional reinforcements of roughly 175,000 men before the end of 1968. Bombing program as in A.
>
> C. Option A plus mining of Haiphong and/or significantly intensified bombing of urban targets in Hanoi and Haiphong areas.
>
> D. Option B plus an intensified bombing program and/or mining of Haiphong. 42/

In addition to an assessment of likely DRV reactions, he wanted to know what could be expected from the Chinese and the Soviets under each option. He also noted that, "At this stage, none of us knows what the timing of

the decision-making will be. I think this again argued for a CIA-only paper at the outset, to be completed perhaps by next Wednesday night [March 13]." 43/

A more complicated draft memo to CIA asking for a review of various bombing alternatives was prepared at about the same time in ISA, but apparently not sent. It contained twelve highly specific different bombing alternatives, including three different bombing reduction or halt options: (1) a concentration of bombing in Route Packages 1, 2 and 3 with only 5% in the extreme north; (2) a complete halt over North Vietnam; and (3) a complete halt over both North Vietnam and Laos. 44/ No particular attention was focused on a partial halt, again indicating that knowledge of the proposal was being restricted to the immediate circle of Presidential advisors. Presumably the CIA did prepare a memo in response to Bundy's request, but it does not appear in the available material.

Meanwhile, a separate set of escalatory options had been proposed to Mr. Nitze by Air Force Secretary Brown on March 4 in response to the latter's February 28 request. 45/ Brown's view was that apart from the various ground strategy alternatives, there were also a number of ways the air war, both north and south, could be expanded to meet the changed situation after Tet. The three alternatives he suggested were:

> 1. First, actions against North Vietnam could be intensified by bombing of remaining important targets, and/or neutralization of the port of Haiphong by bombing and mining.
>
> 2. Second, air actions could be intensified in the adjoining panhandle areas of Laos/NVN.
>
> 3. Third, a change to the basic strategy in SVN is examined, in which increased air actions in SVN are substituted for increased ground forces. 46/

Brown appraised the relative advantages of the various proposed campaigns in this way:

> Intensification of air actions against NVN would be aimed at forcing the enemy to the conference table or choking off imports to NVN to an extent which would make their level of effort in SVN insupportable. The second and third campaigns, individually or together, are more limited in aim. It appears likely that, given adequate sortie capability, the greatest adverse effect on the enemy would result from a plan which simultaneously employed all three campaigns. 47/

Under program #1, Brown envisaged the elimination of virtually all the constraints under which the bombing then operated and an aggressive attack

on North Vietnamese resources, import capability and population centers along the lines of proposals from CINCPAC:

> The present restrictions on bombing NVN would be lifted so as to permit bombing of military targets without the present scrupulous concern for collateral civilian damage and casualties. The following targets systems would be emphasized:
>
> 1. Military control points, military headquarters, storage facilities, government control centers, and such population centers as are known to harbor dispersed materiel and vehicles.
>
> 2. The Ports of Haiphong, Hon Gai and Cam Pha, by a combination of mining and bombing. This would be designed to force over-the-beach delivery of seaborne imports which would require shipping to remain off the coast in unsheltered waters, thereby restricting operations to periods of relative calm seas.
>
> 3. Over-the-beach deliveries by bombing and possibly mining.
>
> 4. Intensified bombing attacks on the northeast and northwest rail lines and other road LOCs contiguous to the NVN-Chicom border. 48/

The objective to be achieved by this expanded campaign was described in the succeeding paragraph:

> The aims of this alternative campaign would be to erode the will of the population by exposing a wider area of NVN to casualties and destruction; to reduce maritime imports by closing the major ports, and by attacking the resulting over-the-beach deliveries; to bring about a saturation of remaining import arteries, thereby creating greater target densities; and to disrupt the movement of supplies into SVN by attacking military control points and storage facilities wherever located. The hopeful assumption is that North Vietnam would then be forced to decide on a priority of imports--war-making goods vs. life-supporting goods--and that it would choose the latter. This in turn would attenuate its ability to supply forces in SVN and would thus slow down the tempo of the fighting there. In time, these cumulative pressures would be expected to bring NVN to negotiation of a compromise settlement, or to abandonment of the fight in SVN. 49/

The Soviet and Chinese reactions to these measures were expected to be confined to increased aid, some "volunteers" and an overall worsening of relations with the U.S. All these were regarded as manageable if not desirable. But in evaluating the likely results of such a bombing program, Brown was forced to admit that:

> Barring that effect, I would judge that Campaign #1 can, in military terms, limit SVN actions by NVN near their pre-Tet level, and below the level of February 1968. This campaign cannot be demonstrated quantitatively to be likely to reduce NVN capability in SVN substantially below the 1967 level, but in view of possible disruption of North Vietnamese distribution capability around Hanoi and Haiphong, such an effect could take place. The campaign would take place beginning in March, and should conceivably have its maximum effect by October. During the following season of poor weather, the North Vietnamese transportation system would begin to be reconstituted.
>
> The other possible impact is on the North Vietnamese will to continue the war. Clearly their society would be under even greater stress than it is now. But so long as they have the promise of continued Soviet and Chinese material support, and substantial prospect of stalemate or better in SVN, the North Vietnamese government is likely to be willing to undergo these hardships. Its control over the populace will remain good enough so that the latter will have no choice but to do so. 50/

The other two programs were regarded as having even less potential for inhibiting communist activity in the south. Program #2 involved simply a greatly intensified program of strikes in the panhandle areas of North Vietnam and Laos, while Program #3 proposed the substantial relocation of South Vietnamese population into secure zones and the designation of the remaining cleared areas as "free strike" regions for intensified air attack. Brown's three alternatives apparently did not get wide attention, however, and were never considered as major proposals within the inner circle of Presidential advisors. Nevertheless, the fact that they were supported by over fifty pages of detailed analysis done by the Air Staff is a reflection of the importance everyone attached to the reassessment going on within the Administration.

Of the other major advisors, Katzenbach had participated to a limited degree in the Clifford Group work and reportedly was opposed to the subsequent proposal for a partial suspension because he felt that a bombing halt was a trump card that could be used only once and should not be wasted when the prospects for a positive North Vietnamese response on negotiations seemed so poor. He reportedly hoped to convince the

President to call a complete halt to the air war later in the spring when prospects for peace looked better and when the threat to Khe Sanh had been eliminated. 51/ Walt Rostow, the President's personal advisor on national security matters, apparently resisted all suggestions for a restriction of the bombing, preferring to keep the pressure on the North Vietnamese for a response to the San Antonio formula. These various opinions represented the principal advice the President was receiving from his staff within the Administration. Other advice from outside, both invited and uninvited, also played a part in the final decision.

2. The New Hampshire Primary

In the days immediately following the early March deliberations, the President, toiling over the most difficult decision of his career, was faced with another problem of great magnitude -- how to handle the public reaction to Tet and the dwindling public support for his war policies. From this point of view probably the most difficult week of the Johnson Presidency began on March 10 when the New York Times broke the story of General Westmoreland's 206,000 man troop request in banner headlines. 52/ The story was a collaborative effort by four reporters of national reputation and had the kind of detail to give it the ring of authenticity to the reading public. In fact, it was very close to the truth in its account of the proposal from MACV and the debate going on within the Administration. The story was promptly picked up by other newspapers and by day's end had reached from one end of the country to the other. The President was reportedly furious at this leak which amounted to a flagrant and dangerous compromise of security. Later in the month an investigation was conducted to cut down on the possibility of such leaks in the future.

The following day, March 11, Secretary Rusk went before Fulbright's Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the first time in two years for nationally televised hearings on U.S. war policy. In sessions that lasted late that Monday and continued on Tuesday, the Secretary was subjected to sharp questioning by virtually every member. While he confirmed the fact of an "A to Z" policy review within the Administration, he found himself repeatedly forced to answer questions obliquely or not at all to avoid compromising the President. These trying two days of testimony by Secretary Rusk was completed only hours before the results from the New Hampshire primary began to come in. To the shock and consternation of official Washington, the President had defeated his upstart challenger, Eugene McCarthy, who had based his campaign on a halt in the bombing and an end to the war, by only the slenderest of margins. (In fact, when the write-in vote was finally tabulated later that week, McCarthy had actually obtained a slight plurality over the President in the popular vote.) The reaction across

the country was electric. It was clear that Lyndon Johnson, the master politician, had been successfully challenged, not by an attractive and appealing alternative vote-getter, but by a candidate who had been able to mobilize and focus all the discontent and disillusionment about the war. National politics in the election year 1968 would not be the same thereafter.

Critics of the President's policies in Vietnam in both parties were buoyed by the New Hampshire results. But for Senator Robert Kennedy they posed a particularly acute dilemma. With the President's vulnerability on Vietnam now demonstrated, should Kennedy, his premier political opponent on this and other issues, now throw his hat in the ring? After four days of huddling with his advisers, and first informing both the President and Senator McCarthy, Kennedy announced his candidacy on March 16. For President Johnson, the threat was now real. McCarthy, even in the flush of a New Hampshire victory, could not reasonably expect to unseat the incumbent President. But Kennedy was another matter. The President now faced the prospect of a long and divisive battle for renomination within his own party against a very strong contender, with the albatross of an unpopular war hanging around his neck.

For the moment at least, the President appeared determined. On March 17, he spoke to the National Farmers' Union and said that the trials of American responsibility in Vietnam would demand a period of domestic "austerity" and a "total national effort." 53/ Further leaks, however, were undercuting his efforts to picture the Administration as firm and resolute about doing whatever was necessary. On March 17, the New York Times had again run a story on the debate within the Administration. This time the story stated that the 206,000 figure would not be approved but that something between 35,000 and 50,000 more troops would be sent to Vietnam, necessitating some selective call-up of reserves. 54/ Again the reporters were disturbingly accurate in their coverage. Criticism of the President continued to mount. Spurred by the New Hampshire indications of massive public disaffection with the President's policy, 139 members of the House of Representatives co-authored a resolution calling for a complete reappraisal of U.S. Vietnam policy including a Congressional review.

3. ISA Attempts to Force a Decision

The President's reluctance to make a decision about Vietnam and the dramatic external political developments in the U.S. kept the members of the Administration busy in a continuing round of new draft proposals and further meetings on various aspects of the proposals the President was considering. Within ISA at the Pentagon, attention focused on ways to get some movement on the negotiations in the absence of any

decisions on forces or bombing. On March 11 Policy Planning produced a lengthy draft memo to Clifford outlining the history of Hanoi's positions on "talks","negotiations", "settlement", and "no advantage" provision of the San Antonio formula. Its conclusion was that Hanoi had indicated "acceptance of the operative portion of the San Antonio formula," if we really wished to acknowledge it. 55/ Policy Planning suggested testing this by asking them to repeat recent private assurances about not attacking Khe Sanh, the cities, across the DMZ, etc. In an effort to move the Administration to a more forthcoming interpretation of the San Antonio formula, this memo proposed discussions with GVN to define what constituted North Vietnamese acceptance.

The memo which Warnke signed the next day went to both Clifford and Nitze and began with the statement: "I believe that we should begin to take steps now which will make possible the opening of negotiations with Hanoi within the next few months. I believe that such negotiations are much much in our interest...." 56/ His arguments were: With respect to the San Antonio formula, he pointed to a number of Hanoi statements accepting the "prompt and productive" U.S.. stipulation for the negotiations, and offered his opinion that Hanoi had also hinted understanding and acquiescence in the "no advantage" provision. Warnke argued that further U.S. probing for assurances about "no advantage" would only reinforce Hanoi's impression that this was really a condition. If this occurred, he argued, Hanoi "may continue to denounce the San Antonio formula in public. This will make it difficult for us to halt the bombing if we decide that it is in our interest to do so." 57/ On the basis of these conclusions, Warnke recommended discussions with the GVN to explain our view of the desirability of negotiations and urged the completion of an inter-agency study preparing a U.S. position for the negotiations. He summed up his recommendation as follows:

> After holding discussions with the GVN and completing the interagency study, we should halt the bombing and enter into negotiations, making "no advantage" and mutual de-escalation the first and immediate order of business at the negotiations.
>
> If you approve this course of action, we will work with State on a detailed scenario for you to discuss with Mr. Rusk and the President. 58

Attached to Warnke's memo were separate supporting tabs outlining Hanoi's public and private responses to the San Antonio formula and arguing that Hanoi's conception of an acceptable negotiated settlement, as revealed in its statements, embodied a good deal of flexibility.

On the same day, Warnke signed a memo to the Director of CIA requesting a study of seven alternative bombing campaigns for the future. For unknown reasons, the memo was apparently never sent. 59/ The options for examination in this memo were all taken from the earlier draft memo with twelve options. Options 1-3 were all reduction or half options, but the wording of them suggests again that ISA was not aware of the high level attention being focused on a complete bombing halt north of 20°.

Neither Clifford's nor Nitze's reaction to Warnke's memo is available in the files, but two days later the Policy Planning Staff drafted a memorandum to the President for Clifford's signature which recommended a leveling off of our effort in the war -- i.e., no new troops and a reconcentration of the bombing to the panhandle area. The memo went through several drafts and is probably typical of efforts going on simultaneously in other agencies. In its final form it urged the retargetting of air strikes from the top of the funnel in North Vietnam to the panhandle with only enough sorties northward to prevent the DRV from relocating air defenses to the south. 60/ A more detailed discussion of the bombing alternatives was appended to the memo and included consideration of four alternative programs. The first two were (1) a continuation of the current bombing program; and (2) an increase in the bombing including the reduction of the restricted zones and the mining of Haiphong. These two were analyzed jointly as follows:

> The bombing of North Vietnam was undertaken to limit and/or make more difficult the infiltration of men and supplies in the South, to show Hanoi that it would have a price for its continued aggression, and to raise morale in South Vietnam. The last two purposes obviously have been achieved.
>
> It has become abundantly clear that no level of bombing can prevent the North Vietnamese from supplying the forces and materiel necessary to maintain their military operations in the South at current levels. The recent Tet offensive has shown that the bombing cannot even prevent a significant increase in these military operations, at least on an intermittent basis. Moreover, the air war has not been very successful when measured by its impact on North Vietnam's economy. In spite of the large diversion of men and materiels necessitated by the bombing, communist foreign aid and domestic reallocation of manpower have sharply reduced the destruction effect of our air strikes." 61/

The other two alternatives considered were a partial and a complete cessation of the bombing. Here is how ISA presented them:

3. A revision of the bombing effort in North Vietnam so that a maximum effort is exerted against the LOC's in Route Packages 1, 2, and 3 with bombing north of the 20th parallel limited to a level designed to cover only the most significant military targets and prevent the redistribution southward of air defenses, e.g. 5% of the attack sorties.

This reprogramming of our bombing efforts would devote primary emphasis on the infiltration routes south of the 20th parallel in the panhandle area of North Vietnam just to the north of the DMZ. It includes all of the areas now within Route Packages 1, 2 and 3. This program recognizes that our bombing emphasis should be designed to prevent military men and materiel from moving out of North Vietnam and into the South, rather than attempting to prevent materiel from entering North Vietnam. Occasional attack sorties north of this area would be employed to keep enemy air defenses and damage repair crews from relocating and to permit attack aginst the most important fixed targets. The effort against this part of North Vietnam through which all land infiltration passes would be intensive and sustained. Yet it provides Hanoi with a clear message that for political reasons we are willing to adjust our military tactics to accommodate a constructive move toward peace. A distinct benefit of this decision would be the lower plane loss rates which are realized in the southern areas of North Vietnam. (In 1967 the joint loss rate per thousand sorties in Route Packages 1, 2 and 3 was 1.36, while it was 5.73 in the more heavily defended Route Package 6 in which Hanoi and Haiphong are located.)

4. A complete cessation of all bombing in North Vietnam.

It would be politically untenable to initiate a complete cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam at a time when our forces in the northern provinces of South Vietnam are seriously threatened by large forces of North Vietnamese regulars, unless we were confident that these attacks would cease. Nevertheless, we must recognize that our intelligence analysts have advised that in spite of our significant bombing effort over the last 2-1/2 years, Hanoi retains the capability and the will to support the present or an increased level of hostilities in South Vietnam. On the other hand, they inform us that:

"If, however, the U.S. ceased the bombing of North Vietnam in the near future, Hanoi would probably respond

more or less as indicated in its most recent statements. It would begin talks fairly soon, would accept a fairly wide ranging exploration of issues, but would not moderate its terms for a final settlement or stop fighting in the South."

As discussed elsewhere in this memorandum, a cessation of the bombing by us in North Vietnam is the required first step if a political solution to the conflict is to be found. We may want to seek some assurance from Hanoi that it would not attack from across the DMZ if we halt the bombing. Alternatively, we could stop all bombing except that directly related to ground operations and indicate that our attacks are in the nature of returning fire and will be halted when the enemy halts its attacks in the area. 62/

These views of Clifford's staff never went to the White House, but are indicative of the direction and tone of the debates in the policy meetings within the Administration. Another aspect of the policy environment in March 1968 was ISA's isolation in arguing that Hanoi was moving toward acceptance of the San Antonio formula and a negotiated settlement. As we shall see, when the decision to halt the bombing north of 20° was finally made, it was not in the expectation that North Vietnam would come to the negotiating table.

4. The "Senior Informal Advisory Group"

At this juncture in mid-March, with the President vacillating as to a course of action, probably the most important influence on his thinking and ultimate decision was exercised by a small group of prominent men outside the Government, known in official Washington as the "Senior Informal Advisory Group." All had at one time or another over the last twenty years served as Presidential advisers. They gathered in Washington at the request of the President on March 18 to be briefed on the latest developments in the war and to offer Mr. Johnson the benefit of their experience in making a tough decision. Stuart Loory of the Los Angeles Times in an article in May reported what has been generally considered to be a reliable account of what took place during and after their visit to Washington and what advice they gave the President. The story as Loory reported it is included here in its entirety.

Hawks' Shift Precipitated Bombing Halt

Eight prominent hawks and a dove -- all from outside the government -- gathered in the White House for a night and day last March to judge the progress of the Vietnam war for President Johnson.

Their deliberations produced this verdict for the chief executive:

Continued escalation of the war -- intensified bombing of North Vietnam and increased American troop strength in the South -- would do no good. Forget about seeking a battlefield solution to the problem and instead intensify efforts to seek a political solution at the negotiating table.

The manner in which Mr. Johnson sought the advice of the nine men before arriving at the conclusion to de-escalate the war announced in his now famous March 31 speech, has been pieced together from conversations with reliable sources who asked to remain anonymous.

The nine men, Republicans and Democrats with extensive experience in formulating foreign policy, were among those frequently consulted by Mr. Johnson from time to time during the war. At each consultation prior to March they had been overwhelmingly in favor of prosecuting the war vigorously with more men and material, with intensified bombing of North Vietnam, with increased efforts to create a viable government in the South.

As recently as last December they had expressed this view to the President. The only dissenter among them -- one who had been a dissenter from the beginning -- was former Undersecretary of State George Ball.

March 18th Meeting

The men who have come to be known to a small circle in the government as the President's "senior informal advisory group" convened in the White House early on the evening of March 18th.

Present in addition to Ball were: Arthur Dean, a Republican New York lawyer who was a Korean War negotiator during the Eisenhower administration; Dean Acheson, former President Truman's Secretary of State; Gen. Matthew B. Ridgeway, the retired commander of United Nations troops in Korea; Gen. Maxwell Taylor, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Cyrus Vance, former Deputy Defense Secretary and a key troubleshooter for the Johnson Administration; McGeorge Bundy, Ford Foundation President who had been special assistant for National security affairs to Mr. Johnson and former President Kennedy; former Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon and Gen. Omar Bradley, a leading supporter of the President's war policies.

First the group met over dinner with Secretary of State Dean Rusk; Defense Secretary Clark M. Clifford; Ambassador W. Averell Harriman; Walt W. Rostow, the President's special assistant for National security affairs; Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Richard Helms, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Paul Nitze, Deputy Defense Secretary; Nicholas Katzenbach, Under Secretary of State; and William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

The outsiders questioned the government officials carefully on the war, the pacification program and the condition of the South Vietnamese government after the Tet offensive. They included in their deliberations the effect of the war on the United States.

Three Briefings

After dinner the government officials left and the group received three briefings.

Philip C. Habib, a deputy to William Bundy and now a member of the American negotiating team in Paris, delivered an unusually frank briefing on the conditions in Vietnam after the Tet offensive. He covered such matters as corruption in South Vietnam and the growing refugee problem.

Habib, according to reliable sources, told the group that the Saigon government was generally weaker than had been realized as a result of the Tet offensive. He related the situation, some said, with greater frankness than the group had previously heard.

In addition to Habib, Maj. Gen. William E. DePuy, special assistant to the Joint Chiefs for counterinsurgency and special activities, briefed the group on the military situation, and George Carver, a CIA analyst, gave his agency's estimates of conditions in the war zone.

The briefings by DePuy and Carver reflected what many understood as a dispute over enemy strength between the Defense Department and the CIA which has been previously reported. Discrepancies in the figures resulted from the fact that DePuy's estimates of enemy strength covered only identifiable military units, while Carver's included all known military, paramilitary and parttime enemy strength available.

Striking Turnabout

The morning of March 19, the advisory group assembled in the White House to discuss what they had heard the previous evening and arrived at their verdict. It was a striking turnabout in attitude for all but Ball.

After their meeting, the group met the President for lunch. It was a social affair. No business was transacted. The meal finished, the advisers delivered their verdict to the President.

He was reportedly greatly surprised at their conclusions. When he asked them where they had obtained the facts on which the conclusions were based, the group told him of the briefings by Habib, DePuy and Carver.

Mr. Johnson knew that the three men had also briefed his governmental advisers, but he had not received the same picture of the war as Rostow presented the reports to him.

As a result of the discrepancy, the President ordered his own direct briefings. At least Habib and DePuy -- and almost certainly Carver -- had evening sessions with the President.

Habib was reportedly as frank with the President as he had been with the advisory group. The President asked tough questions. "Habib stuck to his guns," one source reported.

On top of all this, Clifford, since he had become Defense Secretary, came to the same conclusions Robert S. McNamara had reached -- that the bombing of North Vietnam was not achieving its objectives.

The impact of this group's recommendation coupled with the new briefings the President received about conditions and prospects in the war zone were major factors in cementing the decision not to expand the war but to attempt a de-escalation. The Joint Chiefs for their part were still seeking authorization to strike targets with the Hanoi and Haiphong restricted areas and further escalation of the bombing. On March 19, a Tuesday, they proposed hitting one target in Hanoi and one in Haiphong that had previously been rejected by both Rusk and McNamara plus the Hanoi docks near large population concentrations. 63/ These were probably considered at the noon luncheon at the White House, but they were apparently not approved as no attacks occurred. The military leaders, even at this late hour when the disposition of the administration against any further escalation seemed clear, still pressed for new targets and new authority.

D. March 31 -- "I Shall Not Seek...Another Term as Your President.

1. The Decision.

No exact date on which the President made the decision to curtail the bombing can be identified with certainty. It is reasonably clear that the decisions on the ground war were made on or before March 22. On that date, the President announced that General William Westmoreland would be replaced as COMUSMACV during the coming summer. He was to return to Washington to become Chief of Staff of the Army. The decision was clearly related to the force deployment decisions explicitly taken and the new strategy they implied. Three days after this announcement, that had been greeted in the press as a harbinger, General Creighton Abrams, Deputy COMUSMACV, arrived in Washington without prior announcement for conferences with the President. Speculation was rife that he was to be named Westmoreland's successor. On the 26th he and the President huddled and Mr. Johnson probably informed him of his intentions, both with respect to force augmentations and the bombing restraint, and his intention to designate Abrams the new COMUSMACV. In the days that followed, the speech drafters took over, writing and rewriting the President's momentous address. Finally, it was decided that the announcement speech would be made on nation-wide television from the White House on the evening of March 31.

The night before the speech a cable under Katzenbach's signature, drafted by William Bundy, went out to US Embassies in Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Laos, the Philippines and South Korea slugged "Literally Eyes Only for Ambassador or Charge." It instructed the addressees that they were to see their heads of government and inform them that:

> After full consultation with GVN and with complete concurrence of Thieu and Ky, President plans policy announcement Sunday night that would have following major elements:
>
> a. Major stress on importance of GVN and ARVN increased effectiveness, with our equipment and other support as first priority in our own actions.
>
> b. 13,500 support forces to be called up at once in order to round out the 10,500 combat units sent in February.
>
> c Replenishment of strategic reserve by calling up 48,500 additional reserves, stating that these would be designed for strategic reserve.
>
> d. Related tax increases and budget cuts already largely needed for non-Vietnam reasons.
>
> ...In addition, after similar consultation and concurrence, President proposes to announce that bombing will be restricted

to targets most directly engaged in the battlefield area and that this meant that there would be no bombing north of 20th parallel. Announcement would leave open how Hanoi might respond, and would be open-ended as to time. However, it would indicate that Hanoi's response could be helpful in determining whether we were justified in assumption that Hanoi would not take advantage if we stopping bombing altogether. Thus, it would to this extent foreshadow possibility of full bombing stoppage at a later point. 64/

The significance of the decision they were to communicate to their respective heads of government could hardly have been lost on the Ambassadors. Nevertheless, the cable dramatized the importance of preventing premature leaks by stating that the Ambassadors were to tell the heads of Government to whom they were accreditted that they were "under strictest injunction to hold it in total confidence and not to tell any one repeat anyone until after announcement is made. This is vital. Similarly you should tell no member of your staff whatever." 65/ It is important to note that the cable defines the delimited area for the bombing halt as north of 20°. This apparently was the intent of the President and his advisors all along, but sometime before the speech was delivered any specific reference to the geographic point of limitation was eliminated, for undetermined reasons, if it ever had been included.

The March 30 cable offered the Ambassadors some additional explanatory rationale for the new course that they were to use at their discretion in conversations with their heads of government. These are important because they represent the only available recorded statement by the Administration of its understanding of the purposes and expectations behind the new direction in Vietnam policy. It is also significant that the points concerning the bombing halt are extremely close to those in Secretary Rusk's draft points of March 5. Here, then, is how the Administration understood the new policy, and wished to have understood by our allies:

a. You should call attention to force increases that would be announced at the same time and would make clear our continued resolve. Also our top priority to re-equipping ARVN forces.

b. You should make clear that Hanoi is most likely to denounce the project and thus free our hand after a short period. Nonetheless, we might wish to continue the limitation even after a formal denunciation, in order to reinforce its sincerity and put the monkey firmly on Hanoi's back for whatever follows. Of course, any major military change could compel full-scale resumption at any time.

c. With or without denunciation, Hanoi might well feel limited in conducting any major offensives at least in the

to targets most directly engaged in the battlefield area and that this meant that there would be no bombing north of 20th parallel. Announcement would leave open how Hanoi might respond, and would be open-ended as to time. However, it would indicate that Hanoi's response could be helpful in determining whether we were justified in assumption that Hanoi would not take advantage if we stopping bombing altogether. Thus, it would to this extent foreshadow possibility of full bombing stoppage at a later point. 64/

The significance of the decision they were to communicate to their respective heads of government could hardly have been lost on the Ambassadors. Nevertheless, the cable dramatized the importance of preventing premature leaks by stating that the Ambassadors were to tell the heads of Government to whom they were accreditted that they were "under strictest injunction to hold it in total confidence and not to tell any one repeat anyone until after announcement is made. This is vital. Similarly you should tell no member of your staff whatever." 65/ It is important to note that the cable defines the delimited area for the bombing halt as north of 20°. This apparently was the intent of the President and his advisors all along, but sometime before the speech was delivered any specific reference to the geographic point of limitation was eliminated, for undetermined reasons, if it ever had been included.

The March 30 cable offered the Ambassadors some additional explanatory rationale for the new course that they were to use at their discretion in conversations with their heads of government. These are important because they represent the only available recorded statement by the Administration of its understanding of the purposes and expectations behind the new direction in Vietnam policy. It is also significant that the points concerning the bombing halt are extremely close to those in Secretary Rusk's draft points of March 5. Here, then, is how the Administration understood the new policy, and wished to have understood by our allies:

a. You should call attention to force increases that would be announced at the same time and would make clear our continued resolve. Also our top priority to re-equipping ARVN forces.

b. You should make clear that Hanoi is most likely to denounce the project and thus free our hand after a short period. Nonetheless, we might wish to continue the limitation even after a formal denunciation, in order to reinforce its sincerity and put the monkey firmly on Hanoi's back for whatever follows. Of course, any major military change could compel full-scale resumption at any time.

c. With or without denunciation, Hanoi might well feel limited in conducting any major offensives at least in the

northern areas. If they did so, this could ease the pressure where it is most potentially serious. If they did not, then this would give us a clear field for whatever actions were then required.

d. In view of weather limitations, bombing north of the 20th parallel will in any event be limited at least for the next four weeks or so -- which we tentatively envisage as a maximum testing period in any event. Hence, we are not giving up anything really serious in this time frame. Moreover, air power now used north of 20th can probably be used in Laos (where no policy change planned) and in SVN.

e. Insofar as our announcement foreshadows any possibility of a complete bombing stoppage, in the event Hanoi really exercises reciprocal restraints, we regard this as unlikely. But in any case, the period of demonstrated restraint would probably have to continue for a period of several weeks, and we would have time to appraise the situation and to consult carefully with them before we undertook any such action. 66/

It is important to note that the Administration did not expect the bombing restraint to produce a positive Hanoi reply. This view apparently was never seriously disputed at any time during the long month of deliberations within the Government, except by ISA. The fact that the President was willing to go beyond the San Antonio formula and curtail the air raids at a time when few responsible advisors were suggesting that such action would produce peace talks is strong evidence of the major shift in thinking that took place in Washington about the war and the bombing after Tet 1968. The fact of anticipated bad weather over much of northern North Vietnam in the succeeding months is important in understanding the timing of the halt, although it can plausibly be argued that many advisors would have found another convenient rationale if weather had been favorable.

Finally, the message concluded with an invitation for the respective governments to respond positively to the announcement and with an apology for the tardiness with which they were being informed of this momentous action. "Vital Congressional timing factors" was the rather lame excuse offered, along with the need for "full and frank" consultation with the GVN before the decision (contradicting the impression the GVN put out after the announcement). The stage was thus finally set for the drama of the President's speech.

2. The Speech

At 9:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Thursday March 31 Lyndon Johnson stepped before the TV cameras in the Oval Room of the White House and began, in grave and measured tones, one of the most

important speeches of his life. His first words struck the theme of what was to come:

> Good Evening, my fellow Americans.
>
> Tonight I want to speak to you of peace in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. 67/

Underscoring the peaceful motivations of past and present U.S. policy in the area, he reviewed the recent history of U.S. attempts to bring peace to Vietnam:

> For years, representatives of our government and others have travelled the world -- seeking to find a basis for peace talks.
>
> Since last September, they have carried the offer that I made public at San Antonio.
>
> That offer was this:
>
> That the United States would stop its bombardment of North Vietnam when that would lead promptly to productive discussions -- and that we would assume that North Vietnam would not take military advantage of our restraint.
>
> Hanoi denounced this offer, both privately and publicly. Even while the search for peace was going on, North Vietnam rushed their preparations for a savage assault on the people, the government, and the allies of South Vietnam.

The President noted that the Viet Cong had apparently decided to make 1968 the year of decision in Vietnam and their Tet offensive had been the unsuccessful attempt to win a breakthrough victory. Although they had failed, the President acknowledged their capability to renew the attacks if they wished. He forcefully asserted, however, that the allies would again have the power to repel their assault if they did decide to attack. Continuing, he led up to his announcement of the bombing halt in this way:

> If they do mount another round of heavy attacks, they will not succeed in destroying the fighting power of South Vietnam and its allies.
>
> But tragically, this is also clear: many men -- on both sides of the struggle -- will be lost. A nation that has already suffered 20 years of warfare will suffer once again. Armies on both sides will take new casualties. And the war will go on.

There is no need for this to be so.

There is no need to delay the talks that could bring an end to the long and this bloody war.

Tonight, I renew the offer I made last August -- to stop the bombardment of North Vietnam. We ask that talks begin promptly, that they be serious talks on the substance of peace. We assume that during those talks Hanoi will not take advantage of our restraint.

We are prepared to move immediately toward peace through negotiations.

So, tonight, in the hope that this action will lead to early talks, I am taking the first step to de-escalate the conflict. We are reducing -- substantially reducing -- the present level of hostilities.

And we are doing so unilaterally, and at once.

Tonight, I have ordered our aircraft and our naval vessels to make no attacks on North Vietnam, except in the area north of the DeMilitarized Zone where the continuing enemy build-up directly threatens allied forward positions and where the movements of their troops and supplies are clearly related to that threat.

The President then defined, albeit vaguely, the area within which the bombing would be restricted and suggested that all bombing could halt if the other side would reciprocate by scaling down hostilities.

The area in which we are stopping our attacks includes almost 90 percent of North Vietnam's population, and most of its territory. Thus there will be no attacks around the principal populated areas, or in the food-producing areas of North Vietnam.

Even this very limited bombing of the North could come to an early end -- if our restraint is matched by restraint in Hanoi. But I cannot in good conscience stop all bombing so long as to do so would immediately and directly endanger the lives of our men and our allies. Whether a complete bombing halt becomes possible in the future will be determined by events.

In the hope that the unilateral U.S. initiative would "permit the contending forces to move closer to a political settlement," the President called on the UK and the Soviet Union to do what they could to get negotiations started. Repeating his offer to meet at any time and place he designated his representative should talks actually occur:

> I am designating one of our most distinguished Americans, Ambassador Averell Harriman, as my personal representative for such talks. In addition, I have asked Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, who returned from Moscow for consultation, to be available to join Ambassador Harriman at Geneva or any other suitable place -- just as soon as Hanoi agrees to a conference.
>
> I call upon President Ho Chi Minh to respond positively, and favorably, to this new step toward peace.
>
> But if peace does not come now through negotiations, it will come when Hanoi understands that our common resolve is unshakable, and our common strength is invincible.

Turning his attention to other matters, the President outlined the limited steps that the U.S. would take to strengthen its forces in South Vietnam and the measures he would push to improve the South Vietnamese Army. He then discussed the costs of the new efforts, the domestic frugality they would require, and the balance of payments efforts necessary to their implementation. Next he outlined his own views of the unlikelihood of peace, in an attempt to head off any false hope that the bombing cessation might generate:

> Now let me give you my estimate of the chances for peace:
>
> -- the peace that will one day stop the bloodshed in South Vietnam,
>
> -- that all the Vietnamese people will be permitted to rebuild and develop their land,
>
> -- that will permit us to turn more fully to our own tasks here at home.
>
> I cannot promise that the initiative that I have announced tonight will be completely successful in achieving peace any more than the 30 others that we have undertaken and agreed to in recent years.
>
> But it is our fervent hope that North Vietnam, after years of fighting that has left the issue unresolved, will

now cease its efforts to achieve a military victory and will join with us in moving toward the peace table.

And there may come a time when South Vietnam -- on both sides -- are able to work out a way to settle their own differences by free political choice rather than by war.

As Hanoi considers its course, it should be in no doubt of our intentions. It must not miscalculate the pressures within our democracy in this election year.

We have no intention of widening this war.

But the United States will never accept a fake solution to this long and arduous struggle and call it peace.

No one can foretell the precise terms of an eventual settlement.

Our objective in South Vietnam has never been the annihilation of the enemy. It has been to bring about a recognition in Hanoi that its objective -- taking over the South by force -- could not be achieved.

We think that peace can be based on the Geneva Accords of 1954 -- under political conditions that permit the South Vietnamese -- all the South Vietnamese -- to chart their course free of any outside domination or interference, from us or from anyone else.

So tonight I reaffirm the pledge that we made at Manila -- that we are prepared to withdraw our forces from South Vietnam as the other side withdraws its forces to the North, stops the infiltration, and the level of violence thus subsides.

Our goal of peace and self-determination in Vietnam is directly related to the future of all of Southeast Asia -- where much has happened to inspire confidence during the past 10 years. We have done all that we knew now to do to contribute and to help build that confidence.

The President praised the progressive developments in much of Asia in recent years and offered the prospect of similar progress in Southeast Asia if North Vietnam would settle the war. He repeated the Johns Hopkins offer of assistance to North Vietnam to rebuild its economy. In his peroration he spoke with deep conviction and much feeling about the purposes and reasons for the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia's

destiny which he had authorized. It represents perhaps our best insight into the President's understanding and motivation in the war, as well as his hopes and dreams:

> One day, my fellow citizens, there will be peace in Southeast Asia.
>
> It will come because the people of Southeast Asia want it -- those whose armies are at war tonight, and those who, though threatened, have thus far been spared.
>
> Peace will come because Asians were willing to work for it -- and to sacrifice for it -- and to die by the thousands for it.
>
> But let it never be forgotten: peace will come also because America sent her sons to help secure it.
>
> It has not been easy -- far from it. During the past four and a half years, it has been my fate and my responsibility to be commander-in-chief. I have lived -- daily and nightly -- with the cost of this war. I know the pain that it has inflicted. I know perhaps better than anyone the misgivings that it has aroused.
>
> Throughout this entire, long period, I have been sustained by a single principle:
>
> -- that what we are doing now, in Vietnam, is vital not only to the security of Southeast Asia, but it is vital to the security of every American.
>
> Surely we have treaties which we must respect. Surely we have commitments that we are going to keep. Resolutions of the Congress testify to the need to resist aggression in the world and in Southeast Asia.
>
> But the heart of our involvement in South Vietnam -- under three Presidents, three separate Administrations -- has always been America's own security.
>
> And the larger purpose of our involvement has always been to help the nations of Southeast Asia become independent and stand alone, self-sustaining as members of a great world community.

-- At peace with themselves, and at peace with all others.

With such an Asia, our country -- and the world -- will be far more secure than it is tonight.

I believe that a peaceful Asia is far nearer to reality, because of what America has done in Vietnam. I believe that the men who endure the dangers of battle -- fighting there for us tonight -- are helping the entire world avoid far greater conflicts, far wider wars, far more destruction, than this one.

The peace that will bring them home some day will come. Tonight I have offered the first in what I hope will be a series of mutual moves toward peace.

I pray that it will not be rejected by the leaders of North Vietnam. I pray that they will accept it as a means by which the sacrifices of their own people may be ended. And I ask your help and your support, my fellow citizens, for this effort to reach across the battlefield toward an early peace.

Listing the achievements of his administration and warning ainst the perils of division in America, the President ended his speech th his emotional announcement that he would not run for re-election.

Through all time to come, I think America will be a stronger nation, a more just society, and a land of greater opportunity and fulfillment because of what we have all done together in these years of unparalleled achievement.

Our reward will come in the life of freedom, peace, and hope that our children will enjoy through ages ahead.

What we won when all of our people united just must not now be lost in suspicion, distrust, selfishness, and politics among any of our people.

Believing this as I do, I have concluded that I should not permit the Presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year.

With America's sons in the fields far away, with America's future under challenge right here at home, with our hopes and the world's hopes for peace in the balance every day, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to

any duties other than the awesome duties of this office -- the Presidency of your country.

Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my Party for another term as your President.

But let men everywhere know, however, that a strong, a confident, and a vigilant America stands ready tonight to seek an honorable peace -- and stand ready tonight to defend an honored cause -- whatever the price, whatever the burden, whatever the sacrifices that duty may require.

Thank you for listening.

Good night and God bless all of you.

The speech had an electric effect on the U.S. and the whole world. It completely upset the American political situation, spurred world-wide hopes that peace might be imminent and roused fear and concern in South Vietnam about the depth and reliability of the American commitment. As already noted, no one in the Administration had seriously expected a positive reaction from Hanoi, and when the North Vietnamese indicated three days later that they would open direct contacts with the U.S. looking toward discussions and eventual negotiation of a peaceful settlement of the conflict, the whole complexion and context of the war was changed. To be sure, there was the unfortunate and embarrassing wrangle about exactly where the northern limit of the U.S. bombing would be fixed, with CINCPAC having sent extremely heavy sorties to the very limits of the 20th parallel on the day after the announcement only to be subsequently ordered to restrict his attacks below 19° on April 3. And there was the exasperatingly long public struggle between the U.S. and the DRV about where their representatives would meet and what title the contacts would be given, not finally resolved until May. But it was unmistakably clear throughout all this time that a major corner in the war and in American policy had been turned and that there was no going back. The President's decision was enormously well received at home and greeted with enthusiasm abroad where it appeared at long last there was a possibility of removing this annoyingly persistent little war in Asia as a roadblock to progress on other matters of world-wide importance involving East and West.

The President's speech at the end of March was, of course, not the end of the bombing much less the war, and a further history of the role of the limited air strikes could and should be undertaken. But the decision to cut back the bombing, the decision that turned American policy toward a peaceful settlement of the war, is a logical and fitting place to terminate this particular inquiry into the policy process that surrounded the air war. Henceforth, the decisions about the bombing would be made primarily in the Pacific by the field commanders since no vitally sensitive targets

requiring continuing Washington level political review were within the reduced attack zone. A very significant chapter in the history of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war had come to a close.

As those who struggled with the policy decisions about the bombing came to learn, any dispassionate and objective appraisal of it is almost impossible. As McGeorge Bundy noted in September 1967 after the Stennis hearings, both its proponents and its opponents have been guilty of excesses in their advocacy and criticism. As Bundy put it, "My own summary belief is that both the advocates and the opponents of the bombing continue to exaggerate its importance." 68/ To be sure, the bombing had not been conducted to its fullest potential, but on the other hand it had been much heavier and had gone on much longer than many if not most of its advocates had expected at the outset. Whether more might have been accomplished by different bombing policy decisions, at the start or along the way -- in particular the fast full squeeze favored by the JCS -- would necessarily remain an open question. What can be said in the end is that its partial suspension in part did produce what most had least expected -- a breakthrough in the deadlock over negotiations. And that in the longer view of history may turn out to be its most significant contribution.

UNITED STATES - VIETNAM RELATIONS

1945 - 1967

IV. C. 8.

RE-EMPHASIS ON PACIFICATION:

1965 - 1967

IV. C. 11.

The United States Re-Emphasizes Pacification - 1965 to Present

An Examination of a Major Trend in our Effort

SUMMARY

By the summer of 1967, pacification had become a major ingredient of American strategy in Vietnam, growing steadily in importance and the amount of resources devoted to it. The U.S. Mission in Vietnam had been reorganized three times in 15 months and each reorganization had been designed primarily to improve the management of the pacification effort and raise its priority within our overall effort.

Pacification -- or as it is sometimes called by Americans, Revolutionary Development (RD) -- had staged a comeback in priority from the days in 1964 and 1965 when it was a program with little emphasis, guidance, or support. It has by now almost equalled in priority for the Americans the original priority given the Strategic Hamlet program in 1962-1963, although the Vietnamese have not yet convinced many people that they attach the same importance to it as we do.

This study traces the climb in pacification's importance during the last two years, until it reached its present level of importance, with further growth likely.

This study concentrates on American decisions, American discussions, American papers. It will be clear to the reader that, if this version of events is accurate, the Vietnamese played a secondary role in the move to re-emphasize pacification. It is the contention of this paper that this was indeed the case, and that the Americans were the prime movers in the series of events which led to the re-emphasis of pacification. This study does not cover many important events, particularly the progress of the field effort, the CIA-backed PAT/Cadre program, and GVN activity.

The process by which the American government came to increase its support for pacification is disorderly and haphazard. Individuals like Ambassador Lodge and General Walt and Robert Komer, seem in retrospect to have played important roles, but to each participant in a story still unfolding, the sequence may look different. Therefore, it is quite possible that things didn't quite happen the way they are described here, and someone else, whose actions are not adequately described in the files available for this study, was equally important.

Nor was there anything resembling a conspiracy involved. Indeed, the proponents of what is called so loosely in this paper "pacification" were often in such violent disagreement as to what pacification meant

that they quarreled publicly among themselves and overlooked their common interests. At other times, people who disagreed strongly on major issues found themselves temporary allies with a common objective.

Moreover, there is the curious problem of the distance between rhetoric and reality. Even during the dark days of 1964-1965, most Americans paid lip service, particularly in official, on the record statements, to the ultimate importance of pacification. But their public affirmation of the cliches about "winning the hearts and minds of the people" were not related to any programs or priorities then in existence in Vietnam, and they can mislead the casual observer.

The resurgence of pacification was dramatically punctuated by three Presidential conferences on Pacific islands with the leaders of the GVN -- Honolulu in February, 1966, Manila in October, 1966 (with five other Chiefs of State also present), and Guam in March, 1967. After each conference the relative importance of pacification took another leap upward within the U.S. Government -- reflecting a successful effort within the U.S. Government by its American proponents -- and the U.S. tied the GVN onto Declarations and Communiques which committed them to greater effort.

In addition, each conference was followed by a major re-organization within the U.S. Mission, designed primarily to improve our management of the pacification effort. After Honolulu, Deputy Ambassador Porter was given broad new authority to run the civilian agencies. After Manila, Porter was directed to re-organize the components of USIA, CIA, and AID internally to create a single Office of Civil Operations (OCO). And after Guam, OCO -- redesignated as CORDS -- was put under the control of General Westmoreland, who was given a civilian deputy with the personal rank of Ambassador to assist him.

The low priority of pacification in 1965 was the understandable result of a situation in which battles of unprecedented size were taking place in the highlands and along the coast, the air war was moving slowly north towards Hanoi, and the GVN was in a continual state of disarray.

But a series of events and distinct themes were at work which would converge to give pacification a higher priority. They were to meet at the Honolulu conference in February, 1966.

I. Threads That Met At Honolulu

A. Hop Tac

The first was the hold-over program from 1964-1965 -- pacification's one priority even then, the Hop Tac program. It had been suggested first by Lodge on his way home from his first Ambassadorship, and Taylor and Westmoreland had given it recognition as a high priority program. Although Westmoreland judged it repeatedly as a partial success, it appears now to have been a faultily conceived and clumsily executed program. It was conceptually unsound, lacked the support of the Vietnamese, created disagreements within the U.S. Mission which were never resolved, and then faded away. So unsuccessful was it that during its life span the VC were able to organize a regiment -- 165A -- in the Gia Dinh area surrounding Saigon, and thus forced MACV in late 1966 to commit three U.S. infantry battalions to Operation FAIRFAX to protect the capital. No one analyzed Hop Tac before starting FAIRFAX. With the beginning of FAIRFAX, Hop Tac was buried quietly and the United States proceeded to other matters.

B. Ambassador Lodge and the True Believers

Henry Cabot Lodge returned as Ambassador in August of 1965, and immediately began to talk of pacification as "the heart of the matter." In telegrams and Mission Council meetings, Lodge told the President, the GVN, and the Mission that pacification deserved a higher priority. Because he saw himself as an advocate before the President for his beliefs rather than as the overall manager of the largest overseas civil-military effort in American history, * Lodge did not try, as Ambassador Maxwell Taylor had done, to devise an integrated and unified strategy that balanced every part of our effort. Instead, he declared, in his first month back in Vietnam (September, 1965), that "the U.S. military was doing so well now that we face a distinct possibility that VC main force units will be neutralized, and VC fortresses destroyed soon," and that therefore we should be ready to give pacification a new push. While his involvement was irregular and inconsistent, Lodge did nonetheless play a key role in giving pacification a boost. His rhetoric, even if vague, encouraged other advocates of pacification to speak up. The man he brought with him, Edward Lansdale, gave by his very presence an implicit boost to pacification.

C. The III Marine Amphibious Force

Meanwhile, to their own amazement, the Marines were discovering that the toughest war for them was the war in the villages behind them near the Da Nang air base, rather than the war against the main force, which had retreated to the hills to build up. In the first 12 months of their deployment, the Marines virtually reversed their emphasis, turning away

---

* No other American Ambassador has ever had responsibility and authority even close to that in Saigon; only military commands have exceeded it in size.

from the enemy to a grueling and painfully slow effort to pacify the villages of the central coast in their three TAORs. It was a job that Americans were not equipped for, and the Marine effort raised some basic questions about the role of U.S. troops in Vietnam, but nonetheless, the Marines began to try to sell the rest of the U.S. Government on the success and correctness of their still unproved strategy. The result was a major commitment to the pacification strategy by a service of the U.S. Armed Forces, and influence on the other services, particularly the Army.

D. Washington Grumbles About The Effort

When Lodge was Ambassador, there was widespread concern about the management of the Mission. Lodge was admittedly not a manager. This concern led to a major conference at Warrenton in January of 1966, during which increased emphasis on pacification and better organization within the U.S. Mission were the main topics. Improving the Washington organizational structure was raised, but not addressed candidly in the final report; Washington seemed far readier to tell Saigon how to reorganize than to set their own house in order. But Warrenton symbolizes the growing dissatisfaction in Washington with the Mission as it was.

E. Presidential Emphasis on the "Other War" and Press Reaction

Finally, there was the need of the President, for compelling domestic political reasons, to give greater emphasis to "the other war." With the first full years of major troop commitment ending with victory not yet in sight, there was a growing need to point out to the American public and to the world that the United States was doing a great deal in the midst of war to build a new Vietnam. While this emphasis did not necessarily have to also become an emphasis on pacification, it did, and thus the President in effect gave pacification his personal support -- an act which was acutely felt by Americans in Vietnam.

F. Meanwhile, Back at the War...

A summary of the MACV Monthly Evaluations and other reports is contained here, showing how the U.S. command saw its own progress. The summary suggests that MACV foresaw heavy fighting all through 1966, and did not apparently agree with Ambassador Lodge's predictions and hopes that a major pacification effort could be started, but the issue was not analyzed before decisions were made.

II. Honolulu

A. The Conference - February 1966

The details of the working sessions at the Honolulu conference do not appear, in retrospect, to be nearly as important on the future

emphasis on pacification as the public statements that came out of Honolulu, particularly the Declaration itself. The discussions and the Declaration are summarized, including the President's final remarks in plenary session.

B. Public Impact...

The press reaction to the conference is summarized.

III. Honolulu to Manila

A. Saigon: Porter in Charge

The first reorganization now took place, and Deputy Ambassador Porter was put in direct charge of the civilian agencies. His responsibility and his ability to carry out his responsibility were not equal from the outset, and Porter saw his role in different terms than those in Washington who had given him his difficult task. A major problem was the lack of full support that Porter received from Ambassador Lodge, who had never been fully in favor of the reorganization. Another problem was the lack of a parallel structure in Washington, so that Porter found himself caught between the Washington agencies and their representatives in Saigon, with Komer (see below) as a frequent participant. Nonetheless, Porter accomplished a great deal in the months this arrangement lasted; it just wasn't as much as Washington sought.

B. Washington: Komer As The Blowtorch

In Washington, the President selected a McGeorge Bundy deputy, R. W. Komer, to be his Special Assistant on non-military activities in Vietnam. Komer did not have the same kind of authority over the Washington agencies that Porter, in theory, had over the Saigon extensions. Komer pushed pacification hard, and became the first senior official, with apparently ready access to the President, who put forward the pro-pacification position consistently in high level meetings. His mandate was contained in a loosely worded NSAM, 343, dated March 28, 1966. During the summer of 1966, Komer applied great pressure to both the Mission and the Washington agencies (thus earning from Ambassador Lodge the nickname of "Blowtorch"), with a series of cables and visits to Vietnam, often using the President's name.

C. Study Groups and Strategists: Summer 1966

With Porter and Komer in their new roles, a series of Task Forces and Study Groups began to produce papers that gave a better rationale and strategy to pacification. These included the Army study called PROVN, the Priorities Task Force in Saigon, and the Roles and Missions Study Groups in Saigon. At the same time, Westmoreland, whose year end wrap-up message on January 1, 1966, had not even mentioned pacification, sent

in a new long range strategy which emphasized pacification, to Lodge's pleasure. MACV also produced a new position on revamping ARVN, and briefed the Mission Council on it in August, 1966. The Honolulu emphasis was beginning to produce tangible results on the U.S. side.

D. The Single Manager

Despite the movement described in the above three sections, Washington wanted more, and was not satisfied with the rate of progress. Komer, therefore, in August of 1966 had produced a long paper which offered three possible changes in the management structure of the Mission. They were: (1) put all pacification responsibility and assets, including MACV Advisors, under Porter; (2) reorganize the civilian structure to create a single office of operations, and strengthen MACV internally, but leave the civilians and the military split; (3) give Westmoreland full pacification responsibility. The Mission rejected all these ideas, offering in their stead the proposal that Washington leave Saigon alone for a while, but the pressure for results and better management was too great, and the inadequacies of the Mission too obvious, to leave it alone. Secretary McNamara weighed in at this point with a draft Presidential memorandum proposing that Westmoreland be given responsibility for pacification. Komer and JCS concurred in it, but State, USIA, AID, and CIA nonconcurred. McNamara, Katzenbach, and Komer then went to Saigon to take a look at the situation. When they returned, Katzenbach, new to the State Department and previously uninvolved in the problem, recommended that Porter be told to reorganize the civilians along the lines previously discussed (similar to Komer's Alternative Number 2). The President agreed, discussing it with Lodge and Westmoreland at Honolulu. But he added a vital warning: he would give the civilians only about 90 to 120 days to make the new structure work, and then would reconsider the proposal to transfer responsibility for pacification to MACV.

E. The Manila Conference

The decision had not yet been transmitted to Saigon, but it had been made. At Manila, with six other heads of state in attendance, the discussion turned to other matters. At Manila, in the final Declaration, the GVN announced that they would commit half the armed forces to securing operations in support of pacification/RD. This had previously been discussed, but it was the public commitment that really mattered, and now it was on the record.

IV. OCO to CORDS

A. OCO on Trial: Introduction

The Office of Civil Operations was formed, creating confusion and resentment among the agencies, but also marking an immediate and major

step forward. The example of the civilians moving at this pace also created pressure and conflict within MACV, which was for the first time confronted with a strong civilian structure. The GVN indicated that it understood and approved of the new structure.

B. OCO on Trial: Too Little Too Late -- Or Not Enough Time?

Although it was slower than Washington desired, OCO did get off to a start in December of 1966. Wade Lathram, who had been USAID Deputy Director, was chosen to head up OCO -- a choice that was unfortunate, because Lathram, a skilled and cautious bureaucrat, was not the kind of driving and dynamic leader that OCO -- in a brink of disaster situation from its inception -- needed.

Even worse, Porter was almost immediately diverted from OCO to pay more attention to other matters. While the planners had hoped that Porter would take OCO in hand and give Lathram direct guidance, instead he left Lathram in control of OCO and was forced to turn his attentions to running the Mission, during a long vacation (one month) by Lodge.

The most dramatic action that was taken was the selection of the Regional Directors, a move which even attracted newspaper attention. They included Henry Koren, formerly Porter's deputy; John Paul Vann, the controversial former MACV advisor; and Vince Heymann of the CIA.

Slowly, the OCO then turned to picking its province representatives. All in all, OCO accomplished many things that had never been done before; given time it could no doubt have done much more. But it was plagued from the outset by lack of support from the agencies and their representatives in Saigon, and Washington made higher demands than could be met in Saigon.

C. Time Runs Out

It is not clear when the President made the decision to scrap OCO. He communicated his decision to his field commanders at Guam, but there was a two-month delay before the decision was announced publicly or discussed with the GVN.

D. The CORDS Reorganization

As Bunker took over the Mission, there was a considerable turnover in key personnel. Bunker asked Lansdale and Zorthian to stay on, but Porter, Habib, Wehrle, all left just as Locke, Komer, Calhoun, Cooper, and General Abrams all arrived.

In the new atmosphere, Komer took the lead, making a series of recommendations which maintained the civilian position within MACV, and Westmoreland accepted them.

An example of Komer's influence was the question of the role of the ARVN divisions in the RD chain of command, and here Westmoreland took Komer's suggestion even though it meant a reversal of the previous MACV position.

E. The Mission Assessment as CORDS Begins

The situation inherited by CORDS was not very promising. Measurements of progress had been irrelevant and misleading, and progress by nearly all standards has been slow or nonexistent. At this point, the study of CORDS and pacification becomes current events.

TABLE OF CONTENTS AND OUTLINE

		Page
I.	THREADS THAT MET AT HONOLULU	1
	A. Hop Tac	1
	B. Ambassador Lodge and the "True Believers"	8
	C. III Marine Amphibious Force	16
	D. Washington Grumbles About the Effort	20
	E. Presidential Emphasis on "The Other War" and Press Reaction	28
	F. Meanwhile, Back at the War	32
II.	HONOLULU	36
	A. The Conference - February 1966	36
	B. Impact on Public in US, on US Mission in Vietnam, and on Vietnamese	45
III.	HONOLULU TO MANILA	53
	A. Saigon: Porter in Charge	53
	B. Washington: Komer as the Blowtorch	62
	C. Study Groups and Strategists: Summer 1966	74
	D. The Single Manager	91
	E. The Manila Conference	116
IV.	OCO TO CORDS	119
	A. OCO on Trial: Introduction	119
	B. OCO on Trial: Too Little Too Late -- Or Not Enough Time?	122
	C. Time Runs Out	127
	D. The CORDS Reorganization	132
	E. The Mission Assessment as CORDS Begins	135

I. Threads that Met at Honolulu

A. Hop Tac

While pacification received a low emphasis during troubled 1964-1965, there was one important exception: the Hop Tac program, designed to put "whatever resources are required" into the area surrounding Saigon to pacify it. The area was chosen by Ambassador Lodge in his last weeks as Ambassador in June, 1964, and Hop Tac deserves study because both its failures and limited achievements had many of the characteristics of our later pacification efforts -- and because, like all pacification efforts, there was constant disagreement within the Mission, the press, and the Vietnamese as to how well the program was doing.

Hop Tac -- an intensive pacification effort in the provinces ringing Saigon -- was formally proposed at a high level strategy session in Honolulu in July of 1964 by Lodge, then on his way home from his first assignment as Ambassador. In a paper presented to Secretaries Rusk and McNamara and incoming Ambassador Taylor at Honolulu (dated June 19, 1964), Lodge wrote:

> "A combined GVN-US effort to intensify pacification efforts in critical provinces should be made...The eight critical provinces are: Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Hau Nghia, Long An, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, Vinh Long, and Quang Ngai. Top priority and maximum effort should be concentrated initially in the strategically important provinces nearest to Saigon, i.e., Long an, Hau Nghia, and Binh Duong. Once real progress has been made in these provinces, the same effort should be made in the five others."1/

General Taylor and General Westmoreland began Hop Tac, setting up a new and additional headquarters in Saigon which was supposed to tie together the overlapping and quarrelsome commands in the Saigon area. The Vietnamese set up a parallel, "counterpart" organization, although critics of Hop Tac were to point out that the Vietnamese Hop Tac headquarters had virtually no authority or influence, and seemed primarily designed to satisfy the Americans. (Ironically, Hop Tac is the Vietnamese word for "cooperation," which turned out to be just what Hop Tac lacked.)

Hop Tac had a feature previously missing from pacification plans: it sought to tie together the pacification plans of a seven-province area (expanded from Lodge's three provinces to include the adjacent provinces of Phuoc Tuy, Bien Hoa, Phuoc Thanh, and Gia Dinh, which surround Saigon like a doughnut), into a plan in which each province subordinated its own priorities to the concept of building a "giant oil spot" around Saigon. In a phrase which eventually became a joke in the Mission, the American heading the Hop Tac Secretariat at its inception, Colonel

Jasper Wilson, briefed senior officials on the creation of "rings of steel" which would grow outward from Saigon until the area from the Cambodian border to the South China Sea was secure. Then, according to the plan, Hop Tac would move into the Delta and North. Colonel Wilson ordered his staff to produce a phased plan in which the area (Map 1) to be pacified was divided into four circles around Saigon. Each ring was to be pacified in four months, according to the original plan, which never had any chance of success. But Wilson, under great pressure from his superiors, ordered the plan produced, got his Vietnamese counterparts to translate it, and issued it. The kickoff date for Hop Tac was to be September 12, 1964: the operation, a sweep into the VC-controlled pineapple groves just west and southwest of the city of Saigon -- the VC base nearest to the city, which had not been entered by the GVN since the last outpost had been abandoned in 1960.

The operation began on schedule, with elements of the 51st Regiment moving toward their objective west of Saigon. During the second day of the operation, the unit ran into a minefield and took numerous casualties. Shortly thereafter, instead of continuing the operation, the unit broke off contact and, to the amazement of its advisors, turned back towards the city of Saigon. When next located it was in the middle of Saigon participating in the abortive coup d'etat of September 13, 1964.

From that point on, Hop Tac was a constant source of dispute within the U.S. Mission. Almost to a man, the civilian agencies "supporting" Hop Tac felt that the program was unnecessary, repetitive, and doomed. They claimed that they preferred to work through existing channels, although these, in MACV's view, were inadequate. This view was not stated openly, however, since the Ambassador and General Westmoreland had committed all U.S. agencies to full support. On October 6, 1964, for example, General Taylor sent Washington an EXDIS cable in which he discussed and rejected a suggestion to decentralize the pacification effort, and instead listed several actions that the Mission would take. First among these was a "unanimous recommendation" that the Mission "give full support to Hop Tac Plan, assuring it the necessary priority to give it every chance to succeed...When Hop Tac priorities permit, concentrate on selected weak areas." 2/ Thus there was a reluctance to criticize the program directly.

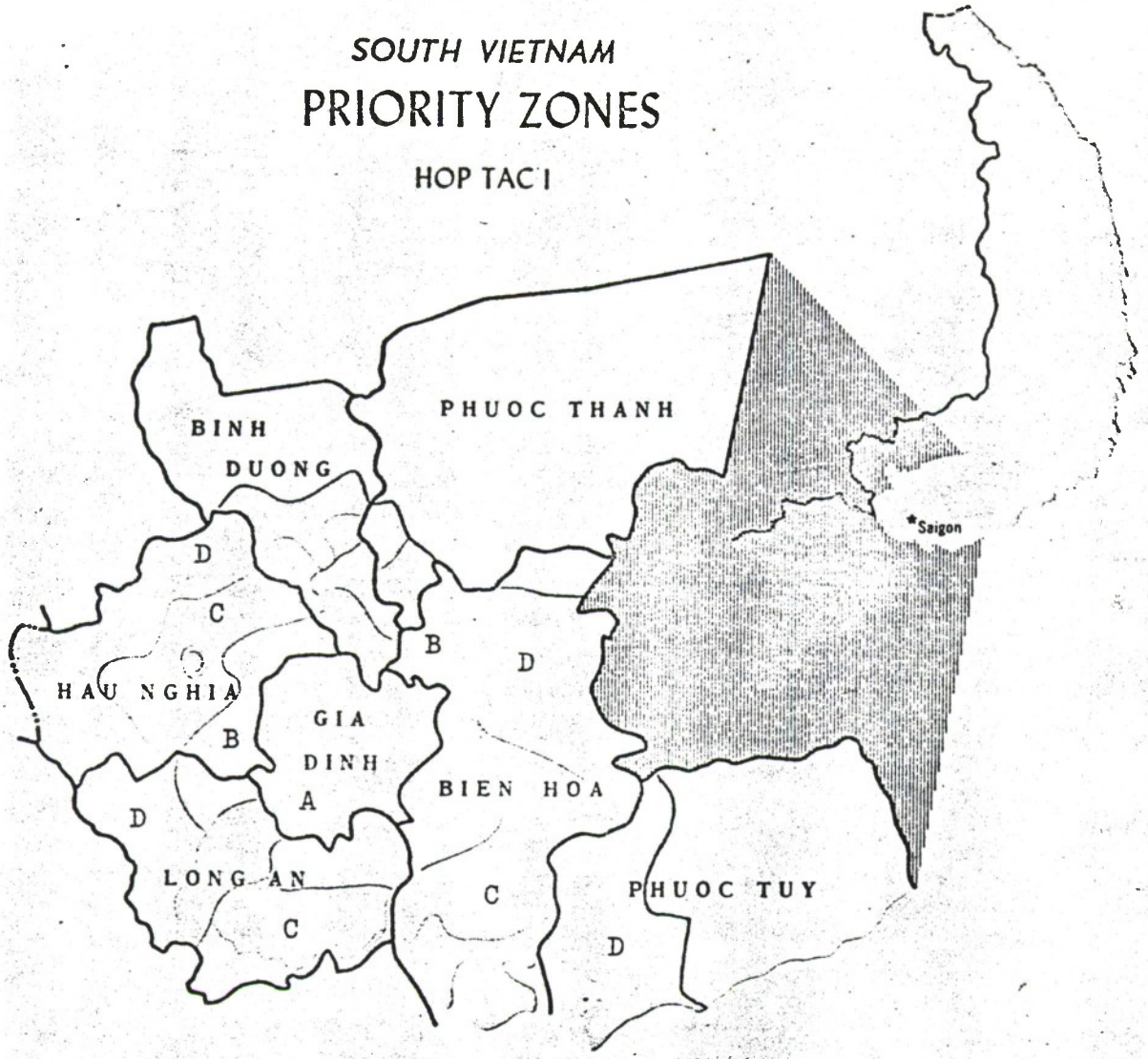
Deadlines slipped continually; phase lines were readjusted; the official count of "pacified" hamlets climbed steadily. But a special study of the area made in October, 1964, by representatives of USOM, USIS, and MACV concluded: "Generally speaking, Hop Tac, as a program, does not appear to exist as a unified and meaningful operation." 3/

The official view of Hop Tac was that the new coordinating machinery was doing some good. Thus, during a period in which cables on the general situation were rather gloomy, Ambassador Taylor could tell the President

SOUTH VIETNAM

PRIORITY ZONES

HOP TAC I



MAP 1.

in his weekly NODIS that while "pacification progress throughout the rest of Vietnam was minimal at best, largely because of the political climate...Some forward movement occurred in the Hop Tac effort growing out of U.S. Mission discussions with the Prime Minister on September 25. The number of operating checkpoints in the Hop Tac area increased markedly; command areas were strengthened; available troop strength increased." 4/ Minor statistical advances, taken out of context, were continually being used in the above manner to prove overall progress.

The MACV Command History for 1964 reflects the official view: "At the end of 1964, Hop Tac was one of the few pacification areas that showed some success and greater promise." 5/ But subsequent events in the area do not bear out this view. In February of 1966 for example -- 18 months after the birth of Hop Tac -- when the Hop Tac area was designated as one of the four "National Priority Areas," the briefers were unable to show Ambassadors Lodge and Porter any progress in the preceding year. They could not even produce a plan for the coming year. Originally Hop Tac was focused on cleaning out the nearest VC base areas, but by February of 1966 -- with the GVN unable to stop the growing VC build-up, the emphasis was "placed on lines of communications, with special attention to be given vital installations including Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut air bases and ammunition and gasoline depots." 6/ The best the briefers could do, in the final briefing prior to the Honolulu Conference, was to say that they hoped to pacify 72 hamlets in the entire seven-province area, and "consolidate" 144 hamlets in Gia Dinh -- which meant the hamlets ringing Saigon, including many which were really part of the city. Lodge and Porter were told that day "there has been a lessening of security in Hau Nghia and Gia Dinh provinces. RF and PF units generally are not up to authorized strengths. The new cadre program should be helpful in solving the problem of continued hamlet security after pacification...The 1966 plan is not overly optimistic from a military standpoint." 7/ (The memorandum recording of this meeting, made by a member of General Lansdale's staff, shows as the only Ambassadorial guidance after this sobering report: "Maps drawn to depict progress of Rural Construction (Pacification) should show as the goal only that area to be pacified during the year...The U.S. Mission manpower committee should look into the use of refugees in the national labor force.") 8/

The Vietnamese were cynical about Hop Tac; it was something, speculation ran, that General Khanh had to do to keep the Americans happy, but it was clearly an American show, clearly run by the United States, and the Vietnamese were reluctant to give it meaningful support. It was one of the first major programs with which the United States became publicly identified (since Diem had always kept the United States in as much of a background role as possible -- and its shortcomings were in part derived from this fact.

All through Ambassador Taylor's tenure, Hop Tac was something on which he and the Mission Council pinned hope. General Westmoreland thought the program had been reasonably successful, when he told the Mission Council about Hop Tac's first year:

> "General Westmoreland said that while Hop Tac could be said only to have been about 50% successful, it had undoubtedly averted a VC seige of Saigon." 9/

This same view was reflected in McGeorge Bundy's comments in a memorandum to the President months earlier in February, 1965, when he said:

> "The Hop Tac program of pacification in this area has not been an unqualified success, but it has not been a failure, and it has certainly prevented any strangling seige of Saigon. We did not have a chance to form an independent judgment on Hop Tac, but we did conclude that whatever its precise measure of success, it is of great importance that this operation be pursued with full vigor. This is the current policy of the Mission." 10/

There were others who said that, as a matter of fact, Saigon was almost under seige and that the situation was deteriorating. Westmoreland's own headquarters, for example, sent to Washington in the June Monthly Evaluation from MACV, the following statement which seems to contradict Westmoreland's optimism:

> "The sealing off of Saigon from surrounding areas, no matter how incomplete the sealing may be, has had and will continue to have serious economic as well as military effects." 11/

Shortly after he arrived in Vietnam for his second tour, Lodge asked for a private assessment of Hop Tac from an Embassy officer, who reported to him in early September of 1965:

> "1. Hop Tac did not achieve its original goals primarily because they were completely unrealistic and did not take into account the difficulty of the task. These goals were set quite arbitrarily and with no regard for the available resources and the strength of the enemy.
>
> "2. The second reason for the failures of Hop Tac lies in its strategic concept. The idea of concentric circles outward from Saigon to be pacified in successive waves of clearing, securing and developing may be sound in macroscopic terms; when the Hop Tac area is looked at carefully, the viability of this strategy breaks down. The concentric phase lines around Saigon do not adequately take into account existing areas of GVN strength and existing Viet Cong base areas; rather

they commit the GVN to a continual expansionary effort on all sides of Saigon simultaneously, an effort which is beyond its capabilities. Above all, they ignore the political structure of the area around Saigon.

"3. The U.S. Mission has two broad courses of action available in regard to Hop Tac. First, the Mission Council may feel that the area encompassed by Hop Tac remains the first pacification priority of the U.S. and the GVN. If this is the considered judgment of the Mission Council, then we must seek ways of re-emphasizing, re-invigorating and reorienting Hop Tac in order to achieve a dramatic and sustained success in pacification.

"4. There is an alternative open to the Mission Council. Perhaps it would be politically unwise to attempt to commit the GVN to re-emphasis of Hop Tac at this time. There are several facts which support this view:

"A. The GVN has never considered Hop Tac its own plan and its own number one priority. The staff planning for the plan was done almost entirely by the United States, and then translated into Vietnamese. It is, in the eyes of many Vietnamese, 'the plan of the Americans.'

"B. It is perhaps the most difficult area in the country in which to attempt pacification. Since it surrounds Saigon (but does not include it), every political tremor in the capital is felt in the neighboring area...the High Command has created chains of command in the area which are clearly designed primarily to prevent coups, and only secondarily to pacify the countryside. Another example: in the last 11 months, 24 out of 31 district chiefs and five out of seven province chiefs have been changed.

"C. Prime Minister Ky will never feel that Hop Tac is his plan. If he is seeking a major public triumph, and intends to devote his attention to achieving that triumph, it is unlikely that he will choose Hop Tac, which as mentioned above, is publicly considered an American plan. Moreover, to the extent that any Vietnamese is publicly connected with Hop Tac, it is Nguyen Khanh. For this reason, more than any other, the dangers of re-emphasizing Hop Tac outweigh the possible gains..."

"The situation in the Hop Tac area will not collapse if Hop Tac is not revitalized now. With the available forces, and particularly with the impending arrival of the 1st Infantry Division to take up a position across the southern arc of Zone D, Saigon itself is not going to be threatened any more than it presently is. The threat -- which is substantial -- comes from the enemy within, and the solution does not lie within the responsibility of the Hop Tac Council: it is a problem for the Saigon police and intelligence communities. This threat, serious as it is, is not directly affected by the presence of the Viet Cong's 506th battalion 20 miles away in Hau Nghia, nor by Zone D. The two problems can be dealt with separately, and solution of the internal security problems of Saigon are not contingent on the success of clearing Hau Nghia and Long An." 12/

In an effort to reconcile these opposing views about Hop Tac, Lodge told the September 15 Mission Council that "the original reasons for the emphasis placed on the area surrounding Saigon...were still valid, primarily because of the heavy density of population. Lodge noted, however, lack of a clear commitment to Hop Tac on the part of the GVN, possibly due to the fact that the Vietnamese consider the program an American scheme. The view was also expressed that the trouble may also lie in US/GVN differences over some fundamental concepts in Hop Tac. Finally, Ambassador Lodge said it was essential that all interested American agencies be agreed on concepts and tactics before an approach to the GVN could be made." 13/ After this meeting, no significant action was taken, and the matter lapsed.

The importance of Hop Tac is still difficult to assess; it is included here primarily because of its role as the one major pacification program that was tried during the 1964-1965 period when pacification was not receiving its present top-level emphasis. Whether or not it averted a seige of Saigon, as General Westmoreland claimed, is a semantic question: what constitutes a seige in a guerrilla war? Saigon, of course, never was under seige in the classic sense of the word, but it is hard to conceive of it ever being literally cut off as Dien Bien Phu or Makefing were -- this would not be a logical objective to the Viet Cong, who wanted to put pressure on the capital but knew they couldn't seal it off (nor would have wanted to, since they got supplies from it).

What is important is that the failures of Hop Tac were never adequately reported and analyzed prior to embarking on other pacification efforts. Thus, at one point General Westmoreland told each of his Senior Corps Advisors to start a Hop Tac in his area -- a strange request since Hop Tac was designed to pull together a multiplicity of commands not duplicated in any other area. Each Corps naturally responded by producing plans which concentrated their pacification assets around the Corps headquarters -- Da Nang, and Can Tho or, in the case of II Corps,

Qui Nhon. This in turn led naturally to the later National Priority Area program, but had no other value.

With MACV reluctant to close down its Hop Tac Secretariat, with the civilian Americans giving Hop Tac only verbal support, and with the Vietnamese leaving a powerless staff at the headquarters, Hop Tac could well have survived as an appendix to the normal chain of command, as so many outdated structures survive in Vietnam because no one wants to admit their irrelevance. But General Westmoreland saw a way to dispose of Hop Tac cleanly and quietly in the summer of 1966, and he took it. At the Mission Council meeting of July 7, 1966:

> "General Westmoreland then turned to the subject of Hop Tac. He summarized the purpose of the Hop Tac concept, which was implemented two years ago, and said that -- while it has enjoyed only modest success over the past two years -- the situation in the area surrounding Saigon/Cholon would be comparatively worse if we had not had the Hop Tac arrangement. He noted that recent organizational changes have taken place, which have resulted in the Capital Military Region becoming the Capital Military District (as part of the III Corps Tactical Zone) with Saigon remaining as an autonomous city. In view of these changes, there is some question of the validity of continuing with the original concept. More importantly, III Corps has a Revolutionary Development Council and a Hop Tac Council which results in some duplication of effort. Consequently, the General believes that these two councils should be merged, with the Revolutionary Development Council absorbing the Hop Tac Council. General Westmoreland asked the Mission Council to endorse this proposal for him to carry out. After brief discussion, Ambassador Lodge indicated his approval." 14/

By this time Hop Tac had long lost the "highest priority" which was supposed to justify it, and both the American and the Vietnamese had turned to other matters.

But Hop Tac was not adequately analyzed before embarking on other efforts, and its shortcomings were largely forgotten by the time that the still-deteriorating situation in Gia Dinh led MACV to commit three U.S. Army battalions to the inner area surrounding Saigon -- the original first phase of Hop Tac -- as part of Operation Fairfax in November of 1966. The Mission, with no institutional memory, forgot -- or never learned -- the lessons that Hop Tac could have offered.

B. Ambassador Lodge and the "True Believers"

Many senior American officials have paid varying degrees of lip service to the pacification effort since 1962 -- a fact which makes it extremely hard to determine who really pushed pacification and who didn't. But about Ambassador Lodge, there can be little question. He had repeatedly called pacification "the heart of the matter," and his unfailing belief in the importance of the effort can be clearly shown in his public and private statements and his cables.

His emphasis on pacification resumed the day he returned to Saigon in August 1965, when in his arrival statement he said that the United States supported the "true revolution" of the Vietnamese people. His continual emphasis on the effort seems to have had a definite impact on the mood in Washington and in the Mission, and played a role in the events leading up to the Honolulu Conference in February 1966 -- where pacification was given (or so it seemed to Americans and Vietnamese alike in Vietnam) the President's blessing.

It is true that Ambassador Taylor also felt that pacification was important and that it would deserve high emphasis; his push on Hop Tac clearly demonstrates this fact. But because Maxwell Taylor saw that it was his responsibility as Ambassador to reconcile competing requirements for limited resources, and develop a single overall strategy for the effort, he never let pacification consume too many resources prematurely. Lodge, on the other hand, did not see himself as an administrator or manager of the U.S. Mission, but as the President's personal representative and advisor in Saigon. Thus, he felt no qualms about advocating a certain course of action -- in this case, pacification. There is no record of Ambassador Lodge worrying about the way his latest proposals would affect the balance of the whole effort. He simply did not see himself as responsible for the actions of the operating agencies which represented AID, USIA, and the CIA, let alone DOD, in Vietnam * -- not even after receiving a strong letter of authority from President Johnson in July of 1965: 15/

> "As you take charge of the American effort in South Vietnam, I want you to have this expression of my confidence, and a reaffirmation of my desire that as Ambassador you exercise full responsibility for the work of the United States

* See for example, Lodge's NODIS to the President, February 1, 1966, in which he said: "...I have learned of Zorthian's wire to Marks, which, of course, he has the right to send, since I hold that Zorthian, like U.S. agency chiefs here, has and should have an open channel to his agency. It is a statement of Zorthian's opinion which, of course, was sent without my approval or direction..." 16/ (The subject was apparently a suggestion that Lodge address the United Nations General Assembly in New York, although Lodge's cable cited does not explicitly state what Zorthian's cable said.)

Government in South Vietnam. In general terms this authority is parallel to that set forth in my letter to Ambassador Taylor of July 2, 1964." * 17/

Given his belief in the fundamental importance of the pacification effort, Lodge was ready to push it at any time he could. He did not examine the possibility that certain times were more favorable than others for an effort which needed the full participation of the Vietnamese in order to succeed, and, like many in the government, failed to see that at certain times emphasis on pacification would not only not work but would be harmful to GVN/US relations, and would reduce the chances for a successful joint effort at some more propitious time.

Thus, it is not surprising that one of his last major documents at the end of his first tour as Ambassador proposed Hop Tac (see I. A.) -- in the face of strong possibilities that the situation was not favorable to it -- and that on his return in August 1965 he was advocating more effort in pacification.

Thus, for example, meeting with his senior officers one month after he arrived, Lodge "began the meeting by stating that in his opinion the United States military was doing so well not that 'we face a distinct possibility that VC main force units will be neutralized and that VC fortresses will be destroyed soon. We should be ready to handle the VC in small units. This gives counter-subversion/terrorism or pacification or counterinsurgency -- I am not overly concerned with what we call it -- a new urgency for all of us here.'" 18/

It is likely that if Lodge had clarified his view of pacification and repeated it continually in public and privately, as he did with anything he believed in, his view would eventually have taken hold in the United States Mission. But the problem of how pacification should work was -- and is -- a very difficult one. It raises a number of extremely difficult questions on which the United States Government has never reached a unified position.

Sensing that Lodge was receptive to ideas which emphasized pacification but that he had no set views on details, many groups and individuals besieged him with a resurgence of ideas and philosophies on pacification. They were all encouraged by his verbal support or his glowing cables to Washington. The whole atmosphere in the Mission became more favorable towards pacification and pacifiers; Lansdale, Colonel Serong (the Australian who was to organize the Police Field Force with support from

---

* The letter to Taylor had said, among other points: "I wish it clearly understood that this overall responsibility includes the whole military effort in South Vietnam and authorizes the degree of command and control that you consider appropriate."

Lodge), Sir Robert Thompson (whose Malayan experiences had led him to emphasize the police), Colonel Bohannon (who began as a Lansdale deputy, but whose views took a different line), the Marines (with their pacification efforts and CAP's near Da Nang), the CIA (which produced, with Lodge's strong support, the PAT's-turned RD cadre), USIA and AID (with their small but growing field programs), the Army (which entered the game late but elicited from Lodge on visits to the U.S. 25th Infantry Division and then the 1st Infantry Division, some of his longest and most glowing accounts of pacification in action. 19/)

These groups and individuals fought about details, sometimes debating minor points like medieval monks but also disagreeing on rather basic points -- such as whether the object was to gain the population's support or to control them by force. (A popular Marine saying, which tried to bridge the gap, went: "Get the people by the balls, and their hearts and minds will follow.") But each group found something that appealed to Lodge, and each in turn gained encouragement from him. The slow change in mood also affected Washington.

In dealing with his role in the re-emphasis of pacification, we must distinguish between Lodge's influence on our overall, or grand, strategy -- on which he was ultimately to have considerable impact -- and his influence on the operational details of the policy. The latter did not interest him on a continuing basis, and it is thus easy to underestimate his influence. There was, for example, a tendency in Saigon during his Ambassadorship to minimize his importance, since each agency could ignore him when he told them to do something and usually get away with it. But this popular view overlooked Lodge's impact in encouraging all sorts of people to emerge from parts of the USG with renewed hope for pacification. It overlooked the impact of his cables and statements, which added up to a massive endorsement of pacification. In his NODIS weeklies to the President, for example, pacification receives more attention than any other subject.

Alone, Lodge could have done little, if anything, to move the USG around. But his influence seems clear, more so in retrospect than at the time: at a time when frustrations were growing, he was emphasizing a different rhetoric and strategy.

The best way to show his emphasis is simply to quote from the cables and memoranda of the period. Each one shows Lodge, either directly or indirectly, putting forth his general beliefs -- sometimes contradictory. They form an important part of the background to Honolulu, where pacification was to get its biggest push to that date:

1. Lodge at the end of his first tour in Vietnam, defining pacification in his paper proposing Hop Tac:

"The first priority after the military have cleared an area is to bring about the selection of an able man for that area,

who will in turn go about creating a basically civilian counter-terrorist organization on the 'precinct' level, or equivalent thereof...Its prime purpose will be, notably with police help, to create security for the local government and free it from all intimidation by going through the precinct with a fine-toothed comb...Once the local government feels safer, it should move energetically to promote public safety for the people; the people should then rally more to the government; and this should create an upward spiral as regards security organization...USOM and USIA will support these local 'precinct' organizations, will actually work through them, and will seek to make it attractive to be one of those who builds such a counter-terrorism precinct organization...The military should take special precautions in their operations not to injure in any way the non-combatants. It must also behave itself so well that the people like the Army..." 20/

2. Lodge's Ten Point Program for Success:

"In each city precinct and each rural hamlet immediately adjacent to a thoroughly pacified city (i.e., the smallest unit from a public safety standpoint) the following program should be undertaken in the following order:

"1. Saturate the minds of the people with some socially conscious and attractive ideology, which is susceptible of being carried out.

"2. Organize the people politically with a hamlet chief and committee whose actions would be backed by the police or the military using police-type tactics. This committee should have representatives of the political, military, economic and social organizations and should have an executive who directs.

"3. With the help of the police or military, conduct a census.

"4. Issue identification cards.

"5. Issue permits for the movement of goods and people.

"6. When necessary, hold a curfew.

"7. Thanks to all these methods, go through each hamlet with a fine-tooth comb to apprehend the terrorists.

"8. At the first quiet moment, bring in agricultural experts, school teachers, etc.

"9. The hamlet should also be organized for its own defense against small Viet Cong attacks.

"10. After all these things have been accomplished, hold elections for local office." 21/

COMMENT: Lodge began his second tour as Ambassador where he had left off the year before. The above paper, which he also transmitted to the President in a NODIS message, again represented no official U.S. position. After writing it and giving it to everyone in the Mission, he let the matter drop, and thus the paper did not assume any official character. Since nothing was changed in the procedures of the Mission, and since the old criteria for pacification still applied unchanged, Lodge had, in typical fashion, failed to affect the operating Mission.

3. The Assignment of Lansdale:

"Handpicked group of about ten experienced counter-subversion/counter terrorism workers under direction of Edward G. Lansdale will be going to Saigon to provide Ambassador Lodge with special operating staff in field of political action both at central level and also in connection with rural programs." 22/

COMMENT: From the beginning, there was misunderstanding over Lansdale's role in Lodge's Embassy. The first cable reflects this. The phrase "counter-subversion/counter-terrorism workers," seems to contradict the latter part of the sentence, about "political action." From the start Lodge wanted him to "get pacification going." Thus, less than a month later, Lodge told the President:

"I appointed Edward Lansdale, with his complete approval, to be chairman of the U.S. Mission Liaison Group to the newly created Vietnamese governmental body having to do with what we call 'pacification,' what they call 'rural construction,' and what means to me socially conscious practical politics, the by-product of which is effective counter-subversion/terrorism. I thought it was important for all concerned for him to have a definite allocation where he would have the best chance of bringing his talents to bear. I trust that the hopes of some journalists that he is here in an adversarial relationship with existing US agencies will be nipped in the bud by making him the spokesman for the whole US Mission in this particular regard." (underlining added) 23/

Thus, another action which served to strengthen the pacification priority, although its primary reason probably was to get Lansdale working on something other than Saigon politics.

4. Lodge on the Use of U.S. Troops in Pacification:

"The presence of American troops does provide the opportunity for thorough pacification of the areas in which they are stationed and full advantage should be taken of this opportunity. It is a very big dividend from our investment of men and money. For example, the Third Marine Division has scored impressive successes north, south, and west of Da Nang...If our American troops can emulate this performance (of the proto-CAC units) of 60 Americans and 150 Vietnamese, we ought to get a tremendous amount of small unit nighttime effective pacification, and we would be neglecting an opportunity not to use American troops for this purpose, thereby pacifying the country and transforming the ARVN, making it into a much more vital and effective element of Vietnamese society, able at some not too remote date to carry on by themselves without outside help... We are already discussing with the Vietnamese the possibility of singling out areas that look like good prospects, that are potentially pretty much over on our side, and then pacifying them so as to get a little smell of across-the-board success in the air...I am not ready to say, 'What areas would be chosen for pacification, when should the plan be started, what objectives would be best,' but hope to be able to do so soon. I am now encouraging General Ky to concentrate GVN efforts and enthusiasm on pacification so that this can have sustained, wholehearted GVN participation...Development of popular electoral processes is part of all our current planning for counter subversion/terrorism in 'rural construction (pacification)'." 24/

COMMENT: Here, for the first time, Lodge addresses a key point: the role of U.S. troops on pacification. The whole concept of the use of U.S. troops was being worked out during this period (see following section on Marines), and Lodge now began to weigh in with qualified support for the Marine approach, based on an overly optimistic view of the situation.

5. Lansdale's Weekly Report, October 4, 1965:

"Past week devoted to getting GVN into sound start again on pacification program...U.S. Mission Liaison Group shaping up into realistic instrument for working level teamwork on pacification by all U.S. Missions..." 25/

COMMENT: Lansdale was responding to the direction given him by Lodge.

6. Lodge on the GVN's Attitude Towards Pacification:

"During my talk with General Co, the deputy Prime Minister in charge of six ministries, I was impressed by the amount of

sustained analytical thought which he, with his colleagues, had given to how to organize the government for the great new job of pacification which confronts them -- and which is clearly their government's most important single responsibility." 26/

COMMENT: Lodge had by this time let the GVN know clearly what tune he wanted to hear, and with their usual skill the Vietnamese -- even General Co, who turned out to be worthless on pacification -- were playing the right song back.

7. "When the chance to win over the people was missed some years ago, a situation came into being in which it was indispensable for the VC large units to be defeated before true community building, with its mixture of political and security measures, would be possible. Otherwise, the VC battalions, emerging from untouchable sanctuaries, would destroy whatever community building had painstakingly been achieved. Now it looks as though the VC know this and has already begun to act on the knowledge, transforming themselves into small units and individual terrorists, and into subversive political operators." 27/

COMMENT: Lodge's sequence of events -- destroy the main force enemy first, pacify second -- is hard to argue with, but his assessment of VC capabilities and intentions falls short of accuracy.

As a final note to the examination of Lodge's emphasis on pacification, it is worthwhile asking why he has so consistently put such a high priority on the effort -- regardless of methodology -- to gain control of the villages. The answer may lie in his strong views on the way the war will end in Vietnam. Lodge doubted that there would ever be meaningful negotiations with the Viet Cong. An old hand at negotiating with the communists, Lodge felt that the most likely end to the war was for the enemy to "fadeaway" after a prolonged period of conflict. In his view, therefore, control of the population became the best way to force the fadeaway. Furthermore, in the event that there was some sort of pro forma discussions with the communists at some future date, Lodge felt that there were certain minimum conditions of a "satisfactory outcome" which must be met. An examination of his definition of a satisfactory outcome shows the overriding importance of the pacification effort in his mind. The following is from a telegram sent "For the President and the Secretary from Lodge" on October 21, 1965, which Lodge considered one of his most important cables:

"What we consider a satisfactory outcome to be would, of course, be a very closely kept secret. It would include the following, not necessarily in this order:

"1. The area around Saigon and south of Saigon (all of the Delta) must be pacified. This area includes about 55 to 60% of the population of Vietnam. 'Pacified' is defined as the existence of a state of mind among the people that they have a stake in the government as shown by the holding of local elections. It also means a proper local police force. In brief, a pacified area is economically, socially, and politically a part of the RVN.

"2. The thickly populated northeastern strip along the coast which includes 25% of the population would be completely pacified.

"3. The GVN would retain its present control of all cities and all provincial capitals.

"4. All principal roads would be open to the Vietnamese military day and night.

"5. Those areas not pacified would not be safe havens for the VC but would be contested by energetic offensive forays to prevent consolidation of a communist base.

"6. The VC disarms; and their weapons and explosives are removed from their hands. Their main force units broken up.

"7. North Vietnam stops its infiltration.

"8. Chieu Hoi rehabilitation would be extended to individual VC who are suitable...

"9. Hardcore VC to go to North Vietnam.

"10. GVN to approve.

"COMMENT: This means that we would not be insisting on the complete elimination of the VC although no safe haven would be allocated them. It would mean that we and the GVN would control 80 to 85% of the population and that the VC would be limited to the jungle and mountainous areas where they would go on as bandits, much as their counterparts in Malaya and Luzon -- and where the GVN would have the right to pursue them and try to destroy them." 28/

Lodge's formula for a satisfactory outcome is based on the absolute necessity of controlling the villages. In day-to-day terms this meant that, as Ambassador, Lodge had to push pacification as hard as possible. Thus, he was quite pleased with the emphasis that came out of the Honolulu conference in February of 1966.

C. III Marine Amphibious Force

To what extent the growing Marine emphasis on pacification was a factor during the period before the Honolulu conference is impossible to determine; the timing and evidence would suggest that the impact of the Marine strategy was greatest in the period after Honolulu, as they became more sure of the rightness of their approach, and as they garnered more and more publicity for it. Nonetheless, in the first eleven months of their mission in I Corps, the Marines had gotten deeply into the pacification program. The Marines thus became the most vocal advocates within the Armed Forces for emphasizing pacification more, and search and destroy less.

The Marine deployments and mission are covered in earlier decision studies in this series and will thus be treated only briefly here. The emphasis of this section is not on the influence the Marines had on the Honolulu conference, but on the way the Marines gradually moved into their new role, and the difficulties with it. The material here applied, therefore, equally to the pre- and post-Honolulu periods, throughout which the Marine successes, as they reported them, had a growing impact on the thinking of civilian and military alike, in Saigon, CINCPAC, and Washington.

The Marines landed their first troops -- two Battalion Landing Teams -- in Da Nang in March of 1965. Their original mission, "to secure enclaves in the northern region of Vietnam containing air and communications installations, was simplicity itself." 29/ (From "U.S. Marine Corps Civic Action Efforts in Vietnam, March 1965-March 1966, a study done by the USMC Historical Branch, SECRET; hereafter referred to as MC History; from unpaged draft.)

By the time of the Honolulu conference the Marines -- by now organized into the III Marine Amphibious Force -- had changed their mission considerably, and to a degree then unequalled among other American units was deeply engaged in pacification operations.

A monthly report issued by General Krulak, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, indicates the evolution of Marine thinking on their mission. Reviewing the first seven months of their deployment in I Corps, the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, wrote in September, 1965:

> "The Mission assigned III MAF was initially confined to airfield security. Subsequently, a limited offensive responsibility was added, which has gradually grown to an essentially unrestrained authority for offensive operations. Finally, and largely on its own, III MAF has entered the pacification program, with the bulk of its pacification efforts taking place since June." [Emphasis added] 30/

One month later, after chronicling their successes, the report indicated the major shift in strategic thinking which was taking place at General Walt's headquarters in Da Nang, and at General Krulak's in Hawaii:

"While accomplishing all this the Marines were feeling, with growing impact, a cardinal counterinsurgency principle: that if local forces do not move in promptly behind the offensive effort, then first line forces must be diverted to provide the essential hamlet security, police and stabilization. The alternative is to risk the development of vacua, into which the VC guerrilla can flow. This condition grew during the period. The Popular Forces and police were inadequate in numbers and in quality to do their part of the job, as the Marines did theirs. This operated to complicate the Marines' problem by making the civic action effort more difficult, by permitting harassment of our forces, and by making possible a suicide attack on the Chu Lao and Marble Mountain areas.

"The end of the period saw the 676 square mile III MAF area of influence more stable, more prosperous, and far more hopeful, but it saw also an urgent need for efficient regional or local forces to take up their proper burden, so the Marines can maintain the momentum of their search/clear/pacification efforts. It is plain that the most efficient way to bring this about is to give III MAF substantial authority over the RF or PF serving in this area, in order that they may be properly trained and properly led." 31/

This summary, written in the headquarters of the man often regarded as the philosopher of the Marine Corps, shows the Marines in the process of swinging their emphasis around -- turning away from the offensive against the enemy waiting in the nearby hills, and towards the people and the VC guerrillas among the people inside their TAOR.

It was a crucial, difficult decision for the men who made it. Significantly, the indications are strong that the decision was made almost entirely inside Marine Corps channels, through a chain of command that bypassed COMUSMACV and the civilian leaders of our government, and ran from General Greene through General Krulak to General Walt. The files do not reveal discussions of the implications, feasibility, cost, and desirability of the Marine strategy among high-ranking officials in the Embassy, MACV headquarters, the Defense and State Departments. Yet in retrospect it seems clear that the strategy the Marines proposed to follow, a strategy about which they made no secret, was in sharp variance with the strategy of the other U.S. units in the country, with far-ranging political implications that could even affect the ultimate chances for negotiations.

It should be clear that the Marine concept of operations has a different implicit time requirement than a more enemy-oriented search and destroy effort. It is not within the scope of this paper to analyze the different requirements, but it does appear that the Marine strategy, which General Walt sometimes described as the

"wringing out of the VC from the land like you wring water out of a sponge," is slow and methodical, requires vast numbers of troops, runs the risk of turning into an occupation even while being called "pacification/civic action," and involves Americans deeply in the politics and traditions of rural Vietnam. The strategy can succeed, perhaps, but if it is to succeed, it must be undertaken with full awareness by the highest levels of the USG of its potential costs in manpower and time, and the exacting nature of the work. Instead, the documents suggest that the Marines determined their strategy basically on their own, deriving part of it from their own traditions in the "Banana Republics" and China (where Generals Walt, Krulak, Nickerson, and others had served in the 1930's), and partly from an attempt to solve problems of an unprecedented nature which were cropping up inside their TAORs, even on the edge of the great air base at Da Nang.

As it was, the Marine strategy was judged successful, at least by the Marines, long before it had even had a real test. It was applauded by many observers before the VC had begun to react to it, and as such, encouraged imitators while it was still unproven.

The Marine dilemma was how to support the pacification effort without taking it over. They thought they had succeeded in doing this by "self-effacing support for Vietnamese rural construction" after August of 1965, but there is much contradictory evidence on this point. The Marines themselves, according to the classified historical study they recently produced, understood that their pacification work had "to function through local Vietnamese officials. The tendency to produce Marine Corps programs or to work 'democratically' through individuals had to be strictly controlled. Only Vietnamese programs could be tolerated and support of these programs had to take place through Vietnamese governing officials..." 32/

But despite their good intentions to work through the existing GVN structure, the Marines found in many cases that the existing structure barely existed, except on paper, and in other cases that the existing structure was too slow and too corrupt for their requirements. And gradually the Marines got more deeply into the politics of rural Vietnam than they had intended, or presumably desired.

Their difficulties were greatest in the area of highest priority, the National Priority Area (as it was to be designated in October 1965) south of Da Nang. In a nine-village complex just south of the air base, the Marines urged upon the GVN successful completion of a special pacification program which had been designed by them in close conjunction with the Quang Nam Deputy Province Chief. The nine villages were divided into two groups, and the first phase, scheduled for completion first in December of 1965, included only five of the villages, with only 23,000 people living in them. By February, 1966, the plan had slipped considerably, and the projected completion date for the first

five villages was pushed back to April, 1966. The GVN and the Marines considered their control to extend to over 16,000 of the 23,000 people in the area, but, according to an Embassy evaluation of the area, only 682 were young men between the ages of 17 and 30. It was clear that the Marines were trying to pacify an area in which the young men no longer lived, having either been drafted, joined the VC, or gone to Da Nang to work for the Americans. "The basic problem posed by this lack of manpower must be solved before the area can be expected to participate in its own defense," the Embassy report said. "Until it is solved, the Marines and the ARVN will remain tied to defensive mission involving them with the population. No one in Quang Nam sees any immediate solution to this dilemma." The report concluded with a description of how over-involved with local politics the Marines were becoming, unintentionally, and said:

> "The plan, despite the valiant efforts of the Marines, is in trouble, caused by a confused and fragmented chain of command, a lack of skilled cadre, inability to recruit locally RF and PF -- and the open opposition of the VNQDD." 33/

The VNQDD, or Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang, was the political party controlling the provinces of Quang Ngai, Quang Nam, and Quang Tin. The Marines knew little about them, although, according to the study, all the village chiefs in the area were VNQDD members. The VNQDD were not supporting the priority area plan because they had not been consulted in its formulation, and for this reason, and others, the report predicted the failure of the plan, despite the heavy Marine commitment.

Like Hop Tac, it was an unusually difficult situation, but it illustrates the problems that the Marines, and any other U.S. troops that got deeply involved in pacification, confronted in Vietnam.

D. Washington Grumbles About the Effort

Throughout the period of the buildup in Vietnam, there was a growing chorus of discontent in Washington over the management of the U.S. effort in Vietnam, most of it directed at the civilian agencies -- USIA, AID, and the CIA. Unhappiness with the way the Mission ran was to lead to three major reorganizations in the 15-month period from the Honolulu conference to the arrival of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker. The first reorganization took place immediately after Honolulu, and assigned to the Deputy Ambassador, William J. Porter, specific duties and responsibilities which had previously been dispersed throughout the Mission and handled on an ad hoc basis. The second reorganization, which took place in November-December 1966, reorganized the internal components of AID, USIA, and the CIA so that the Deputy Ambassador could control directly a single Office of Civil Operation (OCO), by-passing the agency chiefs. The latest reorganization, which was announced in May 1967, transferred responsibility for OCO from the Deputy Ambassador to COMUSMACV, who in turn was given a civilian Deputy with the rank of Ambassador (R. W. Komer). This section outlines events leading to the first reorganization in March 1966, a reorganization which raised the priority of the pacification effort, but left most of the basic problems in the U.S. Mission unsolved. The actual reorganization, and its effects, will be covered in Part III. 1.

Efforts to reorganize the Saigon Mission are a recurring theme in recent history. The impetus for reorganization has consistently come from Washington, and the Mission has usually resisted. Its resistance is not hard to understand, since almost every reorganization scheme tended to diminish the authority and autonomy of senior members of the Mission Council such as the JUSPAO Director, the USAID Director, and the CIA Station Chief.

Skeptics have said that whenever things are going poorly, "Americans reorganize." But the opponents of various reorganization schemes have been unable to defend the existing Mission Council system, which must definitely be rated one of Vietnam's casualties. Not since the beginning of the "country team" concept in the 1950's ("Mission Council" being another term for the same structure) had the concept been tested the way it was to be tested in Vietnam. The pressure of events, the tension, the unprecedented size of the agencies and a host of other factors made the system shaky even under the strong manager Maxwell Taylor. Under the man who didn't want to manage, Lodge, it began to crumble. Each agency had its own ideas on what had to be done, its own communication channels with Washington, its own personnel and administrative structure -- and starting in 1964-65, each agency began to have its own field personnel operating under separate and parallel chains of command. This latter event was ultimately to prove the one which gave reorganization efforts such force, since it began to become clear to people in Washington and Saigon alike that the Americans in the provinces were not always working

on the same team, and that they were receiving conflicting or overlapping instructions from a variety of sources in Saigon and Washington.

Still, while General Taylor was Ambassador, reorganization was not something to be pushed seriously by Washington. With Lodge back in charge, it was a different story. As a matter of fact, so serious were Lodge's managerial deficiencies that even during his first tour, when the U.S. Mission was less than 20,000 men, and the entire civilian component under 1,000, there was talk of reorganization. In a personal message to Lodge on May 26, 1964, the President made the following prophetic statement:

> "I have received from [Mike] Forrestal a direct account of your belief that there is need for change and improvement in the civilian side of the country team. We have reached a similar conclusion here, and indeed we believe it is essential for you to have a top-ranking officer who is wholly acceptable to you as chief of staff for country team operations. My own impression is that this should be either a newly appointed civilian of wide governmental experience and high standing, or General Westmoreland...." 34/

This message became irrelevant when Lodge suddenly resigned in June of 1964 to assist Governor Scranton's bid for the Republican nomination, but it shows that the President, Lodge, and apparently other people in Washington had deep concern with the structure of the Mission at this early date.

By sending Taylor and Alexis Johnson -- then the State Department's highest-ranking Foreign Service Officer -- to Saigon in July of 1964, the President in effect put off any Washington-initiated reorganizations for the length of Taylor's tour, since no one in Washington could tell the former Chairman of the JCS how to run a mission.

Taylor organized the Mission Council -- not a new invention, but a formalization of the country team into a body which met once a week, with agendas, minutes, and records of decisions. Taylor was particularly concerned that the Mission Council should have a "satisfactory meshing with...counterpart activities on the GVN side." 35/ And while he was Ambassador the U.S. made a determined effort to make the system work without reorganization. In a letter to Elbridge Durbrow, who was once American Ambassador in Saigon himself, Alexis Johnson described the system:

> "Max and I dropped the title 'Country Team' and set up what we called the 'Mission Council' on a formalized basis. In addition to Max and myself, the members were General Westmoreland, Barry Zorthian as JUSPAO (Joint United States Public Affairs Office -- this covered both MACV and Embassy

info as well as psychological operations in the field and against the DRV), the Director of USOM and the CAS Station Chief. We established an Executive Secretary who was first Bill Sullivan and later Jack Herfurt, who was charged with the preparation of agenda, the recording of decisions, and, most importantly, following up and monitoring of decisions that were taken. We met regularly once a week (with occasional special meetings as required), with paper circulated beforehand insofar as possible. One of the responsibilities of the Executive Secretary was to see that issues were worked out beforehand at staff level insofar as possible and the remaining issues clearly defined....It was normally our practice to keep all members of the Council fully informed and to discuss all questions, regardless of their sensitivity....After an informal exchange of views, we took up questions on the agenda, doing our best to obtain the consensus of all members. When in rare cases this was not achieved, the Ambassador of course took the decision. We considered the full range of questions, including such fundamental ones as when and under what circumstances we should bomb the North...etc...Below the Mission Council level we established a series of committees in problem areas involving more than one agency of the mission, chaired by the agency of primary interest. These committees were responsible directly to the Mission Council....We persuaded the GVN, on its side, to set up a similar organization that was first called the 'Pacification Council' and later the 'Rural Construction Council.'....The GVN Council and the Mission Council met together once a week with an agenda prepared beforehand by the two Executive Secretaries...One of my theories, and to a degree I think it was borne out in Saigon, was that the Mission Council and the Joint Council were important not so much for what was in fact decided at the meetings but for the fact that their existence, and the necessity of reporting to them, acted as a spur to the staff people to get things done and to resolve issues at their level. Organization structure of course does not assure brilliant performance, but I do take some satisfaction in feeling that, due to the organizational structure that we established, we established the habit of the Mission elements and the GVN and the Mission, working together in a more effective way." 36/

Whether or not the system described by Ambassador Johnson above really worked the way he says it was supposed to is not the subject of this study. But it appears that within a few months after Lodge returned as Ambassador the people within the USG advocating reorganization as at least a partial solution to the problems of the Mission were once again in full cry.

The relationship of the reorganizers to the pacifiers must be explained. Those who advocated restructuring the Mission for more effective management were not necessarily the same people advocating a higher emphasis for pacification. But usually, since the organization of the Mission was so obviously deficient, both groups of people would end up advocating some kind of change -- and even if they disagreed on the nature of the change, the most important fact was that they were generally pushing a similar mood of dissatisfaction with the Mission upon the high-ranking officials with whom they might come in contact. (It should be kept in mind that they were really not groups at all, in the normal sense of the word, but a shifting collection of individuals with varying degrees of loyalty to either their parent agency or their own sense of history; and on each individual issue a different set of allies and antagonists might well exist.)

The efforts of those advocating reorganization began to bear edible fruit in December 1965 and January 1966, when a conference was held at Warrenton, Va., to which the Mission sent an impressive collection of Mission Council members: Deputy Ambassador Porter, USAID Mission Director Mann, JUSPAO Director Zorthian, Political Counsellor Habib, General Lansdale, CIA Station Chief Jorgenson, and Brigadier General Collins, representing Westmoreland. From Washington came the second and third echelons of the bureaucracy: Leonard Unger, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; Rutherford Poats, Assistant Administrator of AID; Major General Peers, SACSA; Alvin Friedman, ISA; William Colby and Peer de Silva, CIA; Chester Cooper, White House; and Sanford Marlowe, USIA. Other participants included: Major General Hutchins, CINCPAC; Rufus Phillips of Lansdale's group; Charles Zwick and Henry Rowen of BOB; George Lodge, the Ambassador's son; Desmond Fitzgerald, CIA; and Leon Goure, of RAND.

The purpose of the meeting was to "bring together senior representatives of the U.S. Mission, Saigon, the Vietnam Coordinating Committee, Washington, and several other individuals to (a) review the joint GVN-US pacification/rural construction program and seek to promote its more effective operation and (b) address the problem of the increasingly serious shortages and bottlenecks in manpower, materials, and transport in Vietnam and to designate priorities and machinery for resources control and allocation." The major unstated purpose, in addition to those mentioned above, was to discuss the organization of the U.S. Mission in Vietnam.

Warrenton was to turn out to be a prelude to Honolulu, and as such its recommendations never were to become an integral part of the Mission's plans and strategy. But the direction that was developed at Warrenton is significant, because it represents the clear and unmistakable thrust that existed at the time in the "working levels" of both Saigon and Washington. Given the normal time lag before individual thoughts can reach the stage of agreed-upon committee-produced papers,

Warrenton, we can assume, reflected the evolution of thinking that had been going on, particularly among the civilians, as the first year of U.S. combat troop and deployment began to end. Indeed, in its catch-all approach to pacification, Warrenton had something for everyone.

The final recommendations from the Warrenton conference were addressed to Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Admiral Raborn, Mr. Bell, Mr. Marks, and Mr. McGeorge Bundy, from the meeting's co-chairmen, Ambassador Unger and Ambassador Porter. The conclusions included the following points (with comments as required):

> 1. "There was a consensus that the designation of priority rural construction areas for 1966 was important and that the modest goals set for these areas were realistic. However, it was emphasized that the contrast between the massive input of U.S. resources and the modest priority area goals made success in those areas imperative..." 37/

COMMENT: The National Priority Areas did not meet their 1966 goals.

> 2. "In view of the prime importance to the U.S. of success in the four National Priority Areas, there was discussion of the need for designating U.S. team chiefs to head the U.S. advisory effort in those areas. It was agreed that the U.S. Mission Council would consider this matter promptly and report its conclusions to the VMCC." 38/

COMMENT: The designation of team chiefs for the priority areas did not take place. Here is another example of the Washington effort to reorganize Saigon, with Saigon resisting.

> 3. "There was widespread recognition of the need to provide within the U.S. Mission a single focus of operational control and management over the full range of the pertinent U.S. efforts in order to gear all such U.S. activities and resources effectively into implementation or the rural construction concept. However, some concern was expressed that too drastic organizational changes within the U.S. Mission would create problems with the counterpart GVN organization and would not ensure success of rural construction programs. No agreement was reached on the precise form for organization changes but there was general consensus that the focal point of control and management had to rest just below the Ambassador and that there must be a senior Mission official solely concerned with this subject. Disagreement was registered as to: (1) whether the Deputy Ambassador, assisted by a staff, should serve this function or whether another senior official

(perhaps a second Deputy Ambassador) should be appointed; and (2) what extent individual agency personnel, funds, and operations devoted to rural construction could and should be broken out of agency organizations and placed under the direction of the single local point..." 39/

COMMENT: Here was the compromise wording on the issue which concerned the participants at Warrenton a great deal. Each representative at Warrenton brought with him a proposed organization chart for the Mission (see below), but no agreement could be reached at that time. In the main body of the memorandum to the principals on January 13, 1966, Unger and Porter wrote:

> "The optimum organization for the U.S. Mission for its support of the rural construction/pacification program -- a senior official with a supporting staff with full-time responsibility in this field was considered necessary. (Coordination is also required with Ambassador Lodge and Mr. Bell on this point.) It would also be desirable for such an official to have in Washington a high-level point of liaison to assure the expeditious discharge here of urgent Vietnam business in this field..." 40/

When he reported to the Mission Liaison Group on Warrenton two weeks later, on January 27, 1966, Porter sharply downplayed the move for reorganization which was coming from Washington and changed the emphasis. He said:

> "a. No decision was reached at Warrenton with respect to a U.S. in-country organization for rural construction, although the possibility of a single manager was discussed.
>
> "b. The U.S. Mission will continue to support Rural Construction with the same organizational structure it is now using, placing particular reliance on the Mission Liaison Group.
>
> "c. Officials in Washington were concerned about teamwork among the U.S. agencies in Vietnam but not about ability to do the job. Differences of opinion are expected, and machinery exists to resolve them. Differences due to personalities cannot be tolerated.
>
> "d. It is clearly understood in Washington that military operations alone are not enough, and that effective Rural Construction is imperative. The highest levels in the USG are keenly aware of the importance of US/GVN work in Rural Construction...." 41/ [Emphasis Added]

Although not much more than a footnote now, the reorganization schemes that were presented at Warrenton deserve brief mention. At Warrenton, the participants were still fishing for ways and means, and their proposals reveal to a limited extent the intent of each agency when faced, three months later, with a new structure in both Saigon and Washington -- with Porter in charge in Saigon and Komer in business in the White House (discussed in III, 1 & 2).

--Chester Cooper, working for McGeorge Bundy in the White House, proposed a second Deputy Ambassador for Pacification, with control over CIA, USAID, JUSPAO, and partial control (not clarified) over MACV's Rural Construction advisors. Cooper also wanted a "Washington representative" in Saigon to expedite resource allocation. He was ambiguous about Lansdale's role. Cooper advocated a unified field chain of command.

--Poats and Mann submitted a joint Washington-Saigon proposal on behalf of AID (another clear indication of the fact that the real chains of command ran through agency channels, rather than through the Ambassador to Washington). They advocated a complicated arrangement in which a Chief of Staff for Pacification would head up special task forces "drawn from operating agencies but staying in their operational job in their agencies." AID in effect wanted no major change in the Mission, and particularly opposed any change in the multiplicity of chains of command in the provinces. They also advocated a Theater CINC, a resources allocation committee chaired by the AID Mission Director, and a MACV advisory structure that is partially under the Ambassador and partially separate (not clarified).

Zorthian suggested that the Deputy Ambassador coordinate all pacification activities but made it clear that he would make no change in the chains of command. Indeed, he emphasized the direct access of each Mission Council member to the Ambassador, the separateness of each agency's field program.

SACSA proposed a division of MACV into a tactical unit command and a Pacification command. All civilian elements supporting pacification would be under the Deputy for Pacification, who in turn would report to the Ambassador and Deputy Ambassador. The advisory structure would have been split down the middle between tactical unit advisors and province/district advisors.

General Collins suggested no major change in the structure of the Mission, but advocated the formation of "Task Groups to deal with specific problems organized on an ad hoc

basis from personnel provided by interested agencies. The Deputy Ambassador to be relieved of routine duties and to spend substantially all his time on rural construction duties...

The State Department proposed a "Central Pacification Organization" which would have been not more than a coordinating committee for the existing agencies. 42/

What these reorganization proposals seem to suggest, in light of the ultimate direction that the Mission took, is that when agencies are asked to produce suggestions which may reduce or inhibit their prerogatives, they are unlikely to do so in a manner responsive to the requirements of their politically-appointed chieftains. The prerogatives and privileges of the agencies inevitably come first. One does not reorganize voluntarily; the impetus comes from without. This is also seen in the different attitude that the reorganizers had towards Washington and Saigon. Although the same problem in coordination existed (and still exists) in Washington as in Saigon, the Washington officials always were ready to tell Saigon how to clean up its house, but were slow to suggest self-improvements. At Warrenton, perhaps prodded by the Saigon representatives, they did take note of the matter, although they were reluctant to suggest a clear solution:

"Note was also taken of the inadequacy of present U.S. Government machinery to handle Vietnam problems quickly and decisively. The need for referral of too large a number of problems to the Secretarial level was one of the problems mentioned. While the meeting did not have time to come to any firm conclusions, there was a view that the VNCC because of its coordinating, rather than decision-cum-enforcement powers could not perform this task except in part. If endowing the VNCC or its Chairman with larger powers, and with a staff associated with no one agency, is not a feasible solution, it was considered that the required directing position might have to be set up at a higher level, perhaps related to the National Security Council." 43/

In the Warrenton report, then, all the events of the coming year were foreshadowed, and, reading between the lines, one can now see what was coming. Unfortunately, and obviously, this was not the case at the time--particularly for the Mission in Saigon.

E. Presidential Emphasis on "The Other War" and Press Reaction

At the end of 1965, with the bombing of the north in its tenth month, and our ground forces growing steadily, the Administration was making a determined effort to emphasize those American activities in Vietnam which did not directly involve guns and fighting. This emphasis on what came to be called the "Other War" reached a high point during the conference at Honolulu in February of 1966. The emphasis on the other war did not necessarily have to lead, as it did, to a re-emphasis of pacification; that was a by-product, at least in part, of the renewed support for pacification which had been coming from Ambassador Lodge, the Marines, the CIA (with their cadre), and the advocates of organizational reform (all covered in previous sections). But the two themes merged at Honolulu, and thus, out of the conference, came the first clear statement of Presidential support to pacification.

The need of the Administration to emphasize and publicize the non-military aspects of the war needs little amplification. Few documents show this emphasis in the pre-Honolulu period, since it was so obvious. In an exception, a joint State-USIA message dated October 4, 1965, Washington told the Saigon Mission:

> "There is continuing concern at the highest levels here regarding need to emphasize our non-military programs in Vietnam and give them maximum possible public exposure both in U.S. and abroad. /Emphasis Added/
>
> "We recognize that the Mission is fully cognizant of this problem and already has underway measures to broaden public knowledge and understanding of non-military activities... We are also conscious of difficulties involved in enlisting greater press interest in these developments when it finds military actions more dramatic and newsworthy. Nevertheless, we hope will continue to give non-military programs increasing priority..." 44/

It is useful to recall the situation which existed in February of 1966, when the President went to Honolulu to meet with Ky and Thieu. On January 30, 1966, the bombing of the North began again, after a 37-day pause. There were 197,000 American servicemen in Vietnam by February 1. The Washington Post -- which supported the Administration -- editorialized on February 1:

> "It is to be hoped that a new look is being taken at the military tactics in the South so that greater emphasis can be put on the safety of civilians, the rehabilitation of the countryside, the furtherance of economic growth.... Efforts behind the lines at economic and social programs must be increased." 45/

Senator Fulbright had launched his public hearings on Vietnam, and on February 4 had subjected David Bell of AID to a nearly four-hour grilling in the committee. That same day, the conference was announced.

The emphasis at Honolulu was clear from before the conference started. In his press conference announcing the meeting, the President said that he would take Secretary Freeman and Secretary Gardner, not previously involved in Vietnam, as well as experts from their staffs. Freeman would go on to Saigon, the President added "to explore and inaugurate certain pacification programs in the fields of health, education, and agriculture." The President then added:

> "We are going to emphasize, in every way we can, in line with the very fine pronouncements that the Prime Minister /Ky/ has made concerning his desires in the field of education and health and agriculture. We want to be sure that we have our best planning and our maximum effort put into it. But we will, of course, go into the military briefing very thoroughly..." 46/

Even before the conference began, there were early reactions from the press to this emphasis. The New York Times editorialized on February 6:

> "Programs in health, education and agriculture of the kind President Johnson evidently has in mind, can make an important contribution. To combat the revolutionary idea the Communists have set loose in Vietnam, a better idea is needed. Vigorous social reform -- and particularly, land reform, which has received little more than lip-service so far -- could well be made the price of increased economic aid, which is now to be doubled.
>
> "But an effort to seek political 'victory' in South Vietnam is likely to prove as fruitless as the long attempt at military 'victory.' A more limited and realistic objective is essential." 47/

The conference itself, and its repercussions both in Washington and Vietnam, will be discussed in a following section, so there is little need to dwell on the pre-Honolulu period. In Saigon, where the word of the conference barely preceded the departure of the participants, the New York Times bureau chief wrote a perceptive article which reflected thinking of many junior and mid-level officials in both the U.S. Mission and the GVN. The theme it stated was not new then, and still has a very familiar ring today:

> "...There are now 230,000 to 250,000 pro-Communist troops in South Vietnam, including the Vietcong guerrillas

and about 11 tough regiments of the North Vietnamese Army. That is at least twice as many enemy troops as there were at the start of last year, despite the major United States build-up since then.

"This does not mean that the American build-up has been futile: the build-up was all that saved South Vietnam, in the view of most experts. It does mean that no way has yet been found to prevent the enemy from matching an American build-up with a build-up of his own.

"About 200,000 American troops are now in South Vietnam along with 550,000 South Vietnamese armed men, of whom about half are well-trained army troops.

"American and South Vietnamese military officers have asked for more American troops, requesting a force of about 400,000 men by the end of 1966. Not all of this strength has been promised by President Johnson, but major reinforcements are already in the offing...

"But while 1966 will be an important year militarily, one in which all generals assume that there will be bloodier fighting, it will also be a year of increased emphasis on the subtle political and social aspects of the struggle.

"The Honolulu conference will in fact concentrate largely on economic, social and political problems, according to informed sources.

"It is felt in Saigon, however, that the Johnson Administration cannot, even with the best of intentions, guarantee the allegiance of the Vietnamese to their Government merely by pumping more money and technical skill into South Vietnam to give people the 'better life' of which officials speak.

"At least 20 to 25 per cent of the country's area is so firmly in control of the Vietcong guerrillas that no civic and political programs are possible there at all. Other large areas are so sharply contested that for the time being pacification and rural-improvement workers cannot operate.

"Thus rural-pacification work in 1966 is to be concentrated in one-third or fewer of the rural hamlets that the Government already claims to control. The limitation implies an admission that after five years of war the allies are starting from scratch in this field, and that progress must be slow.

"With American enthusiasm, the United States may wish to speed the pace of pacification, but there will be serious obstacles. Most of the sadder but wiser veterans of previous programs in Vietnam seem convinced that pressure from Washington for higher and more seductive statistical goals is a major danger. They counsel 'slowly but surely.'

"As an example, the South Vietnamese Government is trying to turn 23,000 rural-affairs workers, most of them originally trained only in armed propaganda work, into more rounded rural-construction workers.

"It then plans to recruit and train 19,000 more workers, for a total of 42,000. In the opinion of some officials, it will be very difficult even to reach this goal, and any great expansion carries a risk of substituting numbers for real training.

"The present pacification plan is considered imaginative and sound by experts with long experience in Vietnam, but it is considered certain that the plan could be improved at Honolulu.

"Experience has shown that the crucial matter in Vietnam is always execution rather than planning. The scarcest resources in the country are manpower and leadership.

"It is generally agreed that it would not be enough, say, for the United States to offer help in improving agriculture in the South Vietnamese countryside. The Americans must also consider, it is felt, whether their suggested plan is one that the South Vietnamese understand and actually -- rather than merely politely -- approve, and whether the badly strained South Vietnamese administration can execute the plan.

"American experts in Saigon also assert that the highly ideological Vietcong movement cannot be offset merely by offers of a 'better life' for the peasants.

"The Vietcong have a loyal, dedicated and highly disciplined underground political structure that operates in the heart of Saigon itself and in thousands of hamlets. So far the peasants have shown little inclination to inform on this structure and to help the Government activity.

"This is the central problem of the South Vietnamese war..." 48/

Charles Mohr

F. Meanwhile, Back at the War

The re-emphasis of pacification was, of course, a far more disorderly process than any written review can suggest, and unfortunately must overlook many events and recommendations which were not central to the re-emphasis of pacification. But it is useful and important to review briefly what the Mission was reporting to Washington about the overall effort during 1965, since Saigon's reports should have formed an important part of the background for decision.

This selection should be read not as the "objective" story of what was happening in Vietnam -- such an objective study is simply not possible at this time, even if we had access to enemy thinking -- but as a reflection of the beliefs of the Americans in Saigon, and as a reflection of what the Mission wanted Washington to believe.

This selection is entirely direct quotations from MACV's Monthly Evaluation Report. Each month this report began with a summary of the month's events, and the following items represent the running evaluation for 1965: [Emphasis Added]

"January, 1965: Review of military events in January tend to induce a decidedly more optimistic view than has been seen in recent months. Despite adverse influence exerted by national level political disorders and localized Buddhist/student rioting, the military experienced the most successful single month of the counterinsurgency effort...Pacification made little progress this month. Although some gains were made in the Hop Tac area, effort in the remainder of RVN was hampered by political activity and religious and student disorders...If the RVNAF capability can be underwritten by political stability and durability, a significant turning point in the war could be forthcoming.

"February, 1965: ...GVN forces continued to make progress in III and IV CTZ, maintained a tenuous balance over the VC in I CTZ, and suffered general regression in II CTZ...The indicators of RVNAF operational effort...all showed a decline. However, losses on both sides remained high due to the violence of encounters and VC tenacity...The long term effect of events in February is impossible to foretell. It is obvious that the complexion of the war has changed. The VC appear to be making a concerted effort to isolate the northern portion of RVN by seizing a salient to the sea in the northern part of II CTZ. Here RVNAF has lost the initiative, at least temporarily. However, US/GVN strikes against DRV and increased use of U.S. jet aircraft in RVN has had a salutary effect on

both military and civilian morale which may result in a greater national effort and, hopefully, reverse the downward trend.

"March, 1965: Events in March were encouraging...RVNAF ground operations were highlighted by renewed operational effort...VC activity was considerably below the norm of the preceding six months and indications were that the enemy was engaged in the re-supply and re-positioning of units possibly in preparation for a new offensive, probably in the II Corps area...In summary, March has given rise to some cautious optimism. The current government appears to be taking control of the situation and, if the present state of popular morale can be sustained and strengthened, the GVN, with continued U.S. support, should be able to counter future VC offenses successfully.

"April, 1965: Friendly forces retained the initiative during April and a review of events reinforces the feeling of optimism generated last month...In summary, current trends are highly encouraging and the GVN may have actually turned the tide at long last. However, there are some disquieting factors which indicate a need to avoid overconfidence. A test of these trends should be forthcoming in the next few months if the VC launch their expected counter-offensive and the period may well be one of the most important of the war.

"May, 1965: The encouraging trends of the past few months did not carry through into May and there were some serious setbacks. However, it is hoped that the high morale and improved discipline and leadership which has developed during that period will sustain future GVN efforts...

"June, 1965: During June the military situation in the RVN continued to worsen despite a few bright spots occasioned by RVNAF successes. In general, however, the VC...retained the initiative having launched several well-coordinated, savage attacks in regimental strength...

"July, 1965: An overall analysis of the military situation at the end of July reveals that GVN forces continued to make progress in IV Corps, maintained a limited edge in I Corps with the increased USMC effort and suffered a general regression in the northern portion of III Corps as well as in the central highlands of II Corps. The VC monsoon offensive, which was so effective in June, faltered during July as VC casualty figures reached a new high...

"August, 1965: An evaluation of the overall military effort in August reveals several encouraging facts. The most pronounced is the steady increase in the number of VC casualties and the

number of VC "ralliers" to the GVN...In summary, the general increase in offensive operations by GVN, U.S. and Third Country forces and a correlative increase in enemy casualties have kept the VC off balance and prevented his interference with the build-up of U.S. forces. The often spoken of VC "monsoon offensive" has not materialized, and it now appears that the VC have relinquished the initiative in the conduct of the war.

"September, 1965: As the end of the monsoon season approached, the military situation appears considerably brighter than in May when the VC threatened to defeat the RVNAF. Since May the build-up of Free World Military Assistance Forces, coupled with aggressive combat operations, has thwarted VC plans and has laid the foundation for the eventual defeat of the VC...

"October, 1965: ...an increase in magnitude and tempo of engagements as the GVN/FWF maintained the initiative...In summary, the military situation during October continued to favor the Allies as the VC experienced heavy casualties from the overwhelming Allied fire power...

"November, 1965: The increasing tempo of the war was reflected in casualty totals which reached new highs for VC/PAVN and friendly forces...While keeping the enemy generally off balance, GVN/FWMAF were able to maintain and, to some degree, to increase the scope and intensity of friendly-initiated operations.

"December, 1965: Military activity in December was highlighted by an increase in the number of VC/PAVN attacks on isolated outposts, hamlets, and districts, towns, and the avoidance of contact with large GVN and Free World Forces. The effectiveness of this strategy was attested by the highest monthly friendly casualty total of the war, by friendly weapons losses in excess of weapons captured for the first time since July, and by 30% fewer VC casualties than in November...

"January, 1966: The Free World peace offensive, coupled with TET festivities and the accompanying cease-fire, resulted in a period of restricted military activities for both friendly and enemy forces...Despite this decrease in activity, GVN and Free World Forces continued to force inroads into areas long conceded as VC territory..." 49/ [Emphasis Added]

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the reporting of the war, or of the implications of the above-cited evaluations. But several points do seem to emerge:

1. The reports are far too optimistic from January through April, 1965, and a big switch seems to come in June, 1965, when

General Westmoreland had already made his 44-battalion request and warned of disaster if they were not forthcoming. May's report begins to show the change in mood, but its ambiguous evaluation is in sharp contrast to the brief backward look offered in September.

2. Pacification is mentioned in the January evaluation, but fades away to virtually nothing in the months of the build-up.

3. The evaluations do not suggest that the main force threat is in any way diminishing by the end of 1965. Indeed, they accurately predict larger battles in 1966. They do not suggest, therefore, that the time had come to start emphasizing pacification at the expense of exerting more pressure directly on the enemy. The evaluations do not address this question directly, of course, but they do suggest that if any greater emphasis was to be put on pacification, it could be done only if there was not a corresponding reduction in the attack effort against the VC. This, in turn, would imply that if pacification was to receive greater emphasis at the beginning of 1966, it would require either more Allied troops or else might lead to a lessening of pressure on the VC.

II. Honolulu

A. The Conference - February 1966

The details of the closed meetings at Honolulu do not appear, in retrospect, to be nearly as important on the future emphasis on pacification as the mere fact that the public statements of all participants carried forward the theme that had been enunciated in the Declaration. This may often be true of conferences; it certainly appears true of this one, which was convened hastily and took place without any preparatory staff work on either side of the Pacific. In addition, the political upheavals in the spring of 1966, which followed the conference closely, contributed to a reduction in the importance of the details of the conference as it related to pacification.

Pacification was discussed frequently during the closed sessions. The first time came during the plenary session, when Ambassador Lodge delivered his statement to the President.

Speaking before a large audience which included General Thieu and Air Vice Marshal Ky, Lodge made a general statement about what he called "the subterranean war," and then discussed the four National Priority Areas which the GVN and the U.S. had established in October 1965:

> "I would like to begin by saying that the successes and the sacrifices of the military, both the Vietnamese and the American military, have created a fresh opportunity to win the so-called 'subterranean war'...
>
> "...We can beat up North Vietnamese regiments in the high plateau for the next twenty years and it will not end the war -- unless we and the Vietnamese are able to build simple but solid political institutions under which a proper police can function and a climate created in which economic and social revolution, in freedom, are possible.
>
> "The GVN has organized itself to do this job and you will hear a presentation by General Thang, who is in charge. The American contribution consists of training and equipping of personnel; advice; and material...
>
> "Four priority areas have been chosen. Three are places of great importance and difficulty. The fourth is largely pacified and is the place where they want to get the economic and social development program going. We think the areas are well chosen. The three tough ones are close to the Vietnamese and American armies which means that the military presence helps pacification. And, as pacification gets going, it improves the base for the military.

"In the four priority areas are 192 hamlets, including 238,600 people, to be secured by the end of 1966. But GVN efforts are not limited to these four priority areas. An effort is underway which aims to raise the percentage of the whole country which is pacified by about 14%; i.e., from the current figure of about 52% to about 66% by the end of the year..." * 1/

After the statements of Lodge and Westmoreland (who discussed only military matters), the President said:

"I hope that out of this conference we will return with clear views in our own minds as to how we can apply more military pressure and do it better, how we can build democracy in Vietnam and what steps must be taken to do it better, how we can search for peace in the world, honorable and just peace, and do it better.

"If we can do the first, namely, develop better methods for defeating the Viet Cong and better methods for developing a democracy, I have no doubt but that the third will be much easier to do because you can bargain much better from strength than you can from weakness." 3/

---

* On March 4, 1966, Lodge transmitted the text and charts of this briefing to Secretary McNamara and apparently at the same time to the White House, at the request of Jack Valenti. Lodge wrote:

"Dear Bob:

"At the request of Jack Valenti, I have put together a book containing the text and maps used in my presentation at the Honolulu Conference. It is intended to serve as a current indicator of pacification progress being made within the 1966 National Priority Areas...

"I think I should call attention to the fact that for Americans, it is natural to set goals and then work to achieve them by a specific date.

"This, however, is not the traditional Vietnamese way. While they have set a goal of 190 hamlets in the four priority areas, my guess would be that by the end of 1966, they may have achieved somewhat more than this, but not necessarily the ones which are listed here. In fact, if they ran into unexpectedly heavy opposition in one place and find a particularly good and unexpected opportunity elsewhere, they probably ought to change the plan..." 2/

After a short recess, Secretary Rusk then discussed the reasons why Hanoi was not yet ready to negotiate, and said that if the GVN built "the kind of society which is indestructible," then Hanoi would probably come to the conference table more rapidly. "Anything that can move faster rather than more slowly on our side and your side," he said, "anything that can cause them to realize that an epidemic of confidence is building in the South and that momentum is gathering could hasten the time when Hanoi will decide to stop this aggression." 4/

The President then said: "I hope that every person here from the U.S. side will bear in mind that before I take that plane back, I want to have the best suggestion obtainable as to how we can bring better military pressure on Hanoi and from the pacification side how we can bring a better program to the people of South Vietnam, and finally, third, what other efforts we can make to secure a just and honorable peace. Now, I want to have my little briefcase filled with those three targets -- a better military program, a better pacification program that includes everything, and a better peace program." 5/

General Thang then presented the GVN's pacification plans, in a briefing later made public. Thang said:

> "The objective of the whole people of my country is a unified democratic and strong Vietnam...To reach this objective, our National Leadership Committee has promoted three main policies: first, military offenses; second, rural pacification; and third, democracy.
>
> "...But it is necessary, Mr. President, to define what this means by pacification. In my opinion, that is a failure of the past government, not to define exactly what we mean by pacification...
>
> "I think that it is necessary to...define pacification as an effort to restore the public security first, and carrying out a government policy which aims at improving the standard of living in this area in every respect -- political, economic, social.
>
> "...the prerequisite is security...So our concept of pacification is based on four main points:
>
> Point No. 1: The rural pacification operation can only implement through the real solidarity among the people, the armed forces, and the administration...
>
> Point No. 2: Our government should be very clear when it says that it would like to build a new society for a better life in rural areas. That is meaningless to the peasant if you don't develop that in a concrete package.

/At this point, Thang launched into a lengthy explanation of what he meant by a new society. In a vague discussion, he described the social, economic, and political attributes of the new society, all of which were general and idealized statements./

Point No. 3: The clear and realistic policy of the government contributing to a better life in a new society I just mentioned should be widely known among the population and the cadres...

Point No. 4: Rural pacification operations will open lasting peace if the enemy infrastructure is destroyed and permanently followed up, our own infrastructure created and supported by the people...All provinces have promised to the government that 75 percent of the following facts maybe can be accomplished by the 1st of January 1967:

"Pacification of 963 new hamlets; pacification of 1,083 existing hamlets; building of 2251 classrooms; 913 kilometers of roads; 128 bridges; 57 dams; and 119 kilometers of canals ...While we have selected four areas of priority, the pacification operation has been pushed forward as usual, but with less efforts...

"Rural pacification will be a long-term operation. We have modest and practical, rather than spectacular, goals for 1966..." 6/

After General Thang's remarks, the plenary session records show repeated references to the pacification effort, although there is confusion as to what it means. General Thieu made additional summary remarks on pacification, then Minister Ton gave a briefing on the economic situation, followed by David Bell on the same subject.

The next day, February 8, the working groups presented their findings to the President. First, Secretary Rusk and Foreign Minister Do discussed the session on negotiations. Then General Thang and Secretary Freeman reported on their session on rural construction. The details of the working groups session itself are covered below, but in plenary. Thang emphasized the following points:

Our future should be developed mainly in four priority areas...Handicraft should be introduced and developed in those areas also...Rural electrification should be developed and the number of generators increased in 1967...

Land reform efforts should be pushed forward...

We ask that construction material and cement be sent to Vietnam as soon as possible so our school programs can be developed...

The training of officials at hamlet and village levels is vital... 7/

Secretary Freeman, who was about to make his first trip to Vietnam, summarized for the Americans:

"Having spent a good deal of time yesterday listening to the very eloquent presentations by the Chairman and the Prime Minister, as well as by Minister Ton, this is pretty much what we would call a nuts and bolts discussion session.

"One thing that was decided for United States purposes, for purposes of phraseology, was that the word 'pacification' really did not have the right tone. The term 'social construction' might better be used...

"There was some discussion, considerable, about the selection of province chiefs. It was strongly emphasized that it was important that the men be of integrity and ability, and that they be selected and maintained and backed up.

"The Prime Minister, General Thieu, and then General Thang both said that you /General Thieu/ were personally interested in this, and that you were going to select them shortly, that they would have a duration of at least a year, but would be carefully reviewed and would be changed if they didn't do the job, but wouldn't be changed for other reasons, which we thought was extremely important and we were gratified to find it out.

"You also explained to us, your associates General Ky and General Thang, the change of command, saying in the past they were confused, and that they were now clear, so that everyone knew exactly what their function would be.

"Then you discussed the training of the cadre...

"I want to review the REA question and find out a bit more about why that seemed to have some lag.

"Finally, we discussed the possibility of a joint training program for the village and hamlet chiefs who presumably would be elected, but that some background in the philosophy, purpose and aims of government, and the techniques of governing and administration, were felt to be needed by those people. 8/

The President then responded to the remarks of Thang and Freeman by urging "all of you connected with our program...to give very special attention to refugee camps and the schools in the refugee camps." 9/ He then turned to Minister Ton and David Bell for a discussion of the economic situation. Then Secretary Gardner, who had co-chaired a working group on health and education -- the distinction between rural construction and the health/education programs was not clarified -- made his remarks. He set out perhaps the most clearly-defined objectives of the session (except for the economic negotiations), describing the new contract with the AMA for training personnel, the new goal for provincial medical teams, and the plans for a new medical logistics system. In large part his goals were more specific than those of the other working group because the USAID Public Health Chief in Saigon, Major General James Humphries, had already laid groundwork for an excellent program of health services and assistance, and Gardner was able to work from a specific plan.

Gardner went on to discuss education, where his goals and objectives were less clear, and the President asked several detailed questions, concluding by asking General Ky to ask the Ambassador to request an educational team to go to Saigon after the agricultural team headed by Secretary Freeman returned.

The Vietnamese then thanked the Americans for the conference, and in turn some of the senior members of the American delegation -- in order, Admiral Sharp, Leonard Marks, General Wheeler, Ambassador Lodge, Ambassador Harriman -- made brief statements about the meaning of the conference. The President then made his final statement:

> "...Preserve this communique, because it is one we don't want to forget. It will be a kind of bible that we are going to follow. When we come back here 90 days from now, or six months from now, we are going to start out and make reference to the announcements that the President, the Chief of State and the Prime Minister made in paragraph 1, and what the leaders and advisors reviewed in paragraph 2...You men who are responsible for these departments, you ministers, and the staffs associated with them in both governments, bear in mind we are going to give you an examination and the finals will be on just what you have done.
>
> "In paragraph 5; how have you built democracy in the rural areas? How much of it have you built, when and where? Give us dates, times, numbers.
>
> "In paragraph 2; larger outputs, more efficient production to improve credit, handicraft, light industry, rural electrification -- are those just phrases, high-sounding words, or have you coonskins on the wall...

"Next is health and education, Mr. Gardner. We don't want to talk about it; we want to do something about it. 'The President pledges he will dispatch teams of experts.' Well, we better do something besides dispatching. They should get out there. We are going to train health personnel. How many? You don't want to be like the fellow who was playing poker and when he made a big bet they called him and said 'what have you got?' He said, 'aces' and they asked 'how many' and he said 'one aces'...

"Next is refugees. That is just as hot as a pistol in my country. You don't want me to raise a white flag and surrender so we have to do something about that...

"Growing military effectiveness: we have not gone in because we don't want to overshadow this meeting here with bombs, with mortars, with hand grenades, with 'Masher' movements. I don't know who names your operations, but 'Masher.' I get kind of mashed myself. But we haven't gone into the details of growing military effectiveness for two or three reasons. One, we want to be able to honestly and truthfully say that this has not been a military build-up conference of the world here in Honolulu. We have been talking about building a society following the outlines of the Prime Minister's speech yesterday.

"Second, this is not the place, with 100 people sitting around, to build a military effectiveness.

"Third, I want to put it off as long as I can, having to make these crucial decisions. I enjoy this agony...I don't want to come out of this meeting that we have come up here and added on X divisions and Y battalions or Z regiments or D dollars, because one good story about how many billions are going to be spent can bring us more inflation that we are talking about in Vietnam. We want to work those out in the quietness of the Cabinet Room after you have made your recommendations, General Wheeler, Admiral Sharp, when you come to us..."10/ /Emphasis Added/

The President's remarks candidly indicated the type of pressure and the expectations that he had for the effort.

But beyond the high-level interest so clearly demonstrated publicly for the first time at Honolulu, what was accomplished? As mentioned earlier, Honolulu's importance lay in two things: (1) the public support shown for the "other war"; and (2) the sections of the Declaration which committed the GVN to the electoral process. If nothing else was accomplished at Honolulu, that made the conference worthwhile. Thus, it is perhaps petty to criticize the details of the conference. But they do

suggest an unfortunate failure to come to grips with any of the basic issues concerning pacification, and, moreover, a skillful performance by the GVN to please their American hosts. Thang's statement to the President after the working session, for example, with its emphasis on rural electrification, handicrafts, and the need for "materials and cement" -- none of which were major GVN concerns at that time -- can best be explained, in retrospect, by the Vietnamese desire to emphasize those things they felt the Secretary of Agriculture, the co-chairman of the American working group, was most interested in.

Although the inner workings of the conference do not seem to have had much importance on the development of the pacification effort, a record does remain of the "rural construction working group," and it deserves a brief summary. The meeting is useful to examine not because of its ultimate importance, which was marginal, but because it provides us with a record of a type of discussion between Americans and Vietnamese which has been replayed constantly since (and before). To some weary participants, the very words used have seemed to be unchanged since 1962.

A summary cannot, unfortunately, recapture the flavor of confusion which surrounds the memorandum for the record (A-2254, February 15, 1966). The meeting began with a discussion of terminology (see footnote on "revolutionary development") in which it was decided to use the phrase "social construction" in place of pacification in English. Then, according to the memorandum, everyone lapsed back into using the phrase "pacification."

The American representatives then pressed the issue of the role of the province chief, implying strongly that they thought the province chiefs should have more power and autonomy. The Vietnamese, led by General Co, neatly answered this issue, "referring to the establishment of Rural Construction Councils and Division and Corps levels, where such matters as the disposition and use of military forces are arbitrated and decided upon." When Leonard Unger, asked if the military commanders would be committed to providing the necessary military forces for the pacification effort, "General Co again responded, saying that in the past senior commanders tended to pull troops away from Provincial control for search and destroy operations. This is a natural desire on the part of these commanders who tend to feel that this is a more important role for such troops. Now, however, their missions have changed. These senior commanders are now directly involved in the pacification program, are members of the respective Rural Construction Councils...In other words, things have changed for the better. Ambassador Unger continued to pursue his point, stressing our concern that vestiges of the past may still remain. General Thang re-entered the discussion, explaining that the GVN now has a new chain of command, clear and clean from Saigon to the Corps to the Division to the Province to the District; there is only one channel in the country and it is a military channel...Still on the same subject,

Mr. Poats raised the question: What is the primary mission of the Division Commander? Is it pacification? General Thang answered in the affirmative."

The discussion continued along these lines, and the airgram candidly concludes: "Generals Co and Thang were being pressed by rather pointed questions at this juncture and seemed to be trying to indicate that pacification is a primary task, although other military tasks must continue to be performed. It was fairly apparent that troops charged with securing the pacification area are liable still to be withdrawn on a temporary basis to meet situations which ARVN senior commanders judge to be critical."

The meeting then discussed the cadre program; the renewed emphasis on village government; the role of the province chief (at this point General Co made his statement that the GVN would appoint province chiefs for one year minimum period, a decision which was never carried out); the introduction of troops; the cadre (again); the six areas where the effort needed improvement (agriculture, handicraft, land reform, rural electrification, construction materials, and training of local officials); land reform (with Minister Tri presenting his four-month old plan again, and Poats expressing "concern about the performance to date"); and the general question of pacification goals.

And then, after reporting back to the President in the meeting described earlier, the participants broke up, returning to Saigon and Washington to give "the other war" a new emphasis; to reorganize the Mission in Saigon; to appoint a new Special Assistant to the President in Washington; to start the quest for coonskins (the phrase was in common use in Saigon within a few days); to await the public and press reaction (see following section); and to walk without warning into a major political crisis which almost brought the government down, set back every time-schedule made at Honolulu, forced a postponement of the next scheduled conference from June-July until October, and -- through an ironic twist of fate -- left the GVN stronger than before, following a remarkably successful election.

B. Impact on Public in US, on US Mission in Vietnam, and on Vietnamese

"This week the word 'pacification' was on everyone's lips at the Honolulu conference on Vietnam," wrote Charles Mohr in the New York Times, February 13, 1966, "and many important members of the Johnson Administration embraced the idea with all the enthusiasm of a horse player with a new betting system. The main purpose of the Honolulu conference was to dramatize this American enthusiasm for the 1966 rural pacification -- sometimes called 'rural construction' -- program of the Government of South Vietnam and to pledge more American assistance for the program."

Mohr's article may have been slightly exaggerated, but there can be little doubt that the President's pledge on behalf of the U.S. Government to the pacification effort began a new period for the U.S. Government in Vietnam. From Honolulu on it was open and unmistakable U.S. policy to support pacification and the "other war," and those who saw these activities as unimportant or secondary had to submerge their sentiments under a cloud of rhetoric. Despite this fact, of course, many heated discussions still lay ahead of the Mission on program after program, and many major battles remained to be fought. Porter and Komer would fight them, as will be shown later.

This was the great impact of Honolulu -- on pacification. But there were other ramifications of the Honolulu conference which overshadowed the emphasis on non-military activities in the months that followed. Because of these events -- particularly the political upheavals that rocked Vietnam from March until June -- the follow-up conference tentatively planned for June did not take place, and the growth in pacification's importance was probably set back about six months. While this study does not try to cover the concurrent events of the period, it should be emphasized that the most important parts of the Honolulu Declaration were not those dealing with pacification at all, but rather the sections which committed the GVN to "formulate a democratic constitution to the people for discussion and modification; to seek its ratification by secret ballot; to create, on the basis of elections rooted in that constitution, an elected government..." 11/ With these words, the GVN was openly committed, under U.S. pressure, to a process which they probably did not desire or appreciate. In the months that followed, the words of the Honolulu Declaration were used against General Ky by his Buddhist Struggle Movement opponents, to hoist him on his Honolulu petard; but then, in a remarkable about-face, Ky simultaneously cracked down on the Buddhists and held successful elections for a Constitutional Assembly (September 11, 1966).

The following collection of newspaper items is selected to show that there were differing opinions within the U.S. Mission and among Vietnamese, but that in general the message from Honolulu did get through to the Mission. Since almost every reporter in Saigon had sources within some element of the Mission who were telling him their

honest feelings (the Saigon Mission, it was once said by Barry Zorthian, could not keep a secret 24 hours), the stories from Saigon do reflect what the Mission thought in the days just after Honolulu. The editorials and columnists from Washington indicate to what degree the Administration succeeded in convincing the press corps (which is not, of course, the U.S. public) that the emphasis at Honolulu was really on pacification.

EDITORIAL: The New York Herald Tribune, February 8:

"The meeting presents the prospect of our resuming the war in more favorable circumstances. The meeting of the heads of the American and South Vietnamese governments is a fresh and stronger demonstration of mutual confidence. On this basis they can now proceed to mount measures for dealing with the equally important military and civilian aspects of the war.

"The two are intimately related...the loyalty and support of the peasants in the interior are essential. President Johnson is bidding for them by offering some of the benefits of his Great Society program to the South Vietnamese. It will not be easy, in time of war,...but...they must be pursued with the same vigor as we press the war on the battlefield."

EDITORIAL: The Washington Evening Star, February 7:

"It is particularly significant that the American delegation included HEW Secretary Gardner and Orville Freeman, Secretary of Agriculture. Their presence certainly means that a greater 'pacification' effort will be made as the fighting goes on..."

COLUMNIST: Marquis Childs, February 9 (from Honolulu)

"This conference called by President Johnson is a large blue chip put on the survival value of the wiry, exuberant Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, and the generals who rule with him. It is expected that Ky will not only survive but that with massive economic help from the U.S. the national leadership committee will eventually win the support of the peasant in the countryside...Any sensible bookmaker would quote long odds against the bet paying off. But after so many false starts this seems to be the right direction -- a determined drive to raise the level of living in the countryside and close the gap of indifference and hostility between the peasant and the sophisticated city dweller...Over and over we have been told that only by winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people will

we achieve a victory that has meaning beyond the grim choice of pulverization of American occupation into the indefinite future ...This is the reason teams of American specialists in agriculture, health, and education are going to Vietnam..."

EDITORIAL: The New York Herald Tribune, February 9:

"Perhaps the most constructive part of the Honolulu conference was the emphasis it placed on this hitherto badly neglected aspect of the Viet Nam war /Pacification/. It is unfortunate that Chief of State Thieu diverted attention from it by heaping more fuel on the controversy over whether the Viet Cong should or should not sit at a peace conference table..."

EDITORIAL: The New York Times, February 9 and 13:

"The Honolulu conference has followed the classic pattern of Summit meetings that are hastily called without thorough preparation in advance; it has left confusion in its wake, with more questions raised than answered...The one important area of agreement at Honolulu, apart from continuation of the military efforts, was on an expanded program of 'rural construction.' The prospective doubling of American economic aid, however, will be futile unless it is accompanied by a veritable social revolution, including vigorous land reform. Premier Ky cast some doubt in his emphasis on moving slowly. His Minister of Rural Pacification envisages action in only 1,900 of South Vietnam's 15,000 hamlets this year.

"Vice President Humphrey evidently has his work cut out for him in his follow-up visit to Saigon. Unless some way can be found to give more momentum to this effort, the new economic aid program may go down the same drain as all previous programs of this kind.

"It would be a cruel deception for Americans to get the idea that social reforms carried out by the Ky government with American money are going to make any perceptible difference in the near future to the Vietnamese people or to the course of the war."

COLUMNIST: Ted Lewis, New York Daily News, February 10 (from Washington):

"Why, all of a sudden, has President Johnson begun to come to grips with the 'other war' in South Vietnam?... Johnson, with his typical oratorical flourishes, has given the impression that he launched something totally new at

Honolulu...The fact is that for several years this problem of the 'other war' has been recognized as vital by the State Department, the Pentagon and even by the White House. But nobody did much about it, except in an offhand way...

"Johnson is a master of timing. He has definitely gained a political advantage over his Viet policy critics by stressing right now the need of winning over the peasants.../Senator Robert/ Kennedy complained in a Senate speech just ten days ago that there were 'many indications that we have not yet even begun to develop a program...It is absolutely urgent,' the Senator said, 'that we now act to institute new programs of education, land reform, public health, political participation...'."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Richard Critchfield in The Washington Evening Star, February 9 (from Saigon):

"President Johnson's historic decision at Honolulu backing an American-sponsored brand of social revolution as an alternative to communism in South Vietnam was warmly hailed today by veteran political observers. The Honolulu declaration was viewed as ending postwar era of American foreign policy aimed at stabilizing the status quo in Asia.

"The key phrase, in the view of many diplomats here, was the offer of full American 'support to measures of social revolution, including land reform based upon the principle of building upward from the hopes and purposes of all the people of Vietnam.

"...Johnson's decisions to put political remedies on a par with military action are also regarded here as a major personal triumph for Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and his top aide, Major General Edward G. Lansdale, the two main advocates of 'social revolution' in South Vietnam...The Honolulu declaration appears to signify a major shift away from the policy of primarily military support established by President Kennedy in 1961 and closely identified with General Maxwell Taylor, Defense Secretary McNamara, and Secretary of State Rusk...The Lodge-Lansdale formula was a striking departure in that it saw the eventual solution not so much in Hanoi's capitulation as in successful pacification in South Vietnam...The Honolulu declaration amounts to almost a point by point acceptance of this formula and both its phraseology and philosophy bear Lansdale's unmistakable imprint..."

EDITORIAL: The Baltimore Sun, February 10:

"Unless there was more substance to the Honolulu Conference than meets the eye, it could be summed up as much ado -- not

much ado about nothing but simply much ado...It was all spectacular and diverting but so far as we can see the problem of the war is where it was before the burst of activity began...It is probably worthwhile to have a reiteration of the social and economic measures needed in South Vietnam...It is essential to underscore the political nature of the war, along with the continuing military operations. But these matters were generally understood before the Honolulu meetings. Perhaps events to come will make the purpose of the meeting clearer."

EDITORIAL: The New York Post, February 9:

"The Hawaii meetings were advertised as the beginning of a vast new movement of economic and social reform in Vietnam, President Johnson, we were told, went to Honolulu to launch the new approach with maximum drama.

"Instead, the session inadvertently underscored the lack of interest of the junta in Saigon in anything but military conquest of the Viet Cong, to be carried out by stepped up U.S. armed efforts..."

NEWS STORY: AP, February 10 (from Honolulu):

"Vice President Humphrey left for Saigon today with South Vietnam's top leaders to spur action on programs attacking hunger, disease, and ignorance in that war-torn country..."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Charles Mohr, The New York Times, February 10 (from Saigon):

"In the atmosphere of Honolulu, there was much emphasis on form, so much that in some ways it may have obscured substance. The Americans appeared so delighted with Marshal Ky's 'style' -- with his showing as a politically salable young man with the right instincts rather than as a young warlord -- that there seemed to be almost no emphasis on the important differences between the Governments...What Marshal Ky told President Johnson was something he had often said before: South Vietnamese society is still riddled with social injustices and political weaknesses; there is not one political party worthy of the name...The South Vietnamese leaders believe that they could not survive a 'peaceful settlement' that left the VC political structure in place, even if the VC guerrilla units were disbanded. Therefore, the South Vietnamese feel that 'rural pacification,' of which much was said at Honolulu, is necessary not

only to help them achieve military victory but also to prevent a political reversal of that victory...As the Vietnamese see pacification, its core is not merely 'helping the people to a better life,' the aspect on which many American speakers dwelled, it is rather the destruction of the clandestine VC political structure and the creation of an ironlike system of government political control over the population...

"But the two governments have never been closer than they are in the aftermath of Honolulu, and the atmosphere of good feeling seems genuine..."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Roscoe Drummond, February 14 (from Washington):

"...The decisions taken at Honolulu by President Johnson and Premier Ky go to the heart of winning. They were primarily social, economic, and political decisions. They come at a malleable and perhaps decisive turn in the war..."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Tom Wicker in The New York Times, February 13 (from Saigon):

"Vice President Humphrey...has left Saigon reverberating with what he said was the 'single message' he had come to deliver. The message was that the war in Vietnam was a war to bring social justice and economic and political progress to the Vietnamese people...Humphrey said at a news conference here: 'Social and economic revolution does not belong to the VC. Non-communist forces are the ones forwarding the revolution.'

"The emphasis on social reform could also quiet critics who contend that Washington has concentrated too much on the military problem and not enough on civic action to win the loyalty of the Vietnamese people..."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Charles Mohr, The New York Times, February 13 (from Saigon):

"By giving enormous emphasis and publicity to it, an impression was left that pacification is something new. In a sense, there was some truth in this. The men running the program, both Vietnamese and American, are new. And the 1966 plan itself is a new one in many respects.

"Pacification is vitally important to success in the guerrilla war in South Vietnam. Without it, purely military success becomes empty even if all the battles are 'won'."

NEWS ANALYSIS: Joseph Alsop, February 14 (from Saigon):

"CART BEFORE HORSE...All that really mattered at Honolulu was a Presidential decision to provide the forces needed to keep the pressure on the enemy here in Vietnam. The odds are heavy that the President, who seems to prefer doing good by stealth, actually took this decision behind the electorate smokescreen of talk about other matters. The question remains whether the needed forces will be provided soon enough. One must wait and see.

"But at the risk of sounding captious, and for the sake of honesty and realism, it must be noted that there was a big Madison Avenue element in all the talk about 'pacification' during the Hawaii meeting and Vice President Humphrey's subsequent visit to Vietnam.

"This does not mean that pacification of the Vietnamese countryside is an unimportant and/or secondary problem. On the contrary, it will eventually be all-important and primary. But one need only glance at the list of priority areas marked for pacification now, to see the adman's touch in the present commotion.

"There are: An Giang Province, which belongs to the Hoa Hao sect and has been long since pacified by the Hoa Hao; the Hop Tac region near Saigon, where General Harkins experimented unhappily with the so-called oil spot technique; parts of Binh Dinh Province along the north-south highway; and the fringes of the Marine enclave at Da Nang.

"Each area differs from the others. In the case of the nine villages on the fringes of the Marines' Da Nang enclave, for instance, pacification is needed to insure airfield security from mortar fire. Most of these villages have been Viet Cong strongholds for over 20 years, and they could be dangerous.

"...Pacification by the Marines looks very fine...But it takes far too many Marines to do the job.

"Nonetheless, the real objections to making a big-immediate show of pacification are quite different. The Hop Tac experience tells the story. Here a great effort was made by the Vietnamese authorities with the strong support of General Harkins. A good deal was initially accomplished. Boasts began to be heard. Whereat the enemy sailed forth from the nearest redoubt area, knocked down everything that had been built up, murdered all the

villagers who had worked with the government, and left things much worse than they had been before...An attempt to make a big immediate show of pacification needs to be warned against, because of the Washington pressure to do just that. A large element of the U.S. Mission was called home a month or so ago. And in effect, these men were commanded to produce a plan for making a show as soon as possible.

"Fortunately, they had the courage to point out that the cart was being put before the horse once again. Fortunately, Ambassador Lodge is well aware of the dangers of putting the cart before the horse. The pressure for something showy may continue, but it is likely to be resisted.

"If so, the pressure will not be altogether useless. The Vietnamese and the Americans here are getting ready for pacification on a big scale and in an imaginative way, partly because of that pressure.

"It is vital to have everything in readiness to do the job of pacification as soon as favorable circumstances arise. But it is also vital to bear in mind that really favorable circumstances cannot arise until the enemy's backbone of regular units is at last very close to the breaking point, if not actually beginning to break."

EDITORIAL: Christian Science Monitor, February 11:

"If Saigon and Washington fight South Vietnam's economic and social war as vigorously as they fight its military war, the Communist thrust against that country will fail. Yet this is the biggest 'if' of the war. Over and over lip-service has been paid to the inescapable need of winning over the peasantry. But time and again this has come to naught.

"We are cautiously encouraged by the latest steps being taken. The strong emphasis laid in the Honolulu Declaration on civic reforms is a commitment in the right direction. The sending of Vice-President Humphrey to study South Vietnamese reform programs on the spot is an even stronger earnest of America's intention not to let this program slip back into another do-nothing doldrum..."

III. Honolulu to Manila

A. Saigon: Porter in Charge

"Question. Mr. President, when you were in Los Angeles reporting on the Honolulu Conference, you listed eleven items which you said were discussed, and you said that in all these fields you set targets, concrete targets. Would it be possible to get a list of these concrete targets?

"Answer. I don't have any. I think what I had in mind there was saying that we hoped to make certain progress in certain fields and we expect to have another conference after a reasonable length of time, in which we will take the hits, runs, and errors and see what we have achieved and everybody would be answerable, so to speak, as to the progress they have made and whether or not they are nearing their goals...I hope to be in Honolulu in the next few months, maybe in the middle of the year, and see what has been done. I thought it was good that we could go there and have the Government and the military leader, General Westmoreland, and the Ambassador and the Deputy Ambassador, meet with the Vice President, the Secretary of Agriculture and technicians, and try to expose to the world for three days what this country is trying to do to feed the hungry, and educate the people, and to improve the life span for people who just live to be 35 now...A lot of our folks think it is just a military effort. We don't think it should be that, and we don't want it to be that..." 1/

As the President returned to Washington from Honolulu, the Vice President, Secretary Freeman, and McGeorge Bundy headed up a large list of high-ranking officials that went on to Saigon. Bundy, about to leave the government, carried with him authority from the President to give the Deputy Ambassador wide authority over all aspects of the rural construction program. On February 12, 1966, the President sent Ambassador Lodge a NODIS telegram, which was designed to pave the way for Bundy's reorganization effort:

"QUOTE. I hope that you share my own satisfaction with the Honolulu Conference. The opportunity to talk face to face with you, General Westmoreland and the Vietnamese leaders has given me a much better appreciation of the problems each of you face, but perhaps even more importantly the opportunities open to us. I was particularly impressed with the apparent determination of Thieu, Ky and the other Vietnamese Ministers to carry forward a social policy of radical and constructive change. However, I full well realize the tremendous job that they and we have in putting this into practice. I intend to see that our organization back here for supporting this is promptly tightened and

strengthened and I know that you will want to do the same at your end. I was impressed with Ambassador Porter and it seems to me that he probably has the necessary qualifications to give you the support you will need in this field. While I know that he is already doing so, I suggest that your designation of him as being in total charge, under your supervision, of all aspects of the rural construction program would constitute a clear and visible sign to the Vietnamese and to our own people that the Honolulu Conference really marks a new departure in this vital field of our effort there. We will of course be glad to give prompt support with whatever additional personnel or administrative rearrangement this might require within the Mission or Embassy. Please let me know your own thoughts on this.

"I hope that in June we can have a full report showing real progress in our war on social misery in Viet Nam. In the meanwhile, I know that you will not hesitate to let me know how we can be of help. UNQUOTE

"The President has instructed that a copy of this message be given to McGeorge Bundy." 2/

The President also sent General Westmoreland a personal telegram that day, which did not mention the matter of civilian organization. To Westmoreland he wrote:

"QUOTE. I want you to know that I greatly enjoyed the opportunity of talking directly with you at Honolulu and I hope you share my own satisfaction on the outcome of that conference. I was much encouraged by your presentation of the military situation and now have even more pride and confidence in what you and your men are doing. I feel that we are on the right track and you can be sure of my continued support.

"I know that you share my own views on the equal importance of the war on social misery, and hope that what we did at Honolulu will help assure that we and the Vietnamese move forward with equal vigor and determination on that front. As I have told Ambassador Lodge and am telling Thieu and Ky, I hope that in June I can have a report of real progress in that field. With continued progress in the military field, we should by that time be able to see ahead more clearly the road to victory over both aggression and misery.

"You have my complete confidence and genuine admiration and absolute support. I never forget that I have a lot riding on you. UNQUOTE." 3/

After the mood at the Warrenton Conference, the push for reorganization should have come as no surprise to the higher ranking members of the Mission. Discussions centering around the role of the Deputy Ambassador (and earlier, the DCM) as a manager for the mushrooming Civilian Mission had been going on for a long time, as Lodge and Porter well knew. With Bundy in Saigon to ease the issue, Lodge answered the President on February 15, 1966:

> "I do indeed want to 'tighten and strengthen the organization for support of the rural construction program at this end,' as you tell me you plan to do at yours. And I applaud your determination to treat 'rural construction' (for which there should be a better name) * as an end in itself and on a par with the military.
>
> "As you say, Ambassador Porter is already putting a great deal of effort into this work. I have never made a formal announcement of this fact because it seemed to me that the arrangement was working pretty well as it was and that public announcement was unnecessary. Also, I felt the U.S. Government

* Lodge had for some time been troubled by the phrase "rural construction" -- the literal translation of the Vietnamese Xay Dung Nong Thon -- which he felt suggested bricks and cement, rather than the entire program of "revolutionary uplift" which he advocated. Right after the Honolulu meeting, he asked each member of the Mission Council for suggestions on how better to translate the Vietnamese phrase. Out of the suggestions that he received (including Westmoreland's recommendation that we ought to leave the phrase alone, just translating the literal meaning of the Vietnamese as accurately as possible), Lodge chose the phrase "Revolutionary Development." At about the same time, the GVN dropped the word "rural" from the name of the Ministry of Rural Construction (thus, Xay Dung Nong Thon was replaced by Xay Dung). Lodge and Ky then announced that henceforth the Vietnamese Ministry would be known in English as the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, and the overall program called Revolutionary Development (RD). To this day, the semantic gap remains unbridged: the Vietnamese call it the Ministry of Construction (Bo Xay Dung), except when they are talking in English to an American; the Americans call it the MORD. The same applies to the program: moreover, the confusion is often compounded by the fact that in most informal discussions between Americans and Vietnamese, the term most often used is still "pacification." See, for example, the Working Group session at Honolulu, February 7, 1966: "It is perhaps significant that this was the only time in the course of the meeting, i.e., at the outset, that the newly adopted U.S. term was heard. Throughout the remainder of the Working Group discussion, the term pacification was used almost exclusively. In this connection, the Saigon U.S. representatives present at the meeting are inclined to doubt the actual appropriateness of the new term...)"

was getting really enthusiastic work without thought of self from both Porter and Lansdale under present conditions. I felt public announcements might make Lansdale feel less important without any gain for Porter who does not need or want a sense of importance. I believe that Americans are pulling together here as never before and that there is a spirit here which is worth more than organization charts.

"But I can see the merit of the idea that a public designation of Porter as being in total charge of the American aspects of the rural construction program would 'constitute a clear and visible sign to the Vietnamese and to our own people that the Honolulu Conference really marks a new departure.'

"There are pitfalls to be avoided. For example, I assume that if Porter's new allocation means that I am so taken up with U.S. visitors that I am in effect separated from 'rural construction,' then we would take a new look at the whole thing. Much of the most time-consuming job out here is not rural construction but is the handling and educating of U.S. visitors. Although it must be done at the expense of the war effort within Vietnam, it is vitally important. But it was not until the end of January that I was free enough of visitors to start holding meetings of U.S. 'rural construction' workers to probe and to prod and to develop the 'check-up' maps which I showed you at Honolulu.

"I suggest, therefore that I make the following announcement: 'I have today designated Deputy Ambassador William Porter to take full charge, under my direction, of all aspects of work of the United States in support of the programs of community building, presently described as rural construction, agreed at the Honolulu Conference. This includes overcoming by police methods the criminal, as distinct from the military aspect of Viet Cong violence; and the training and installation of health, education and agricultural workers and of community organizers. Ambassador Porter will have the support of a small staff drawn from all elements of the U.S. Mission, and he and I will continue to have the help of General Edward Lansdale as senior liaison officer and adviser. Ambassador Porter will continue to serve as my Deputy in the full sense of the word, but he will be relieved as far as possible of all routine duties not connected with the Honolulu program. We are determined that this program for peace and progress shall be carried forward with all the energy and skill of a fully coordinated U.S. Mission effort, always with full recognition that the basic task of nation-building here belongs to the people of Viet Nam and to their government.'

"I know that you appreciate that this is essentially a Vietnamese program and that what Porter would be supervising would be the American end of it. I recognize the existence of the view that we must in effect impose detailed plans and somehow run the pacification effort ourselves. But I do not share it. Nothing durable can be accomplished that way.

"As far as 'administrative rearrangement' is concerned, I would like Sam Wilson to take the office now occupied by Porter, with the rank of Minister, and to serve as Mission coordinator. I intend to put Habib in the office now occupied by Chadbourn with the rank of Minister....

"As soon as I receive word from you that this is satisfactory, I intend to make the announcement about Porter. The other appointments can be announced later. LODGE" 4/

From the beginning, Lodge, who felt that "a public announcement was unnecessary" except as a "clear and visible sign to the Vietnamese and to our own people that the Honolulu conference really marks a new departure," 4/ was not overly enthusiastic about the public designation of his deputy as being "in total charge" of something. The documentation is virtually nonexistent on the question of whether Lodge's feelings on this point acted as a constraint on Porter, but it is hard to escape the strong impression that from the outset, Lodge was going along with the new authority for Porter only with reluctance -- and that Porter had to keep this in mind whenever he considered putting heavy pressure on an agency.

Porter also had his reservations about his role. Whether these were caused by a feeling that the Ambassador was not going to support him in showdowns with the agencies, or whether his caution came from some more basic feelings, there can be no doubt that he did not, in the period between Honolulu and Manila, perform in his new role as the President and his senior advisors had hoped. And thus once again, at Manila, a reorganization was approved -- this time a much broader and far-reaching one.

Porter's intentions were accurately foreshadowed in his first statement to the Mission Council on the subject, February 28, 1966. He sought then to allay the fears which the announcement had raised in the minds of the agency chiefs in Vietnam:

"Ambassador Porter described briefly his new responsibilities as he sees them in the pacification/rural development area. He pointed out that the basic idea is to place total responsibility on one senior individual to pull together all of the civil

aspects of revolutionary development. He sees this primarily as a coordinating effort and does not intend to get into the middle of individual agency activities and responsibilities. As he and his staff perceive areas which require attention and action by a responsible agency, he will call this to the attention of that agency for the purpose of emphasis; he intends to suggest rather than to criticize...Ambassador Porter noted that the non-priority areas are still getting the bulk of the resources, which means that we have not yet really concentrated on the priority areas and which also flags the necessity to bring the priority areas into higher focus. He will have a great interest in the allocation of resources such as manpower; yet he recognizes that under wartime conditions which prevail in Vietnam there will always be some inequity." 5/

It is important to emphasize that the appointment of Porter to his new role did indeed improve the organization of the Mission, and that Porter did accomplish some of the things that Washington had hoped he would -- but, under the constraints outlined below, he did not get enough done fast enough to satisfy the growing impatience in Washington with the progress of the effort. This impatience was to lead to the second reorganization and the formation of the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) after the Manila Conference. Although the impatience of Washington was justified, the fact is that under the new and limited mandate Porter had, he did begin the process of pulling together CIA, USAID, and JUSPAO, and forcing them to work more closely together. He also tried to focus General Lansdale's liaison efforts with General Thang more closely on items related to our operational objectives. He presented a new and vastly improved image of the civilian mission to the press, many of whom came to regard him as the most competent high official in the Mission. To one semi-official observer, Henry Kissinger, who visited Vietnam first in October of 1965, and then returned in July, 1966, the situation looked substantially improved:

"The organization of the Embassy has been vastly improved since my last visit. The plethora of competing agencies, each operating their own program on the basis of partly conflicting and largely uncoordinated criteria, has been replaced by an increasingly effective structure under the extremely able leadership of Bill Porter. Porter is on top of his job. It would be idle to pretend that the previous confusion is wholly overcome. He has replaced competition by coordination; he is well on his way to imposing effective direction on the basis of carefully considered criteria. At least the basic structure for progress exists. Where eight months ago I hardly knew where to begin, the problem now is how to translate structure into performance -- a difficult but no insuperable task." 6/

Despite Kissinger's hopeful words, there was a growing tendency in Washington to demand more out of the Mission that it was then producing.

In a paper written in August, 1966, Robert W. Komer, whose role in the re-emphasis of pacification will be discussed in the next section, wrote:

> "There is a growing consensus that the US/GVN pacification effort needs to be stepped up, that management of our pacification assets is not yet producing an acceptable rate of return for our heavy support investments, and that pacification operations should be brought more abreast of our developing military effort against the NVA and VC main force. The President has expressed this view, and so has Ambassador Lodge among others." 7/

Why did Porter not live up to the expectations of Washington? While the documentation is weak on this point, the following reasons can be deduced from the available evidence, including discussions with people who worked in both Saigon and Washington:

1. The Ambassador was not fully backing his Deputy, and Porter was never sure of Lodge's support in Mission Council meetings, in telegrams, in discussions with the agencies. Many senior officials of the USG, including the President, had told Porter that he had their full support, and that they expected him to manage the Mission. But on a day-to-day basis, Porter had to get along with the Ambassador, who was still (and legitimately so) the boss. The result was a considerable gap between what high officials in Washington considered Porter's mandate, and what Porter felt he would be able to do without antagonizing the Ambassador. *

---

* This problem was foreshadowed in a remarkable way in 1963-1964. After visiting Vietnam in December, 1963, the Secretary of Defense sent President Johnson a memorandum in which he pointed out that the Mission "lacks leadership...and is not working to a common plan...My impression is that Lodge simply does not know how to conduct a coordinated administration... This has of course been stressed to him both by Dean Rusk and myself (and also by John McCone), and I do not think he is consciously rejecting our advice; he has just operated as a loner all his life and cannot readily change now. Lodge's newly-designated deputy, David Nes, was with us and seems a highly competent team player. I have stated the situation frankly to him and he has said he would do all he could to constitute what would in effect be an executive committee operating below the level of the Ambassador." It is fairly well established that Nes, whatever his own ability and shortcomings was unable to establish an "executive committee operating below the level of the Ambassador," and that, as a matter of fact his every attempt to move in the direction indicated by the Secretary further alienated him from the Ambassador. The presumed lesson in the incident was that it is difficult and dangerous to tell one man's deputy that he has to assume broad responsibility and authority if the top man does not want this designation made.

2. The agencies involved -- AID, USIA, and CIA -- were hostile to the new designation from the outset. Since every agency paid lip-service to the new role of the Deputy Ambassador, it is difficult to document this fact. But it is virtually self-evident: since every agency was being told that its chief representative in Saigon now worked for the Deputy Ambassador, a career Foreign Service Officer, there was unhappiness with the system in both Saigon and Washington. Men like the Director of JUSPAO, who had served in Vietnam since January of 1964, and the CIA Station Chief, who retained a completely independent communications channel to Washington, were not going to yield any portion of their autonomy without some quiet grumbling and invisible foot-dragging. To overcome this reluctance was not as easy for Porter as Washington had perhaps hoped, particularly in light of Lodge's attitude.

3. The Washington organization did not parallel the Saigon structure it was supposed to support, and in fact actually prevented strong and continuous support. With legitimate legal and traditional responsibilities for programs overseas, each agency in Washington was understandably reluctant to channel their guidance through the Deputy Ambassador, whose authority did not seem to be derived from the normal letter of authority to all Chiefs of Mission sent by President Kennedy in 1961. The agencies, moreover, also had a special problem with regard to Vietnam: Congress was being far more rigorous in its review of the Vietnam program than it was in most other areas. The Moss Subcommittee on Overseas Governmental Operations, for example, was sending investigating teams to Saigon regularly, and issuing well-publicized reports criticizing the AID program across a broad front. The Senatorial group that reviews CIA programs was showing considerable concern with the nature and size of the cadre and counter-terror programs. And beyond that, there was the normal budgetary process, in which each agency generally handles its own requests through an extremely complex and difficult process. Each agency was bound to try to communicate as directly as possible with their representatives in Saigon. Thus, while some major conflicting policies which had previously existed were ironed out through the new system (such as the role of the cadre), many smaller, or second-level matters contained to receive the traditional separate agency approach.

A good example of this was the vital issue of improving village/hamlet government. Although consistently identified as a key element in any successful pacification program, improving the war-torn village structure seemed to escape the Mission organizationally. Responsibility for advice and assistance to the GVN Ministry of Interior (later the Commissariat for

Administration), rested with the USAID Public Administration Division, which in turn was at the third level of the USAID, reporting to the USAID Director only through an Assistant Director for Technical Services. Within the Public Administration Division (PAD) itself, to make matters worse, improving village/hamlet government was only one of a large number of activities for which PAD was responsible -- and in the eyes of many traditionally-minded professional public administrators, it did not automatically come first.

Other issues of obvious importance -- such as budgeting, strengthening the Ministry, improving the National Institute of Administration, sending officials to the U.S. for participant training -- all came within the normal PAD program as outlined in the AID Country Assistance Program (CAP) for FY 67, and, moreover, they required more resources, more Americans, more attention at high levels of AID, than the village/hamlet government problem. When Ambassador Porter directed AID, in May of 1966, to begin massive efforts to improve village government, his orders were obeyed to the extent they could be within the context of previous AID commitments. The result was a further stretching of the already taut USAID/PAD staff, since no previous commitments or programs were cut back to provide man and/or money for village government.

At the same time, other sections of the Mission which were expected to support the renewed emphasis on local government were not producing as requested. JUSPAO, asked to support the effort with psychological operations, agreed in principle but found its existing list of priorities basically unchanged. The Embassy Political Section, which should have supported the effort at least to the extent of urging through its political contacts that the GVN revitalize the village structure, simply had better things to do. The CIA was also asked to support the effort; with their cadre assets, they were in a crucial position on the matter, particularly since some of the critics of the cadre had stated that the cadre actually undercut village government instead of strengthening it (as they claimed). Again, the CIA gave lip service to the idea, without making any significant change in their training of the cadre at Vung Tau.

In this situation, Ambassador Porter tried several times to get action, each time received enthusiastic, but generalized, words of agreement and support from everyone, and finally turned his attention to other matters; with the crush of business, there was always a more immediate crisis.

B. Washington: Komer as the Blowtorch

The Warrenton conference had discussed not only the reorganization of the Mission in Saigon, but -- far more gingerly -- the need for a more centralized management of the effort in Washington.

After the Honolulu conference the President decided to take action to change the Washington structure on Vietnam, but not in quite the way suggested at Warrenton. While many people at Warrenton, particularly the State representative, had hoped that the President would designate one man, with an interagency staff, as the overseer of an integrated political-military-diplomatic-economic policy in Vietnam, the President decided to reduce the scope of the job, and give one man responsibility for what was coming to be called "The Other War." Thus, for the very first time, there would be a high-ranking official -- a Special Assistant to the President -- whose job would be to get the highest possible priority for non-military activities. In effect, the President had assured a place at the decision councils in Washington for someone with built-in pro-pacification, pro-civil side bias. This was Robert W. Komer, whose strenuous efforts in the next few months were to earn him the nickname of "The Blowtorch" (given to him by Ambassador Lodge, according to Komer).

How much authority the President intended to give Komer is not clear. It is quite likely that the issue was deliberately left vague, so as to see what authority and what accomplishments Komer could carve out of an ambiguous NSAM and his ready access to the President.

On March 23, 1966 -- six weeks after Manila -- Joseph Califano, Special Assistant to the President, sent the Secretary of Defense an EYES ONLY draft of the NSAM setting up Komer's authority. In the covering note, Califano said, "We would be particularly interested in whatever suggestions you would have to strengthen Komer's authority." 8/ In response, the Defense Department (the actual person making suggestion unidentified in documents) suggested only one minor change, and approved the NSAM.

The other departments also suggested minor changes in other parts of the NSAM, and on March 28, 1966, the President issued it as NSAM 343. It said:

> "In the Declaration of Honolulu I renewed our pledge of common commitment with the Government of the Republic of Vietnam to defense against aggression, to the work of social revolution, to the goal of free self-government, to the attack on hunger, ignorance and disease, and to the unending quest for peace. Before the Honolulu Conference and since, I have stressed repeatedly that the war on human misery and want is as fundamental to the successful resolution of the Vietnam conflict, as our military operations to ward off aggression... In my view, it is

essential to designate a specific focal point for the direction, coordination and supervision in Washington of U.S. non-military programs relating to Vietnam. I have accordingly designated Mr. Robert W. Komer as Special Assistant to me for carrying out this responsibility.

"I have charged him and his deputy, Ambassador William Leonhart, to assure that adequate plans are prepared and coordinated covering all aspects of such programs, and that they are promptly and effectively carried out. The responsibility will include the mobilization of U.S. military resources in support of such programs. He will also assure that the Rural Construction/Pacification program and the programs for combat force employment and military operations are properly coordinated.

"His functions will be to ensure full and timely support of the U.S. in Saigon on matters within his purview...

"In addition to working closely with the addressee Cabinet officers he will have direct access to me at all times.

"Those CIA activities related solely to intelligence collection are not affected by this NSAM." 9/

Mr. Komer was in business, with a small staff and a mandate, as he saw it, to prod people throughout the government, in both Washington and Saigon. Combined with a personality that journalists called "abrasive," his mandate resulted in more pressure being put on the civilians associated with Vietnam than ever before, and in some understandable frictions.

Komer's significance in the re-emphasis of pacification is important, and must be dealt with briefly, although this section does not relate his story in detail.

First, there was Komer's influence on AID. With little difficulty, he established his ability to guide AID, and began to give them direct instructions on both economic and pacification matters. AID, previously with limited influence in the Mission's pacification policy, found its influence diminished still further.

Of more significance was Komer's emphasis on the RD Cadre program, run by the CIA. Together with Porter, he recommended a premature expansion of the program, in an effort to get the program moving faster. On April 19, 1966, after his first trip to Vietnam, Komer told the President:

"Cadre Expansion. While the RD program has some questionable aspects, it seems the most promising approach yet developed. The RD ministry led by General Thang is better than most, and the Vung Tau and Montagnard training centers are producing 5500 trained men for insertion in 59-man teams into 93 villages every 15 weeks.

"But Porter sees even this rate as insufficient to keep up with 'the growing military capability to sweep the VC out of key areas.' He urges rapid expansion via building another training center (which he'd like to get Seabees to build). The aim is roughly to double cadre output from 19,000 to 39,000 trained personnel per year. He thinks this rate could be reached by end CY 1966. I agree with Porter and will press this concept at the Washington end." 10/

Plans were approved, and construction began on the second training center. But by the end of 1966 it was recognized that the attempt to double cadre training would only weaken their quality, which was shaky to begin with. The construction of the second center was abruptly halted. Komer and Porter had miscalculated badly.

Komer also sought to influence the military in both Saigon and Washington to give more attention to the pacification effort.

In cables to Saigon -- most of them slugged with his name, and thus known as "Komergrams" -- Komer sought to prod the Mission forward on a wide variety of programs. One of his most recurring themes was the Chieu Hoi program * and in time his urgings did contribute to a more successful program, with a high-ranking American official in Ambassador Porter's office working on nothing else, in place of the previous ad hoc arrangement between JUSAPO and USAID.

Another recurring theme was refugees, but here he was less successful, particularly since the U.S. Mission was never able to determine whether or not it desired to stimulate more refugees as means of denying the VC manpower. His cables on this complex issue were characterized by an absence of objective, but at least he was addressing frontally questions few other people would raise at all:

"For Porter from Komer: We here deeply concerned by growing number of refugees. Latest reports indicate that as of 31 August, a total of 1,361,288 had been processed...Of course, in some ways, increased flow of refugees is a plus. It helps

---

* For example: "Porter from Komer: Highest authorities interested in stepping up defection programs. While recognizing limitations Chieu Hoi program and inadequacies GVN administration, program has achieved impressive results and shown high return in terms modest U.S. support costs. Greatly concerned by two recent administrative decisions taken by GVN..." 11/ Or: "To Porter from Komer: USIA eager help maximize success both Chieu Hoi and RD programs, in which highest authorities vitally interested..." 12/ Or: "For Mann and Casler from Komer: Would appreciate your following through on coordinated set of action proposals to energize lagging Chieu Hoi program...We are concerned about drop-off in returnees since April...Bell and Marks concur." 13/

deprive VC of recruiting potential and rice growers, and is partly indicative of growing peasant desire seek security on our side.

"Question arises, however, of whether we and GVN adequately set up to deal with increased refugee flow of this magnitude. AID has programmed much larger refugee program for FY 67, but is it enough?...Only Mission would have answers, so intent this cable is merely to pose question, solicit bids for increased support if needed, and assure you I would do all possible generate such support." 14/

On another controversial issue, Land Reform, Komer repeatedly pressed the Mission for public signs of progress, but by the time he went out to Saigon as General Westmoreland's deputy in 1967, he -- and apparently the President -- were still unsatisfied.

But perhaps the most important role Komer played was to keep the general subject of pacification before the President, to encourage Ambassador Lodge to talk pacification up, and to constitute a one-man, full-time, nonstop lobby for pacification within the USG.

After his first trip to Vietnam, for example, Komer reported to the President that "while our splendid military effort is going quite well, our civil programs lag behind...To achieve the necessary results, we must ourselves give higher pricrity to (and expand) certain key pacification programs, especially cadres and police -- if necessary at some expense to the military effort." 15/

Komer's memorandum constitutes only a small proportion of the information and suggestions reaching the President and his senior advisors on Vietnam, and the intention of this paper is not to suggest that they were in any sense definitive documents which show the direction of U.S. strategy in Vietnam. But it seems clear that Komer was the first senior official in Washington to make a major effort to put pacification near the top of our combined civil-military effort, and that he had a particularly advantageous spot from which to try. He had authorized back-channel communications with the Ambassador and Deputy Ambassador in Saigon, apparent access to the President, and the umbrella of the White House.

His memoranda to the President over his year in Washington showed considerable change in thinking on many issues, but a consistent support for more pacification. A small sample is revealing:

"Key aspects of pacification deserve highest priority -- and greater emphasis. Unless we and the GVN can secure and hold the countryside cleared by military operations, we either face an ever larger and quasi-permanent military commitment or risk letting the VC infiltrate again...I personally favor more

attention to the Delta (IV Corps) region, which contains eight out of Vietnam's 15 million people and is its chief rice bowl ...Clearly we must dovetail the military's sweep operations and civil pacification. My impression is that, since the military are moving ahead faster than the civil side we need to beef up the latter to get it in phase. There's little point in the military clearing areas the civil side can't pacify. On the other hand, security is the key to pacification; people won't cooperate and the cadre can't function till an area is secure...

"Somehow the civil side appears reluctant to call on military resources, which are frequently the best and most readily available. I put everyone politely on notice that I would have no such hesitations -- provided that the case was demonstrable -- and that this was the express request of the Secretary of Defense." 15/ [Cited Supra.]

In August of 1966, Komer produced the longest of his papers, and the one he considered his most important. Its title was "Giving a New Thrust to Pacification." In addition to discussing the substance of pacification, the paper made some further organizational suggestions, which clearly foreshadowed the second reorganization of the Mission which took place after the Manila conference. It is worth quoting in some length (all underlining is part of the original):

"There is a growing consensus that the US/GVN pacification effort needs to be stepped up, that management of our pacification assets is not yet producing an acceptable rate of return for our heavy investments, and that pacification operations should be brought more abreast of our developing military effort against the NVA and VC main force. The President has expressed this view, and so has Ambassador Lodge among others.

"I. What is pacification? In one sense, "pacification" can be used to encompass the whole of the military, political, and civil effort in Vietnam. But the term needs to be narrowed down for operational purposes, and can be reasonably well separated out as a definable problem area.

"If we divide the US/GVN problem into four main components, three of them show encouraging progress. The campaign against the major VC/NVA units is in high gear, the constitutional process seems to be evolving favorably, and we expect to contain inflation while meeting most needs of the civil economy. But there is a fourth problem area, that of securing the countryside and getting the peasant involved in the struggle against the Viet Cong, where we are lagging way behind. It is this problem area which I would term pacification...

"At the risk of over-simplification, I see management of the pacification problem as involving three main sub-tasks: (1) providing local security in the countryside -- essentially a military/police/cadre task; (2) breaking the hold of the VC over the people; and (3) positive programs to win the active support of the rural population.

"...Few argue that we can assure success in Vietnam without also winning the 'village war.' Chasing the large units around the boondocks still leaves intact the VC infrastructure, with its local guerrilla capability plus the weapons of terror and intimidation...So winning the 'village war' which I will loosely call pacification, seems an indispensable ingredient of any high-confidence strategy and a necessary precaution to close the guerrilla option.

"...Yet another reason for stressing pacification is that the U.S. is supporting a lot of assets in being which are at the moment poorly employed. Even the bulk of ARVN, which increasingly sits back and watches the U.S. take over the more difficult parts of the war against main enemy units and bases, might be more effectively used for this purpose...Thus, even if one contends that pacification as I have defined it is not vital to a win strategy, stepping up this effort would add little to present costs and might produce substantial pay offs.

"Beyond this, the time is psychologically ripe for greater emphasis on pacification. South Vietnamese confidence is growing as the U.S. turns the tide. New US/FW military forces are arriving to reinforce the campaign against the main force; their presence will release much needed assets to pacification. The GVN, fresh from success against the Buddhist led struggle and confidently facing an election process leading toward a constitution, also has been making the kind of tough decisions -- devaluation, turnover of the Saigon port to military management, etc. -- that will be needed in pacification, too.

"In sum, the assets are available, and the time is ripe for an increased push to win the 'village war.'

"III. What is Holding Up the Pacification Efforts? The long history of the Vietnam struggle is replete with efforts to secure the countryside. Most of them, like Diem's strategic hamlet program, proved abortive. ...Some of the chief difficulties we confront are suggested below:

"A. We had to go after the major VC/NVA units first... It was a matter of first things first...

"B. The VC/NVA have been able to select the weakest point in any embryonic GVN pacification effort and destroy it with a lightening attack...

"C. There are inherent difficulties in the pacification process itself...

"D. Lack of high quality assets. Pacification has also had to take a back seat in the sense that it generally gets only the lowest grade GVN assets -- and not enough of these...

"E. Last but not least, neither the U.S. nor the GVN have as yet developed an adequate plan, program, or management structure for dealing with pacification...

"1. The JCS and MACV are so preoccupied, however justifiably, with operations against the major VC/NVA units that they are not able to pay enough attention to the local security aspects of pacification...

"2. There is no unified civil/military direction within the GVN...

"3. A similar divided responsibility prevails on the U.S. side...

"4. Nor does there yet appear to be a well-understood chain of command from Porter even to the civilians operating in the field...

"5. There is no integrated civil/military plan for pacification on either the U.S. or GVN side...

"IV. How do we step up Pacification? ...It demands a multi-faceted civil-military response...

"A. Provide more adequate, continuous security for the locales in which pacification is taking place. This is the essential prerequisite. None of our civil programs in the countryside can be expected to be effective unless the area is reasonably secure. Nor, unless the people are protected, and their attitudes likely to change in favor of the GVN... To provide security requires the assignment on a long term basis of enough assets to defeat these resident VC companies and battalions, in addition to providing 24-hour security to the people until they are able to assist in providing their own protection. This is primarily the task of RF and PF, supported by the RD cadres and police...Some knowledgeable

experts contend that even if we improve the...RF, PF, police, and cadre, they are together insufficiently to extend local security much beyond existing secured areas. They feel that lacking mobility and heavy firepower, these forces must be thickened with a liberal sprinkling of regular ARVN units working in the area outside the immediate area undergoing pacification. I do not suggest that ARVN regulars gainfully employed in battle against the enemy main forces be so diverted. I do urge that those ARVN forces not now fully engaged -- a substantial fraction of the total be used to contribute directly to improving local security.

"B. We must devote more effort to breaking the hold of the VC over the people...

"C. Carry out positive revolutionary development programs to win active popular support. The cliche of winning support by offering the people a better life through a series of interrelated RD programs has great relevance in Vietnam...

"D. Establish functioning priorities for pacification...

"E. Better Area Priorities... A greater stress on pacification logically means greater stress on the Delta...

"F. Concentrate additional resources on pacification... Arguments made in the past that pacification is a delicate subject to be approached only with care and precision have lost some of their relevance as the intensity of warfare has increased ...Increase:

Police...
RD Cadre...
Material Support for Pacification...
The U.S. Agricultural Effort...
Chieu Hoi...
Village/Hamlet Administration...

"G. Set more performance goals...

"H. Rapidly extend the security of key roads...

"I. Systematize the flow of refugees...

"J. Get better control over rice...

"V. How can Pacification be Managed More Effectively?

"A. Restructuring the GVN...

-- Place the RD and PF under the RD Ministry...

-- Establish a single line of command to the province chiefs...

-- Remove the Division from the pacification chain of command...

-- Strengthen the authority of the Province Chiefs...

-- Appoint civilian chiefs in selected provinces and districts...

"B. Parallel strengthening of the structure is essential. U.S. leadership has often sparked major pacification steps by the GVN. The structure for managing pacification advice to the GVN, and direct U.S. military/civilian support, have evolved slowly as the U.S. contributions have grown. Once it was possible to coordinate the U.S. pacification effort through an interagency committee for strategic hamlets. Later the Mission Council concept was used extensively. In the wake of the Honolulu Conference, the President appointed Ambassador Porter to take charge of the non-military effort in Vietnam. Several highly qualified people now give Porter the nucleus of a coordination and operations staff. However...the U.S. management structure must be strengthened considerably more.

"There are three basic alternatives, each building on the present structure, which could provide the needed result. Two of them are based on the principle of a 'single manager' over both civilian and military assets by assigning command responsibility either to Porter or Westmoreland. The third accepts a continued division between the civil and military sides for numerous practical reasons, but calls for strengthening the management structure of both.

"Alternative No. 1 -- Give Porter operational control over all U.S. pacification activity...

"Alternative No. 2 -- Retain the present separate civil and military command channels but strengthen the management structure of both MACV and the U.S. Mission. This option, recognizing the practical difficulties of putting U.S. civilian and military personnel under a single chief, would be to settle for improved coordination at the Saigon level.

"To facilitate improved coordination, however, it would require strengthening the organization for pacification within MACV and the U.S. Mission. MACV disposes of by far the greater number of Americans working on pacification in the field. It has advisory teams spending most of their time on pacification in 200 out of 230 districts and in all 43 provinces. These teams -- not counting

advisors at division, corps and all tactical units down to battalion -- number about 2000 men compared with about one-eighth this number from all other U.S. agencies combined.

"However, the senior officer in MACV dealing with pacification as his principal function is now a colonel heading the J33 staff division. Moreover, with 400,000 U.S. troops soon to be committed, General Westmoreland, his subordinate commanders, and his principal staff officers must spend increasing time on military operations associated with defeating the VC/NVA main formations. Therefore, management of the tremendous advisory resources with MACV inevitably suffers regardless of General Westmoreland's personal effort to give balanced attention to both.

"Hence there might be merit in COMUSMACV having a senior deputy to manage pacification within MACV and pacification advice to the JCS, as well as throughout the Vietnamese military chain of command. Key staff sections, such as J33, Polwar Directorate, Senior Advisor for RF/PF, could be controlled by a chief of staff for pacification responsive to the Deputy. Advisory teams at corps and division would receive guidance and orders on pacification from the Deputy. Province and district advisors would receive all orders, except routine administrative instructions, through the pacification channel.

"To parallel the MACV organization and provide a single point of liaison on the civil side, Ambassador Porter should have his own field operations office formed by merging USAID Field Operations, JUSPAO Field Services and CAS Covert Action Branch. Control over the people assigned would be removed, as in Alternative No. 1, from their parent agency. All civilian field personnel in the advisory business would also receive their guidance and orders from the Deputy Ambassador.

"For this dual civilian-military system to operate effectively, the closest coordination would be required between the offices of the MACV Deputy and the Deputy Ambassador. Since it is difficult and dangerous to separate military and civilian aspects of pacification at the province level, most policy guidance and instructions to the provinces hopefully would be issued jointly and be received by the senior military and civilian advisors who would then develop their plans together.

"I would still favor a single civil/military team chief in the province, even though he would have two bosses in Saigon talking to him through different and parallel chains of command. Alternatively, since MACV already has a senior advisor in each province, it would be possible similarly to assign a single civilian as the

Vietnamese province chief's point of contact on all non-military matters. All other civilians in the province would be under his control.

"Alternative No. 3 -- Assign responsibility for pacification civil and military, to COMUSMACV. This is not a new suggestion, and has a lot to recommend it. In 1964, General Westmoreland proposed that he be made "executive agent" for pacification. MACV at that time had an even greater preponderance of field advisors than it does today, and was devoting the bulk of its attention to pacification. Since the military still has by far the greatest capacity among U.S. agencies in Vietnam for management and the military advisors outnumber civilians at least 8 to 1 in the field, MACV could readily take on responsibility for all pacification matters.

"Turning over the entire pacification management task to COMUSMACV would require him to reorganize his staff to handle simultaneously the very large military operations business involving U.S., Free World and Vietnamese forces and the civil/military aspects of pacification at the same time. The USAID, JUSPAO, and CAS Covert Operations staffs would come under COMUSMACV's control where they would be used as additional "component commands." In this case, it might be desirable to have a civilian deputy to COMUSMACV for pacification.

"Also appropriate under this concept would be a single U.S. advisory team, under a team chief, at each subordinate echelon. The result would be a single chain of command to the field and coordinated civilian/military pacification planning and operations on the U.S. side. The U.S. Mission would speak to Vietnamese corps and division commanders, province chiefs and district chiefs with a single voice." 16/

In the latter part of this lengthy memorandum, Komer clearly foreshadowed both the formation of OCO after the Manila conference -- his Alternative No. 2 -- and the merger of OCO and MACV into MACCORDS after Guam -- his Alternative No. 3. But when he sent the paper to Saigon with his deputy in mid-August, the reaction from Lodge, Porter, and Westmoreland was uniformly negative: they asked him, in effect, to leave them alone since they were satisfied with their present organization.

But Komer had also distributed his paper around Washington, and was lobbying for another change in the structure of the Mission, although he remained, in August, vague as to which of the three alternatives he put forward he personally favored. When other senior officials of government began to voice feelings that additional organizational changes were necessary in the Mission in Saigon, the die was cast.

Another major attribute of Komer was his strong public and private optimism. He produced for any journalist willing to hear him out facts and figures that suggested strongly that the war was not only winnable, but being won at an accelerating pace.

To the President he sounded the same theme:

> "After almost a year full-time in Vietnam, and six trips there, I felt able to learn a good deal more from my 11 days in country, 13-23 February. I return more optimistic than ever before. The cumulative change since my first visit last April is dramatic, if not yet visibly demonstrable in all respects. Indeed, I'll reaffirm even more vigorously my prognosis of last November (which few shared then) that growing momentum would be achieved in 1967 on almost every front in Vietnam." 17/

Komer believed in the concept of "sheer mass" -- that in time we would just overwhelm the Viet Cong:

> "Wastefully, expensively, but nonetheless indisputably, we are winning the war in the South. Few of our programs -- civil or military -- are very efficient, but we are grinding the enemy down by sheer weight and mass. And the cumulative impact of all we have set in motion is beginning to tell. Pacification still lags the most, yet even it is moving forward.
>
> "Indeed, my broad feeling, with due allowance for oversimplification, is that our side now has in presently programmed levels all the men, money and other resources needed to achieve success..." 18/

In summary, Komer's 13 months in Washington were spent steadily raising the priority of the pacification and other non-military efforts in Vietnam. While he never was in a controlling position within the Washington bureaucracy, he succeeded in making those who were more aware of the "other war" (a term he used continually until Ambassador Bunker announced in May of 1967 that he did not recognize that there was such a thing). While it can be no more than speculation, it would also appear that Komer played an important role in inserting into high-level discussions, including Presidential discussions, the pacification priority. Thus, when General Westmoreland visited the President at the LBJ ranch in August, 1966, Komer put before the President a series of pacification-related subjects to be used during the discussions. This happened again at Manila, where some of the points in final communique were similar to things Komer had been pushing earlier, as outlined in his August memorandum.

C. Study Groups and Strategists: Summer 1966

In the aftermath of Honolulu, task forces and study groups were suddenly assembling, producing papers on priorities, on organization of the Mission, on the role and mission of various forces. They were all manifestations of the new mood that had come over the Mission and Washington on pacification. The advocates of pacification -- with their widely differing viewpoints -- all saw their chance again to put forward their own concepts to a newly interested bureaucracy, starting with Komer and Porter.

The most important of the numerous studies were:

1. The Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam (Short Title: PROVN) -- commissioned by the Army Chief of Staff in July of 1965, completed and submitted in March 1966;

2. The Priorities Task Force -- formed in Saigon in April 1966 by Deputy Ambassador Porter, completed in July 1966;

3. The Inter-Agency "Roles and Missions" Study Group -- formed by Porter in July 1966, completed in August.

While the recommendations of these studies were never accepted in toto, they all play key roles in the development of strategic thinking in Washington and Saigon during the latter part of 1966, and they continue to be influential today.

PROVN -- As early as the summer of 1965, General Johnson saw the need to select a superior group of officers, and set them to work on a long-term study of the problem in Vietnam. The study was intended for internal Army use, and was for a while after its completion treated with such delicacy that Army officers were forbidden even to discuss its existence outside DOD. This was unfortunate, because in content it was far-ranging and thoughtful, and set a precedent for responsible forward planning and analysis which should be duplicated in other fields.

PROVN was charged with "developing new sources of action to be taken in South Vietnam by the United States and its allies, which will, in conjunction with current actions, modified as necessary, lead in due time to successful accomplishment of U.S. aims and objectives." With this broad mandate, PROVN staff spent eight months questioning returning officers from Vietnam, studying the history of the country, drawing parallels with other countries, analyzing the structure of the U.S. Mission; and making recommendations. In the end, the PROVN team decided that there was "no unified effective pattern" to the then-current efforts in Vietnam, and submitted a broad blueprint for action. Its thesis was simple:

> "The situation in South Vietnam has seriously deteriorated. 1966 may well be the last chance to ensure eventual success. 'Victory' can only be achieved through bringing

the individual Vietnamese, typically a rural peasant, to support willingly the GVN. The critical actions are those that occur at the village, district, and provincial levels. This is where the war must be fought; this is where that war and the object which lies beyond it must be won. The following are the most important specific actions required now:

-- Concentrate U.S. operations on the provincial level to include the delegation of command authority over U.S. operations to the Senior U.S. Representative at the provincial level.

-- Reaffirm Rural Construction as the foremost US/GVN combined effort to solidify and extend GVN influence.

-- Authorize more direct U.S. involvement in GVN affairs at those administrative levels adequate to ensure the accomplishment of critical programs.

-- Delegate to the U.S. Ambassador unequivocal authority as the sole manager of all U.S. activities, resources, and personnel in-country.

-- Direct the Ambassador to develop a single integrated plan for achieving U.S. objectives in SVN.

-- Reaffirm to the world at large the precise terms of the ultimate U.S. objective as stated in NSAM 288: A free and independent non-communist South Vietnam..." 19/

Beyond this frank and direct summary, the study had hundreds of recommendations, ranging from the specific and realizable to the vague and hortatory.

In summary, the PROVN was a major step forward in thinking. Although as mentioned above, its value was reduced for a long time by the restrictions placed on its dissemination, the candor with which it addressed matters was probably possible only because it originated within a single service, and thus did not require the concurrences of an inter-agency study.

For example, the PROVN study addressed directly a point of such potential embarrassment to the U.S. Government that it is quite likely an inter-agency group would not have addressed it except perhaps in oblique terms:

"A PROVN survey...revealed that no two agencies of the U.S. Government viewed our objectives in the same manner. Failure to use that unequivocal statement of our fundamental objective -- a free and independent, non-communist South Vietnam -- set forth in NSAM 288, hinders effective inter-agency coordination and the integrated application of U.S. support efforts." 20/

As for the study's "highest priority" activities, PROVN recommended:

"(1) Combat Operations -- the bulk of U.S. and FWMA Forces and designated RVNAF units should be directed against enemy base areas and against their lines of communication in SVN, Laos, and Cambodia as required; the remainder of Allied force assets must ensure adequate momentum to activity in priority Rural Construction areas.

"(2) Rural Construction -- in general, the geographic priorities should be, in order, the Delta, the Coastal Lowlands, and the Highlands; currently the highest priority areas are the densely populated and rich resource Delta provinces of An Giang, Vinh Long, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, and the Hop Tac area surrounding Saigon.

"(3) Economic Stability -- current emphasis must be directed toward curbing inflation and reducing the excessive demands for skilled and semi-skilled labor imposed upon an over-strained economy..."

On the management of the United States effort -- which PROVN found extremely poor -- the recommendation was to create a single manager system, with the Ambassador in charge of all assets in Vietnam and the mission of producing a single integrated plan. PROVN suggested major steps in the direction of giving the Ambassador a stronger hold over the military.

Of greatest importance -- aside from the reorganizational suggestions -- was the PROVN conclusion on the supremacy of Rural Construction activities over everything else:

"Rural Construction must be designated unequivocally as the major US/GVN effort. It will require the commitment of a preponderance of RVNAF and GVN paramilitary forces, together with adequate U.S. support and coordination and assistance. Without question, village and hamlet security must be achieved throughout Vietnam...RC is the principal means available to broaden the allied base, provide security, develop political and military leadership, and provide necessary social reform to the people..." 21/

To this end, PROVN suggested a division of responsibility among the forces:

"The need to sustain security pervades every ramification of RC...The various forces capable of providing this environment must be unified...at the province level. They must include the ARVN as a major component -- as many of its battle-tested units as can possibly be devoted to this mission. These integrated national security forces must be associated

and intermingled with the people on a long-term basis. Their capacity to establish and maintain public order and stability must be physically and continuously credible. The key to achieving such security lies in the conduct of effective area saturation tactics, in and around populated areas, which deny VC encroachment opportunities." 22/

Finally, the study advocated a far stronger system of leverage for American advisors in the field -- "mechanisms for exerting U.S. influence must be built into the U.S. organization and its methods of operation." 23/

The PROVN study concluded with a massive "Blueprint for National Action" which was never implemented. But the influence of the study was substantial. Within the Army staff, a responsible and select group of officers had recommended top priority for pacification. Even if the Army staff still rejected parts of the study, they were on notice that a study had been produced within the staff which suggested a substantial revision of priorities.

The PROVN study had some major gaps. Proceeding from the unstated assumption that our commitment in Vietnam had no implicit time limits, it proposed a strategy which it admitted would take years -- perhaps well into the 1970's -- to carry out. It did not examine alternative strategies that might be derived from a shorter time limit on the war. In fact, the report made no mention of one of the most crucial variables in the Vietnam equation -- U.S. public support for the Administration.

Further, the report did little to prove that Vietnam was ready for pacification. This "fact" was taken for granted, it seems -- a fault common to most American-produced pacification plans. While PROVN did suggest geographic priorities, they were derived not even in part from the area's receptivity to pacification but exclusively from the location and strategic importance of the area. Thus, the same sort of error made in Hop Tac was being repeated in PROVN's suggestions.

MACV analyzed the report in May of 1966, calling it "an excellent overall approach in developing organization, concepts and policies..." In a lengthy analysis of PROVN, MACV cabled:

"As seen here, PROVN recommends two major initiatives essential to achieving U.S. objectives in South Vietnam: creation of an organization to integrate total U.S. civil-military effort, and exercise of greatly increased direct U.S. involvement in GVN activities.

"MACV has long recognized need for the greatest possible unity of effort to gain U.S. objectives in South Vietnam. MACV agrees with PROVN concept to achieve full integration of effort in attaining U.S. objectives in South Vietnam. Evolution of U.S. organization in Saigon is heading towards this goal. Deputy Ambassador now has charge of revolutionary

and economic development programs and MACV is charged with military programs. In addition, special task force has been established by Deputy Ambassador to draft mission-wide statement of strategy, objectives, and priorities. In effect, this task force is engaged in integrated planning which under PROVN concept would be performed by supra-agency staff. PROVN proposal for designation of a single manager with supra-staff is a quantum jump to achieve the necessary degree of military-civil integration. This final step cannot be implemented by evolutions here in Saigon. It would have to be directed and supervised from highest level in Washington.

"MACV is in complete agreement with PROVN position that immediate and substantially increased United States direct involvement in GVN activities in form of constructive influence and manipulation is essential to achievement of U.S. objectives in Vietnam. PROVN emphasizes that "leverage must originate in terms of reference established by government agreement," and "leverage, in all its implications, must be understood by the Vietnamese if it is to become an effective tool." The direct involvement and leverage envisioned by PROVN could range from skillful diplomatic pressure to U.S. unilateral execution of critical programs. MACV considers that there is a great danger that the extent of involvement envisioned could become too great. A government sensitive to its image as champion of national sovereignty profoundly affected by the pressure of militant minorities, and unsure of its tenure and legitimacy will resent too great involvement by U.S. Excessive U.S. involvement may defeat objectives of U.S. policy: development of free, independent non-communist nation. PROVN properly recognizes that success can only be attained through support of Vietnamese people, with support coming from the grass roots up. Insensitive U.S. actions can easily defeat efforts to accomplish this. U.S. manipulations could easily become an American takeover justified by U.S. compulsion to "get the job done." Such tendencies must be resisted. It must be realized that there are substantial difficulties and dangers inherent in implementing this or any similar program.

"Several important aspects of proven concept require comment, further consideration and resolution or emphasis. Some of the more significant are:

"Regarding U.S. organization, MACV considers that any major reorganization such as envisioned by PROVN must be phased and deliberate to avoid confusion and slow-down in ongoing programs...

"There appears to be an overemphasis on military control in PROVN which may be undesirable. For instance, the study states that all senior U.S. representatives (SUSREPs) initially will be U.S. military officers. This should not necessarily be stated policy. The senior U.S. representative, particularly at province level, should be selected on basis of major tasks to be performed, program emphasis in a particular area and other local considerations. PROVN also limits U.S. single manager involvement in military activities. If single manager concept of a fully integrated civil-military effort is to be successful, military matters, such as roles and missions, force requirements, and deployments must be developed in full coordination and be integrated with civil aspects.

"PROVN proposal for enlarged U.S. organization for revolutionary development, particularly at sector and subsector levels, will require both military and civilian staff increases. It will necessitate further civilian recruiting and increased military input. Present shortage of qualified civilian personnel who desire duty in Vietnam must be considered. It may fall to the military, as it is now happening to some degree, to provide personnel not only for added military positions, but also for many of civilian functions as well.

"Regardless of what U.S. might desire, however, our efforts to bring about new Vietnamese organizational structure must be tempered by continuous evaluation of the pressure such change places on Vietnamese leaders. Our goals cannot be achieved by Vietnamese leaders who are identified as U.S. puppets. The U.S. will must be asserted, but we cannot afford to overwhelm the structure we are attempting to develop.

"Accordingly, MACV recommends that PROVN, reduced primarily to a conceptual document, carrying forward the main thrusts and goals of the study, be presented to National Security Council for use in developing concepts, policies, and actions to improve effectiveness of the American effort in Vietnam." 24/

The "Priorities Task Force" -- This group was set up at Ambassador Porter's direction in April 1966, following Komer's first trip to Vietnam, during which Komer had strongly urged that the Mission try to establish a set of interagency priorities. The actual work of this task force, which had full interagency representation, was considered disappointing by almost all its "consumers," particularly Komer, since it failed to come up with a final list of priorities from which the Mission and Washington could derive their programs. But it was by far the most ambitious task force the Mission had ever set up, and it provoked considerable thought in the Mission.

Its introductory section was a rather gloomy assessment of the situation. As such, it was at variance with the then current assessment of the situation -- but in retrospect, it is of far greater interest than the recommendations themselves!

"After some 15 months of rapidly growing U.S. military and political commitment to offset a major enemy military effort, the RVN has been made secure against the danger of military conquest, but at the same time it has been subjected to a series of stresses which threaten to thwart U.S. policy objectives...

"The enemy now has a broad span of capability for interfering with progress toward achievement of U.S. objectives. He can simultaneously operate offensively through employment of guerrilla and organized forces at widely separated points throughout the country, thus tying down friendly forces, while concentrating rehearsed surprise attacks in multi-battalion or even multi-regimental strength. ...The war will probably increase in intensity over the planning period (two years) though decisive military victory for either side is not likely. Guerrilla activity will make much of the countryside insecure. More of the rural population will be directly affected, and the number of refugees and civilian casualties on both sides seem bound to rise...

"Reasons for lack of success of the overall pacification program -- including all the stages from clear and secure operations to sustaining local government -- were varied. First, the primary hindrance to pacification was the low level of area security given active Viet Cong opposition. Second, political instability prevented continuing and coherent GVN direction and support of any pacification program. Third, pacification execution has been almost wholly Vietnamese and can be supported only indirectly by the U.S. This has made it less susceptible to American influence and more subject to political pressures and the weaknesses of Vietnamese administration and motivation. Fourth, no pacification concept since the strategic hamlet program has been sufficiently clear in definition to provide meaningful and consistent operational guidance to those executing the program. Fifth, given the pressure for success and the difficulty of measuring progress the execution of pacification failed to emphasize the political, social and psychological aspects of organizing the people and thus eliciting their active cooperation. The material aspects, being both visible and less difficult to implement, have received too much attention. Sixth, there was an absence of agreed, definitely stated pacification roles and missions not only within the GVN and the U.S. Mission but also between

the GVN and the U.S. Mission. This absence caused proliferation of various armed and unarmed elements not clearly related to each other. Seventh, a quantitative and qualitative lack of trained and motivated manpower to carry out pacification existed. In addition, insufficient emphasis has been given to training and orientation of local officials associated with the pacification program. Eighth, lack of a well defined organizational structure in the U.S. Mission created some confusion and conflicting direction of the pacification effort...

"During 1965, military plans were developed to support revolutionary development; national priority areas were selected where special emphasis would be placed on revolutionary development, and a structure was established by the GVN extending an organizational framework for revolutionary development from national to district levels. Meanwhile, the U.S. Mission has begun action to centralize direction for revolutionary development to ensure coordination of all Mission activities in support of revolutionary development.

"A new approach was also taken in 1965 to bring coherence to the use of cadre in the pacification process. Drawing on a concept of armed political action teams, whose relative success locally was at least partly owing to direct U.S. sponsorship and control, a combined cadre team approach was developed. A new organization, the Revolutional Development Cadre, was established, which brought together and replaced a number of disparate cadre organizations. The combined cadre team approach includes armed units and special skills of relating to and assisting the people. The combined teams form the basis of the present pacification program.

"While these measures have helped to alleviate some of the problem areas which previously frustrated pacification efforts, some areas of major concern remain: First area security where Revolutionary Development is being initiated is not always adequate because of manpower problems; second, continued existence of various overlapping security forces further reduces effectiveness; third, approved pacification concepts, roles, and missions agreed to by the U.S. and the GVN are lacking; fourth, the effectiveness of the new RD cadre teams remain to be tested and evaluated; fifth, extensive training of local and other officials associated with RD still must be accomplished; sixth, emphasis on rapid expansion and the desire for immediate visible and statistical progress would operate against lasting results; and, seventh, organizational development and functioning on both the GVN and U.S. sides are as yet incomplete. 25/

* * * * *

"The situation described above suggests that the course of events in Vietnam during the next two years will be significantly influenced by the following principal current trends.

"The war can be expected to increase in intensity, but decisive military victory should not be expected. It will be basically a war of attrition. Troop casualties should increase on both sides, and civilian casualties and refugees as well. The enemy can, if he chooses, increase still further the rate of his semi-covert invasion and the level of combat.

"The enemy will continue to build up his forces through infiltration from NVN and recruitment for main force VC units in SVN to achieve a favorable relationship of forces.

"At the same time, he will continue to reinforce his capabilities for political action in the urban areas, to exploit anticipated future political disturbances, to increase his terrorist acts in the cities, and to isolate the urban population from the countryside.

"GVN control of the countryside is not now being extended through pacification to any significant degree and pacification in the rural areas cannot be expected to proceed at a rapid rate. A new approach to pacification has been developed, but it is too early to judge its effectiveness. In addition, important problems requiring resolution remain...

"The Vietnamese will continue to face grave problems in creating an effective system of government. Under present conditions we cannot realistically expect a strong GVN to emerge over the planning period, nor can we expect political unity or a broadening of the base of popular support. The increased American presence, rising inflation and an image of considerable corruption are issues which will be increasingly exploited by unfriendly and opportunistic elements. U.S. influence on political events continues to be limited while our responsibility for Vietnam's future is increasing." 26/

The Task Force divided all activities in Vietnam into categories of importance, and assigned them priorities in groups. Unfortunately, the divisions were either too vague to be useful, or else they designated specific activities, such as agriculture, to such a low position that Washington found the selection unacceptable. In its first rank of importance the Task Force placed:

"1. Those activities designed to prepare a sound pacification program primarily through strengthening the human resources element of pacification, and through coordinated planning...

"2. Those activities which draw strength away from the enemy and add to GVN's strength and image of concern for all its citizens...

"3. Those psychological activities that support the war effort...

"4. Those activities that persuade the people that RVNAF is wholly on the side of the people and acting in their interests...

down through:

"16. Those activities which develop the leadership and organization of non-governmental institutions, particularly youth groups..." 27/ .

It was scarcely a list from which one could assemble a coherent program. Moreover, the above list of 16 "highest priority" tasks, was followed by a group of ten "high priority" tasks -- including strengthening provincial governments, autonomous municipal governments, better budgetary procedures, better refugee programs, minority programs, and so on. These, in turn, were followed by a nine-point list of "high priority programs." Into at least one of the 35 highest, high, or just plain priority activities, one could fit every program and project then being pursued in Vietnam. Furthermore, the proposal seemed to confuse inputs and outputs, placing in the same category "wishes" like "minimizing the adverse impact of and exploiting the opportunities provided by the American presence" (which was only "high priority") with "programs" like "creating a sound base for agricultural development."

The Priorities Task Force recommendations were used, unlike those of PROVN. In the FY 67 Country Assistance Program (CAP), submitted by AID to Congress that fall, the Task Force Strategy statement was used as a foreword, with Ambassador Lodge's approval. Moreover, the concept of priorities outlined in the final paper was applied to the AID program in Vietnam, with each activity being placed in one of the categories of priority. This did not result, however, in the original objective of reducing the size of the program and focusing it: instead, the AID program more than doubled in 1967, and a year later people were still complaining about the lack of clear-cut priorities. (As a matter of fact, when Deputy Ambassador Eugene Locke returned to Washington in September of 1967 with a "Blueprint for Vietnam," he was told that it lacked any sense of priorities, and was too much of a "shopping list.")

The "Roles and Missions" Study Group -- One of the Priority Task Force recommendations was that the Mission should establish another group to examine the question of the proper role of each military and paramilitary and police and civilian force in the country. This group was set up, under the chairmanship of Colonel George Jacobson in July of 1966, and submitted its final

report to the Mission Council on August 24. The group was once again interagency, and it produced a paper of considerable value -- indeed, a paper which could well have served as a basic policy document for the Mission and Washington.

The Study Group made 81 recommendations, of which 66 were acceptable to all agencies of the Mission. But even these 66 were not immediately adopted as basic doctrine. Because of inertia and weariness, rather than deliberate sabotage, the recommendations were never treated as basic policy, and simply were carried out or not depending on the drive and desire of the individual officials associated with each individual recommendation.

The report began, as almost all Vietnam studies seem to, with a definition:

> "Revolutionary Development consists of those military and civil efforts designed to liberate the population of South Vietnam from communist coercion; to restore public security; to initiate economic and political development; to extend effective GVN authority throughout SVN; and to win the willing support of the people to these ends." 28/

From there it developed the most logical and coherent approach to returning an area to GVN control and then gaining its support that had yet been produced by a group in either the Mission or Washington. The report was hailed by Porter, by Komer, and by various mid-level officials. Jacobson himself was to be named Mission Coordinator four months later, a position from which he could present his ideas directly to the Ambassadors.

While, as mentioned above, the recommendations were never issued as Mission policy in a group, many of them found their way into the main stream of the Mission through other means. Some of the more controversial ones -- for example: "that Division be removed from the RD Chain of Command" -- remained as potent ideas to be discussed within the government and with the Vietnamese, and to be acted on slowly.

Since the report foreshadowed several major developments in pacification, and since it still has today an intrinsic value of its own, it is worth quoting some of its major points:

> "High hopes are now pinned on the RD cadre, as the critical element of success in RD. Unfortunately, there is a real danger it is being regarded as a panacea with curative powers it does not, of and by itself, possess. The introduction of RD Cadre cannot alone achieve success in any of the tasks discussed above. Even cadre such as may be available in six months...cannot compensate for the current failings and limitations of other fundamental elements bearing directly on the RD process.
>
> "...RD demands for its success radical reform within the GVN including its Armed Forces. This reform must start

at the top...These radical changes in the GVN and RVNAF seem most unlikely to occur without a strong, focused and coordinated exertion of U.S. influence at high levels...

RECOMMEND: -- That FWMAF give increased emphasis to improving the performance and conduct of GVN military forces through combined operations...

-- That as the increase in FWMAF strength permits, these forces engage with RVNAF in clearing operations in support of RD with the primary objective of improving the associated GVN forces...

-- That in view of the deployment and capabilities of FWMAF in Vietnam and recognizing the necessity for increased security support to RD, the bulk of ARVN Divisional combat battalions be assigned to Sector commanders with only those Divisional battalions not so assigned to be under the control of Divisions...

-- That the Division be removed from the RD chain of command...

-- That Ranger units because of their frequently intolerable conduct toward the populace, be disbanded with individual Rangers reassigned * ...

-- That RF and PF become Provincial and District Constabulary...

-- That the Constabulary be placed under the Ministry of RD...

-- That National Police (Special Branch) assume primary responsibility for the destruction of the VC "infrastructure"...

-- That Police Field Force be integrated into the Constabulary...

-- That the Vietnamese Information Service (VIS) terminate its rural information cadre operations and assume a supporting role...for RD Cadre, technical cadre, and hamlet officials..." 29/

---

* This was a recommendation which MACV particularly opposed, arguing that it "would seriously reduce ARVN combat strength." Westmoreland added that he could not countenance the disbanding of units which had just received a Presidential Unit Citation.

And so on. What lay behind each recommendation was an effort to unify the various GVN agencies and ministries working on pacification, streamline their operations, and, at the same time, increase U.S. influence over those operations.

While many items the Study Group recommended have still not been carried out, there has been growing acceptance of the bulk of the recommendations. In its initial reaction to the paper, MACV's Chief of Staff wrote to Ambassador Lodge "that many actions have been taken or are being considered by MACV which support and complement the overall objectives envisioned by the report. There are, however, certain recommendations with which we do not agree." 30/

The most important reservation that MACV had, concerned the allocation of resources for the RD effort:

> "We are confronted with a determined, well-organized force operating in regimental and division strength. As long as this situation exists, it is imperative that the regular military forces retain first priority for the available manpower. Once the threat of the enemy's regular forces has diminished and the defeat of external aggression is accomplished, then other programs should have the first priority for recruiting...

In addition, MACV opposed the removal of Division from the RD chain of command; suggested a further task force to examine the Constabulary issue in detail; and opposed the suggestion that Special Branch Police -- which meant on the American side the CIA -- take over the anti-infrastructure effort. (On this latter point, the issue was finally resolved by an ingenious compromise structure under Westmoreland and Komer called ICEX -- Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation -- in July 1967.) Finally, Westmoreland rejected any internal changes in the MACV structure, as suggested by the Study Group. These had included:

> " -- the establishment at MACV Division advisory level of a Deputy Senior Advisor for RD, at Corps a Deputy Senior Advisor for RD, and at COMUSMACV level a Deputy COMUSMACV for the entire MACV advisory effort and for RD...
>
> " -- changes in the advisory rating system to emphasize the quality of the advice and the accuracy of reports, rather than the performance of the organization/Vietnamese they advise..." 31/

USAID reacted favorably to the study. In his memo to Lodge, the Acting USAID Director said that the report "presents an antidote to our having been too indulgent with the GVN in the past to our peril and theirs." Once again, however, as with MACV, USAID added some reservations -- and the reservations all fell in areas in which USAID would have the action responsibility if something was to be done. USAID feared that the report

recommended steps that would give the Ministry of RD too much strength, reflecting the worry of their Public Safety Division. The Constabulary recommendations, which had far-reaching implications, were given a particularly rough going-over. For example, to protect its own embryonic structure, the Police Field Force USAID made the following comment on the recommendation that the PFF be integrated as units into the Constabulary:

> "USAID concurs with the reservation that PFF remain a separate entity with its essential police powers." 32/

The CIA also thought the report was "constructive and helpful," but listed a few "disagreements." Once again, these pertained to those items in which the ICA had a strong vested interest. They opposed strenuously, for example, the suggestion that the MACV subsector advisor -- the only American at the district level in almost every district -- "be given primary responsibility for monitoring the activities of the cadre." Using the argument that everything possible be done to retain the civilian nature of the cadre, the CIA refused to let the MACV subsector advisors do what they were already doing in many cases.

The CIA and MACV both opposed the suggestion that a single Director of Intelligence be appointed to command civilian and military intelligence structures. The CIA said that this was "unwieldly and unworkable" because "this is not a theater of war." 33/

The Political Section of the Embassy also thought the study was "valuable," but added that "it appears to neglect a number of political considerations." Beyond that, they supported every specific suggestion, while noting how hard it would be to carry some of them out.

JUSPAO shared the fears of USAID that the report would concentrate more power in the hands of the Ministry of RD than it could usefully employ. JUSPAO thought that the Constabulary should be created, therefore, but placed under the Ministry of Defense. JUSPAO also found the removal of the Division from the RD chain of command "hardly feasible or realistic at this juncture" -- begging the issue of whether or not the United States should seek this as a valuable objective.

When the exercise was over, there were many in the Mission in Saigon who felt that the Study Group recommendations should have formed a blueprint for action throughout the Mission. They pointed out that almost all the recommendations were concurred in by every agency, and that these could be carried out immediately. The remaining 15 which were still not unanimously accepted could then be discussed and perhaps resolved.

In Washington, at least one high official, R.W. Komer, felt the same way, and urged the Mission to use the recommendations as policy. But somewhere between August 24, when the paper was submitted, and the end of 1966, the paper was relegated to the useful but distinctly secondary role of another "study group," as its name suggests. While everyone was

complimentary about the paper, no machinery was set up in Ambassador Porter's office to oversee the implementation of the recommendations. While the agencies said that they agreed with most of the recommendations, the all-important decisions as to how fast and how hard to push forward with each recommendation was left to whichever agency "had the action" on it. This in effect left some crucial decisions -- the variables in our effort -- outside the Deputy Ambassador's hands. He had no machinery for checking to see what the agencies were doing to carry out the suggestions they said they agreed with. He had virtually no staff to observe how the agencies were actually handling each problem, although it was obvious that success or failure on each item lay to a large extent in the method it was handled. Indeed, Porter had no good way to even find out whether the agencies really did accept the recommendations. He was reliant on a knowledgeable but small staff which could only meddle in the internal matters of other agencies to a limited degree.

It was these shortcomings in the new mandate to Porter that were becoming evident in the late summer of 1966, and pressure began to build in Washington for another reorganization.

The pressure and emphasis on pacification was also producing visible results in MACV. On August 8, 1966, the J-3 of MACV, Major General Tillson, briefed the Mission Council on how MACV intended to "give maximum support to RD." The briefing was general, simplistic, and shallow, but it was a clear indication that General Westmoreland and MACV were beginning to respond to the pressure from outside their command that they should give RD more support. As such, it marked a major step for MACV. Tillson said that "military operations must be used to assure the security necessary for RD to begin. All military operations are designed towards this goal..."

He then went on to trace the degree to which criticism of ARVN was justified, and examine the suggestion that ARVN be re-oriented to support RD -- something which was to become part of the Manila communique only two months later:

> "The ARVN has been at war continuously for a period of over ten years...The fact that ARVN today even exists as an organized fighting force is a tribute to its stamina and morale.
>
> "Since its inception, ARVN has been oriented, trained, and led towards the task of offensive operations...It is difficult, in a short period of time, to redirect the motivation and training of years, and to offset the long indoctrination that offensive action against the VC is the reason for the existence of the Army...
>
> "In the 1967 campaign plan, we propose to assign ARVN the primary mission of providing direct support to RD and US/FW Forces the primary mission of destroying VC/NVA main forces and base areas. Agreement has been reached between

General Westmoreland and General Vien that, in I, II and III Corps areas, ARVN will devote at least 50% of its effort directly in support of the RD program. In IV Corps, where there are no U.S. forces, it was agreed that ARVN might have to devote up to 75% of its effort to offensive operations...

"[General Vien has issued a directive that] flatly states that, while some progress has been made, desired results are still lacking on RD. It emphasizes that RD efforts must be on a par with efforts to destroy the enemy...These directives of General Vien resulted from his conversations with General Westmoreland..." 34/ [Emphasis Added]

This was by far the strongest verbal support that MACV had ever given pacification, and it actually contained the kernel which developed into the important passage in the Manila communique that committed the RVNAF to support of RD.

The change in mood in Saigon among the Americans was reflected by Ambassador Lodge in his Weekly NODIS to the President. On August 31, 1966, he began his cable with:

"The biggest recent American event affecting Vietnam was giving pacification the highest priority which it has ever had -- making it, in effect, the main purpose of all our activities...

"The above was brought about in several ways -- by word in General Westmoreland's "Concept of Military Operations in South Vietnam" of August 24, and by the deeds of the U.S. 1st and 25th Divisions and the III MAF. There has also been the new MACV proposal to revamp ARVN and turn it into a force better suited to pacification. Also at a special meeting of the Mission Council a stimulating paper was presented by the "Interagency Roles and Mission Study Group" which would take RF and PF, now a part of the Vietnamese Armed Forces, make them into a "constabulary" and call it that. Police Field Force would also be included in the Constabulary under this concept." 35/

A week earlier, Westmoreland had sent forward to CINCPAC and JCS a broad strategy statement for the coming year. He saw the time as "appropriate in light of the fact that we are on the threshold of a new phase in the conflict resulting from recent battlefield successes and from the continuing FWMAF buildup." After reviewing the course of battle since the introduction of U.S. troops, Westmoreland projected his strategy over the period until May 1, 1967, as "a general offensive with maximum practical support to area and population security in further support of RD." He then added:

"The growing strength of US/FW Forces will provide the shield and will permit ARVN to shift its weight of effort to an extent not heretofore feasible to direct support of RD. Also, I visualize that a significant number of US/FW maneuver battalions will be committed to tactical areas of responsibility (TAOR) missions. These missions encompass base security and at the same time support RD by spreading security radially from the bases to protect more of the population...

"The priority effort of ARVN forces will be in direct support of the RD program; in many instances the province chief will exercise operational control over these units... This fact notwithstanding, the ARVN division structure must be maintained..." 36/

This long message, with its "new look" emphasis on pacification, was sent apparently not for CINCPAC's routine consideration, as would be the normal case in the military chain of command, but for the edification of high-ranking civilian leaders in Washington. It ended with a comment added by Ambassador Lodge -- an unusual procedure in a military message:

"I wish to stress my agreement with the attention paid in this message to the importance of military support for RD. After all, the main purpose of defeating the enemy through offensive operations against the main forces and bases must be to provide the opportunity through RD to get at the heart of the matter, which is the population of SVN." 37/

The new emphasis on RD/pacification was thus coming from many sources in the late summer of 1966. Porter and Komer, pushing the civilians harder than they had ever been pushed before, had not only improved their performance, but also to create pressures inside MACV for greater emphasis on RD. Westmoreland, responding to the pressure, and finding the VC/NVA increasingly reluctant to give battle, was planning a two-pronged strategy for late 1966-early 1967: attack and destroy enemy base areas, and use more forces to protect and build up and expand the GVN population centers.

D. The Single Manager

By the late summer of 1966, as has been shown in detail in the preceding sections, the flaws in the structure of the U.S. Mission had been openly criticized in studies or reports by the U.S. Army Staff (in PROVN), by the Priorities Task Force and by the Roles and Missions Study Group in Saigon, by Robert Komer in repeated memoranda, and by various other visitors and observers. In addition to the written record, there were undoubtedly numerous private comments being made both in Saigon and Washington, some of which were reaching senior officials of the government.

The options before the USG were, in broad outline, fourfold. The Mission could either remain unchanged, or else it could reorganize along one of the three general lines which Komer had outlined in his August 7, 1966 memorandum:

Alternative One -- Put Porter in charge of all advisory and pacification activities, including the military;

Alternative Two -- Unify the civilian agencies into a single civilian chain of command, and strengthen the military internally -- but leave civilian and military separate;

Alternative Three -- Assign responsibility for pacification to Westmoreland and MACV, and put the civilians in the field under his command.

The Mission, as usual, argued for leaving the structure the way it was. Their arguments in this direction were unfortunate, because in Washington the mood was certainly in favor of some further changes, and by resisting all suggestions uniformly, the Mission was simply causing friction with Washington and reducing influence on the ultimate decisions.

The issue was joined more rapidly than anyone in Saigon had expected, because in mid-September, 1966, the Secretary of Defense weighed in on the issue in a direct way, producing a Draft Presidential Memorandum which advocated handing over responsibility for pacification to COMUSMACV.

McNamara's draft said:

"Now that a Viet Cong victory in South Vietnam seems to have been thwarted by our emergency actions taken over the past 18 months, renewed attention should be paid to the longer-run aspects of achieving an end to the war and building a viable nation in South Vietnam.

"Central to success, both in ending the war and in winning the peace, is the pacification program. Past progress in

pacification has been negligible. Many factors have contributed, but one major reason for this lack of progress had been the existence of split responsibility for pacification on the U.S. side. For the sake of efficiency -- in clarifying our concept, focusing our energies, and increasing the output we can generate on the part of the Vietnamese -- this split responsibility on the U.S. side must be eliminated.

"We have considered various alternative methods of consolidating the U.S. pacification effort. The best solution is to place those activities which are primarily part of the pacification program, and all persons engaged in such activities, under COMUSMACV...In essence, the reorganization would result in the establishment of a Deputy COMUSMACV for Pacification who would be in command of all pacification staffs in Saigon and of all pacification activities in the field.

"It is recognized that there are many important aspects of the pacification problem which are not covered in this recommendation, which should be reviewed subsequent to the appointment of the Deputy COMUSMACV for Pacification to determine whether they should be part of his task -- for example, the psychological warfare campaign, and the Chieu Hoi and refugee programs. Equally important, is the question of how to encourage a similar management realignment of the South Vietnamese side, since pacification is regarded as primarily a Vietnamese task. Also not covered by this recommendation are important related national programs...Finally, there is the question of whether any organizational modification in Washington is required by the recommended change in Vietnam.

"I recommend that you approve the reorganization described in this memorandum as a first essential step toward giving a new thrust to pacification. Under Secretary Ball, Administrator Gaud, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director Helms, Director Marks, and Mr. Komer concur in this recommendation." 38/

This memorandum was apparently never sent to the President, but it was distributed, with a request for comments and concurrence, to Ball (Rusk being out of the country), Gaud, the JCS, Helms, Marks, and Komer. Only Komer and the JCS concurred, with the others producing alternate suggestions. The entire question was handled as an "EYES ONLY" matter.

The positions that were taken were:

State opposed the recommendation. In informal discussions with Komer, Alexis Johnson cited the failure of Hop Tac (which seems irrelevant), the

"optics" of militarizing the effort, and the need to check with Lodge as reasons against actions. 39/

AID agreed that the present program had its faults, but resisted the idea of a MACV takeover. Instead, they proposed a complex system of committees and deputies for RD, who would report to a Deputy Ambassador for Pacification. 40/

The JCS found that the proposal "provides an excellent rationale for an approach to the problem of appropriately integrating the civil and military effort in the important field of pacification" and concurred in the idea of a Deputy COMUSMACV for RD. 41/

CIA and USIA both opposed the reorganization, although their written comments are not in the files. 42/

Komer weighed in with a lengthy rationale supporting the idea. Although he may not have known it at the time, he was talking about the organizational structure he was going to fit into later. After agreeing that the need to get pacification moving was great, and that "the military are much better set up to manage a huge pacification effort," he said that 60-70% of "real job of pacification is providing local security. This can only be done by the military..." Komer then raised some additional points:

1. The Ambassador should remain in overall charge.

2. MACV should not assume responsibility for everything, only the high payoff war-related activities.

3. Logistic support should remain a multi-agency responsibility. 43/

As the discussions on the subject continued, Deputy Ambassador Porter arrived in the United States for a combined business-personal trip. When he found out what was being considered, he immediately made strong representations to McNamara, Komer, and Rusk. He also sent a personal cable back to Lodge, alerting him for the first time to what was afoot in Washington:

> "Principal topic under discussion here is DOD proposal to bring both U.S. military and U.S. civilian resources needed to advance RD program under direction of Deputy COMUSMACV. This plan will be discussed with you during McNamara visit. It would detach all civilian field operations from direct control of Saigon civilian agencies and would place them under Deputy COMUSMACV for RD. In addition to controlling civilian field resources, latter would also manage U.S. military resources with view to increasing their effectiveness in furthering RD programs. Deputy COMUSMACV would be responsible to Ambassador or Deputy Ambassador through COMUSMACV. This at least is my understanding of proposal which is being strongly pushed here.

"I have taken position that this proposal and certain counter proposals put forward by civilian agencies here require careful field study. In its existing form, as I understand it, it does not take into account the fact that militarization of our approach to this important civilian program runs counter to our aim of de-militarizing GVN through constitutional electoral process...

"I have been stressing here that our military are already heavily loaded with responsibility for achieving military measures required to further civilian RD programs, such as evoking adequate cooperation from RVN...I have emphasized need for MACV to grapple with problem of VC guerrilla activity during night, as distinct from main force activity during daytime which we now know can be dealt with. These areas would appear to offer great possibilities for application of military talent and I repeat that in my view question of burdening MACV further with complex programs (cadre, police, etc.) requires careful field study which I would have done promptly, if you agree, by group similar to that which carried out 'Roles and Missions' study." 44/

This was the background as Secretary McNamara, Under Secretary Katzenbach, General Wheeler, and Mr. Komer went to Saigon in October. The issue had been deferred, and when the visitors returned, they would make recommendations to the President. Katzenbach, making his first trip as Under Secretary, was requested to look at the problem with a new eye and no prior prejudices.

When they came back from Saigon, Katzenbach and McNamara both sent the President an important memorandum. Katzenbach argued for a strengthening of Ambassador Porter's role, and a deferral of the question of turning the RD effort over to MACV. McNamara concurred, but with a different emphasis. The memorandums were dated October 14 and 15, 1966, less than two weeks before the Manila conference, and the recommendations were accepted by the President. Katzenbach's memorandum was, for a first effort after a short VIP trip, an unusually interesting one. Excerpts:

"...I believe decisive, effective RD depends on a clear and precise common understanding of the security as we all recognize to be the foundation of success in the 'other war.'

"To illustrate the divergency of meanings, let me report briefly on a conversation I had with a small group of reporters in Saigon. It quickly degenerated into a debate, not between the reporters and me, but between Ward Just of the Washington Post and Charles Mohr of the New York Times.

"Just argued heatedly that RD could not begin to be effective unless security were first guaranteed both to the peasants

and to RD workers. 'An AID man cannot do his job,' he said, 'while being shot at by the VC.'

"Mohr responded just as heatedly, that security could not come first -- because security from guerrillas is meaningless and impossible until the peasant population is motivated to support the GVN and deprive the guerrillas of havens, secrecy, and resources.

"Obviously, the easy answer to this circular chicken-egg debate is to say that both are necessary -- military protection and public motivation against the VC. And yet even that answer is incomplete for it defines security only in the American frame of reference...

"I know of no one who believes we have begun effectively to achieve the goal of gaining the population's active support, despite a series of pacification programs and despite even the budding early efforts of Ambassador Porter's new program.

"The Military Aspect. Secretary McNamara, Mr. Komer, Ambassadors Johnson, Lodge, and Porter, Mr. Gaud, I, and all others who have approached the problem are perfectly agreed that the military aspect of RD has been spindly and weak." 45/

* * * * * * *

"This probably is the result of the entirely understandable preoccupation by MACV in recent months with the main force military emergency. However justifiable this has been, a major effect has nonetheless been our failure effectively to press RVNAF to even start meeting their crucial RD responsibilities.

"(I know of no one who believes that these should be met principally by American forces -- unless we should wish the whole RD effort to collapse once we leave.)

"The Civil Aspect. Similarly, the work of civilian agencies has fallen short -- largely, but not only because of the failure of RVNAF to provide a military screen behind which to work...

"Rather than engage in a civil-military debate, I think we should devote our efforts toward trying to devise an administrative structure that capitalizes on the assets each agency can offer to RD.

"What should be the elements of an ideal organization?

"1. It should have maximum leverage on RVNAF to engage in clear and hold operations in direct support of RDM efforts.

"2. It should have a single American "negative," anti-VC channel -- that is a single commander for all action against communist guerrilla forces. This commander would calibrate and choose among the various force alternatives -- depending on whether he believed the need to be military, para-military, or police.

"This command would include complete responsibility for all anti-VC intelligence -- that is, concerning all VC suspects either in the infrastructure or in guerrilla units.

"3. It should have a single, unified channel for all 'positive' pro-people aspects of RD, irrespective of the present lines of command within civilian agencies, allowing a single commander to calibrate and assign priorities to relevant positive programs on behalf of the peasantry.

"This, too, would include the immediate expansion of and control over all 'pro-people' intelligence -- that is, detailed district-by-district and province-by-province reporting on the particular gains most wanted by the populace (land reform, for example, in one province; or schools in another; or agricultural assistance in another).

"4. Sensitivity to political inputs and wise political guidance of the whole process are needed to ensure that military programs support rather than negate efforts to win public support and participation. Failure to assure this -- which characterized French efforts in Indochina and Algeria, in contrast to civil-led, successful, British efforts in Malaya and the Filipino campaign against the Huks -- means that the very process of gaining security would be weakened and prolonged, at increased cost in Vietnamese and American lives.

"Thus, overall civilian command of the RD program is needed for fundamental practical reasons, by no means for considerations of international image alone (though on the latter point, it must be observed that as soon as we put 'the other war' under obvious military control, it stops being the other war). In particular, it is important not to block or reverse -- by the way we organize our efforts -- the current genuinely hopeful Vietnamese trend toward increased civilian influence and participation in government.

"In short, it is not the precise form of organization or the precise choice of flow chart that is important. What is important is:

"1. An immediate and effective military screen for RD efforts; and

"2. Authoritative and compelling administration of the efforts of civilian agencies.

"I believe we can institute effective administration of the RD program -- which Ambassador Lodge has aptly described as the heart of the matter -- achieving all of these ideals:

"1. Maintain the effect and the appearance of civilian control by immediately assigning overall supervision of all RD activities to Ambassador Porter (and assigning a second deputy to Ambassador Lodge to absorb the substantial other responsibilities now met by Ambassador Porter).

"2. That the several civilian lines of command within agencies be consolidated into one. Thus, USAID, JUSPAO, OSA, and the Embassy personnel assigned to RD all would continue under the nominal administrative control of their respective agencies but full, unified operational control would rest solely with Ambassador Porter.

"3. That Ambassador Porter's authority be made clear and full to each constituent agency of the RD team, including:

-- relocation of personnel;

-- the establishment of priorities irrespective of agency priorities;

-- and the apportionment of the funds allocated by each agency to Viet-Nam, bounded only by statutory limitations.

"4. That MACV immediately give highest-level command focus and consolidation to its RD concerns and staff, now that it is no longer so completely distracted from RD by the compelling requirements of main force combat. This would be organized around the thesis that the central need is the most effective persuasive power or leverage on RVNAF. This thesis is strengthened substantially by:

-- The firm intent, expressed to us in Saigon last week, of President Thieu and Prime Minister Ky to shift ARVN infantry to revolutionary development work starting in January;

-- The enhanced powers they intend to give to General Thang, already an able chief of RD for GVN.

"5. That the MACV effort embrace at least advisory control over all levels of force -- starting with ARVN but also including RF, PF, CIDG, and the para-military operations of the RD cadre, PFF, and PRV.

"These steps would greatly strengthen both the military and civil lines of command. They would contribute significantly to the success of RD. But not even these changes would be decisive without a strong link between them.

"The civil side requires the capacity to influence military movement which no organizational chart can provide. The MACV side requires the political and substantive expertise which a military organization does not -- and is not expected to -- possess.

"Thus the fundamental recommendation I would make is:

"6. To appoint, as principal deputy and executive officer to Ambassador Porter, a general of the highest possible ability and stature -- of two, three or even four-star rank. To do so would win the following advantages:

"a. Compelling indication of the seriousness with which the Administration regards RD.

"b. The rank, and stature to insure optimum RD performance from MACV.

"c. The rank and stature to afford maximum impact on GVN military leaders and capacity to persuade them properly to prod RVNAF when necessary.

"d. Demonstrated command administrative capacities with which to assist Ambassador Porter, while bridging the inevitable institutional difficulties that might well otherwise develop from one arm of MACV's taking orders from a civilian.

"e. A solution to the military control image problem, by which the advantages of close military support would be veiled by civilian control.

"f. The capacity and position to formulate an effective qualitative plan encompassing both military and civil realities. Previous plans have focused on numbers of provinces, volume of RD cadre trained, and so on. They have put an unrealistic premium on quantitative, "statistical" success. Meaningful criteria, however, must be qualitative. I would envision such a qualitative plan intended to cover at least the next 12 months.

"There would be an additional prospective advantage as well. If it should later be found that dual lines of authority -- even given this strong link -- are not successful, then we could more readily fall back to a unitary, military command structure -- with the new RD general taking charge.

"He would have the benefit, in that situation, of having been under civilian control and his relationship to RD would already be evident, making the change to military control less abrupt and less susceptible to criticism." 46/

Secretary McNamara's memorandum -- sent the day before Katzenbach's -- was of greater importance, and stands out as one of the most far-reaching and thoughtful documents in the files. While this study concentrates on pacification, it is necessary to view McNamara's remarks about pacification in this memorandum within the context of the entire paper.

He said that the military situation had gone "somewhat better" than he had anticipated a year earlier, and that "we have by and large blunted the communist military initiative." But he found little cause for hope that the overall situation would turn dramatically in our favor within the next two years. "I see no reasonable way to bring the war to an end soon," he said, and described the enemy strategy as one of "keeping us busy and waiting us out (a strategy of attriting our national will)."

"Pacification is a basic disappointment. We have good grounds to be pleased by the recent elections, by Ky's 16 months in power, and by the faint signs of development of national political institutions and of a legitimate civil government. But none of this has translated itself into political achievements at Province level or below. Pacification has, if anything, gone backward..."

Thus, the Secretary found us "no better, and if anything worse off -- from the point of view of the important war (for the complicity of the people)."

He did not think at that time that major increases in U.S. force levels or bombing programs would make a big difference in the short run. Rather, he suggested a series of actions designed to emphasize to Hanoi that we were setting definite limits on the cost in men and money of the war, while settling down for the long haul -- "a posture that makes trying to 'wait us out' less attractive." His strategy was "five-pronged."

First, he suggested that we stabilize U.S. force levels in Vietnam, "barring a dramatic change in the war." The limit he proposed was the 470,000 total then under consideration. (CINCPAC had requested 570,000 by end 1967). This limit would "put us in a position where negotiations would be more likely to be productive, but if they were not we could pursue the all-important pacification task with proper attention and resources and without the spectre of apparently endless escalation of U.S. deployments."

Second, he recommended a barrier near the DMZ and "across the trails of Laos."

Third, he suggested that we "stabilize the Rolling Thunder program against the North." He thus recommended against the increase in the level

of bombing and the broader target systems that the JCS was then requesting. Again, his reason was to "remove the prospect of ever-escalating bombing as a factor complicating our political posture and distracting from the main job of pacification in South Vietnam."

Fourth, he said, we should "pursue a vigorous pacification program."

"The large-unit operations war, which we know best how to fight and where we have had our successes, is largely irrelevant to pacification as long as we do not lose it. By and large, the people in rural areas believe that the GVN when it comes will not stay but that the VC will; that cooperation with the GVN will be punished by the VC; that the GVN is really indifferent to the people's welfare; that the low-level GVN are tools of the local rich; and that the GVN is ridden with corruption.

"Success in pacification depends on the interrelated functions of providing physical security, destroying the VC apparatus, motivating the people to cooperate, and establishing responsive local government. An obviously necessary but not sufficient requirement for success of the RD cadre and police is vigorously conducted and adequately prolonged clearing operations by military troops who will 'stay' in the area, who behave themselves decently and who show respect for the people.

"This elemental requirement of pacification has been missing. In almost no contested area designated for pacification in recent years have ARVN forces actually 'cleared and stayed' to a point where cadre teams, if available, could have stayed overnight in hamlets and survived, let alone accomplish their mission...

"Now that the threat of a communist main-force military victory has been thwarted by our emergency efforts, we must allocate far more attention and a portion of the regular military forces (at least half of ARVN and perhaps a portion of the U.S. forces) to the task of providing an active and permanent security system behind which the RD teams and police can operate and behind which the political struggle with the VC infrastructure can take place.

"The U.S. cannot do this pacification security job for the Vietnamese. All we can do is 'massage the heart.' For one reason, it is known that we do not intend to stay; if our efforts worked at all, it would merely postpone the eventual confrontation of the VC and GVN infrastructures. The GVN must do the job, and I am convinced that drastic reform is needed if the GVN is going to be able to do it.

"The first essential reform is in the attitude of GVN officials. They are generally apathetic, and there is corruption high and low. Often appointments, promotions, and draft deferments must be bought; and kickbacks on salaries are common. Cadre at the bottom can be no better than the system above them.

"The second needed reform is in the attitude and conduct of the ARVN. The image of the government cannot improve unless and until the ARVN improves markedly. They do not understand the importance (or respectability) of pacification nor the importance to pacification of proper, disciplined conduct. Promotions, assignments and awards are often not made on merit, but rather on the basis of having a diploma, friends, or relatives, or because of bribery. The ARVN is weak in dedication, direction and discipline.

"Not enough ARVN are devoted to area and population security, and when the ARVN does attempt to support pacification, their actions do not last long enough; their tactics are bad despite U.S. prodding (no aggressive small-unit saturation patrolling, hamlet searches, quick-reaction contact, or offensive night ambushes); they do not make good use of intelligence; and their leadership and discipline are bad.

"Furthermore, it is my conviction that a part of the problem undoubtedly lies in bad management on the American as well as the GVN side. Here split responsibility -- or 'no responsibility' -- has resulted in too little hard pressure on the GVN to do its job and no really solid or realistic planning with respect to the whole effort. We must deal with this management problem now and deal with it effectively.

"One solution would be to consolidate all U.S. activities which are primarily part of the civilian pacification program and all persons engaged in such activities, providing a clear assignment of responsibility and a unified command under a civilian relieved of all other duties. (If this task is assigned to Ambassador Porter, another individual must be sent immediately to Saigon to serve as Ambassador Lodge's deputy.) Under this approach, there would be a carefully delineated division of responsibility between the civilian-in-charge and an element of COMUSMACV under a senior officer, who would give the subject of planning for and providing hamlet security the highest priority in attention and resources. Success will depend on the men selected for the jobs on both sides (they must be among the highest rank and most competent administrators in the U.S. Government), on complete cooperation among the U.S.

elements, and on the extent to which the South Vietnamese can be shocked out of their present pattern of behavior. The first work of this reorganized U.S. pacification organization should be to produce within 60 days a realistic and detailed plan for the coming year.

"From the political and public-relations viewpoint, this solution is preferable -- if it works. But we cannot tolerate continued failure. If it fails after a fair trial, the only alternative in my view is to place the entire pacification program -- civilian and military -- under General Westmoreland. This alternative would result in the establishment of a Deputy COMUSMACV for Pacification who would be in command of all pacification staffs in Saigon and of all pacification staffs and activities in the field; one person in each corps, province and district would be responsible for the U.S. effort."

"(It should be noted that progress in pacification, more than anything else, will persuade the enemy to negotiate or withdraw.)"

Fifth, the Secretary recommended a renewed effort to get negotiations started, by taking steps "to increase our credibility" with Hanoi, by considering a shift in the pattern of our bombing program considering the possibility of cessation of bombing, by trying to "split the VC off from Hanoi," and by "developing a realistic plan providing a role for the VC in negotiations, postwar life, and government of the nation."

His summation was somber. While repeating his prediction that the next two years would not see a satisfactory conclusion by either large-unit action or negotiations, McNamara advocated pursuing both routes although "we should recognize that success from them is a mere possibility, not a probability."

"The solution lies in girding, openly, for a longer war and in taking actions immediately which will in 12 to 18 months give clear evidence that the continuing costs and risks to the American people are acceptably limited, that the formula for success has been found, and that the end of the war is merely a matter of time. All of my recommendations will contribute to this strategy, but the one most difficult to implement is perhaps the most important one -- enlivening the pacification program. The odds are less than even for this task, if only because we have failed so consistently since 1961 to make a dent in the problem. But, because the 1967 trend of pacification will, I believe, be the main talisman of ultimate U.S. success or failure in Vietnam, extraordinary imagination and effort should go into changing the stripes of that problem.

The memorandum closed with a comment on the thoughts of Thieu and Ky:

> "They told me that they do not expect the enemy to negotiate or to modify his program in less than two years. Rather, they expect the enemy to continue to expand and to increase his activity. They expressed agreement with us that the key to success is pacification and that so far pacification has failed. They agree that we need clarification of GVN and U.S. roles and that the bulk of the ARVN should be shifted to pacification. Ky will, between January and July 1967, shift all ARVN infantry divisions to that role. And he is giving Thang, a good Revolutionary Development director, added powers. Thieu and Ky see this as part of a two-year (1967-1968) schedule, in which offensive operations against enemy main force units are continued, carried on primarily by the U.S. and other Free World forces. At the end of the two-year period, they believe the enemy may be willing to negotiate or to retreat from his current course of action." 47/

McNamara's memorandum marked a strong new emphasis on pacification by him, and the ripples that this new emphasis set off were inevitably to spread throughout the USG, changing emphasis and official rhetoric up and down the line. His first reactions were official: comments on his memorandum from George Carver, Helms' Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs at the CIA; and from the JCS. Carver agreed with the evaluation of the situation, but objected to some of the recommended actions, particularly the "press for negotiations" items which he felt would be "counter-productive." Carver made the provocative statement that he considered the prognosis "too gloomy." If the odds for enlivening the pacification program are indeed "less than even, present U.S. objectives in Vietnam are not likely to be achieved."

In his memorandum, Carver took issue with McNamara on pacification. Carver felt that "despite the errors and administrative weaknesses of present programs, in the concept of RD we <u>have</u> found the right formula, a catalyst that is potentially capable of inspiring the Vietnamese into effective action...Serious and systematic effort in this field is really a post-Honolulu Conference development and it would be unrealistic to expect dramatic, readily quantifiable progress in the short span of eight months."

Carver supported the new stress on pacification, adding that he would support "wholeheartedly" a "real reorganizational change under which the civilian director would have a joint staff of sufficient scope to enable him to plan, control, and direct the U.S. effort and have operational control over all -- not just civilian -- elements engaged in RD..." He opposed a "carefully delineated division between the civilian in charge and an element of COMUSMACV under a senior officer."

"A civilian pacification structure cannot be given a 'fair trial' unless the civilian director has the necessary authority," Carver said. "Also, the

trial will not be fair if major quantifiable results are anticipated in a matter of months."

Carver's vision of pacification rested to a large degree on the idea of gaining the active support of the population. He seemed opposed to the use of troops to merely protect terrain and the people who lived on it, saying, "If an attempt is made to impose pacification on an unengaged populace by GVN or U.S. military forces, that attempt will fail."

He concluded, as he had begun:

> "We agree with Secretary McNamara's prognosis that there is little hope for a satisfactory conclusion of the war within the next two years. We do not agree that "the odds are less than even" for enlivening the pacification program. If this were true, the U.S. would be foolish to continue the struggle in Vietnam and should seek to disengage as fast as possible. We think that if we establish adequate management and control on the U.S. side and ensure that the Vietnamese follow through on redirecting their military resources as promised, there are at least fair prospects for substantial progress in pacification over the next two years." 48/

The JCS review of McNamara's memorandum was far more severe. While agreeing that "There is no reason to expect that the war can be brought soon to a successful conclusion," the Chiefs made a strong case, as usual, for increased bombing, no predetermined force ceilings, and stated several times in different ways that the war was going very well indeed -- although this same point had been made by McNamara. The Chiefs also disagreed strongly with the move for negotiations which McNamara had suggested. Any bombing pause, they said, would be regarded by Hanoi, by the GVN, and by our Allies, as "renewed evidence of lack of U.S. determination to press the war to a successful conclusion."

On pacification, the JCS "adhered to their conclusion" that "to achieve optimum effectiveness, the pacification program should be transferred to COMUSMACV. However, if for political reasons a civilian type organization should be considered mandatory by the President, they would interpose no objection.

> "Nevertheless, they are not sanguine that an effective civilian-type organization can be erected, if at all, except at the expense of costly delays. As to the use of a substantial fraction of ARVN for pacification purposes, the JCS concur. However, they desire to flag that adoption of this concept will undoubtedly elicit charges of a U.S. takeover of combat operations at increased cost in American casualties." 49/

The JCS requested that their views be brought to the attention of the President.

On the record, Secretary McNamara and Under Secretary Katzenbach had been quite frank in telling the American public that they had found pacification lagging during their October trip to Vietnam. Katzenbach said he was "concerned" and, after emerging from the meeting with the President, told the White House press corps that "We have to do a good deal more to get the 'other war' moving and I think we can." 50/ Even Komer, who remained more optimistic than McNamara and Katzenbach, was quoted as "acknowledging" that pacification was lagging.

While "military progress has exceeded our expectations," the Defense Secretary said, progress in pacification has "been very slow indeed." His trip also raised fears, for the first time, in Saigon that the military would take over the pacification effort. Thus, at almost the very moment that the President was hearing Katzenbach's recommendation that the civilians be reorganized and given a last chance (see previous action), Ward Just was writing from Saigon:

> "McNamara left behind the impression that his visit to South Vietnam last week marked the beginning of the end of civilian supremacy in the American effort...
>
> "Sources here were saying today that McNamara, a stickler for detail, was unimpressed with civilian descriptions of progress, or lack of it, in the pacification effort. The American who bears most of the authority for that, Deputy Ambassador William C. Porter, was in the U.S. during the McNamara visit.
>
> "There has always been, as one official here put it, a 'military component' to pacification. But it is understood now that that component will be increased and the military will more and more take control of pacification -- the task called nation-building.
>
> "...The other likely outcome of McNamara's four days in Vietnam is that the role of ARVN will change.
>
> "Informed sources said that McNamara heard no complaints whatsoever from American military sources regarding the performance of the ARVN, but the fact is that he did. It has been an open secret in Saigon that the role of the ARVN would change next year. Their work would be in pacification, not in striking at main force units...
>
> "There is now increased certainty that the war effort despite public homage to the 'other war' and the 'hearts and minds of the people' is more thoroughly military than ever -- and more thoroughly American.
>
> "In the end, the military is thought to have carried the day not by force or logic or force of wisdom, although their

position here can be argued plausibly with both logic and wisdom, but by sheer weight of what one official called the juggernaut...

"'Westmoreland says do this, do that, and something happens,' one informed observer said. 'When Lodge says do this, do that, sometimes something happens, and sometimes it doesn't happen.'

"The men here who wanted to see one ideology beaten by a better one, to see the Vietnamese character (not to mention the countryside) preserved and not submerged by the war, who viewed the struggle as an exercise in counterinsurgency, have now certainly lost...

"It remains to be seen whether the problems of Vietnam lend themselves to military solutions and whether changing conditions in this war are better handled by colonels than diplomats." 51/

Just's article was wrong, of course, since the decision to give MACV responsibility for pacification had not been made. Indeed, within a few days this fact had also leaked to the press, and stories in the New York Times, datelined Saigon, spoke of the "abortive effort" by MACV to take over the effort. But the importance of the stories was not in their accuracy or inaccuracy, but in the fact that they indicated the emotions that had been raised by the subject during and after the McNamara-Katzenbach-Komer visit. In truth, no one in Saigon, not even Lodge and Westmoreland, knew at this time what the final decision was to be. But the subject was up for discussion, and the pressure from Washington had been measurably increased.

With the McNamara and Katzenbach memoranda in hand, the President apparently indicated tentative agreements to give the civilians a short trial period to get pacification moving. Then he left for his Asian tour, which was to climax with the Seven-Nation Conference at Manila. He left behind him instructions to prepare a message to Lodge and Porter and Westmoreland, instructing them in his decision. Since the message was drafted and sent on to the President in Wellington on October 18, before Manila, but not sent on to Lodge and Porter in Saigon until November 4, after Manila, there apparently remained some uncertainty as to his decision, which was not clarified until most of the principals were united briefly in Manila. But this is of marginal importance. The fact was that the President had approved the idea of giving the civilians a final chance.

The Cable Exchange: November, 1966

By October 18, McNamara, Katzenbach, and Komer had an agreed-upon telegram for the President to send Lodge. It was forwarded to Wellington, where the President had begun his Asian tour:

"State/Defense and Komer recommend your concurrence in the general plan recommended by both Secretary McNamara and

Under Secretary Katzenbach regarding reorganization on the American side of the administration of the Revolutionary Development (RD) program in Viet-Nam. We therefore recommend that you approve our sending the following State-Defense message to Ambassador Lodge:

BEGIN TEXT

"Personal For Lodge. You have described the RD program as the heart of the matter in SVN. We agree. Also, you have reported and we agree that progress in the RD program so far has been slight and unsatisfactory. We all agree that progress must be made in this crucial area if the war is to be won in the South and if the North is to be persuaded to negotiate. It is clear to us that some organizational changes are required on the American side to get RD moving -- to bring harder pressure on the GVN to do its job and to get solid and realistic planning with respect to the whole effort.

"We had considered putting the entire program under COMUSMACV to achieve these ends; and this may ultimately prove to be the best solution. But recognizing certain objections to this approach, we are prepared to try a solution which leaves the civilian functions under civilian management. As we see it, the trial organization would involve the following changes:

"1. The several civilian lines of command within U.S. agencies would be consolidated into one. Thus, line responsibility for all personnel assigned to RD civilian functions would rest solely with one high-ranking civilian. (We presume this man would be Ambassador Porter. If so, he would have to be relieved of all other duties, and you would have to have another deputy assigned to absorb the substantial other responsibilities now met by Ambassador Porter.) The authority of this civilian would be made clear and full to each constituent agency of the civilian RD team, including relocation of personnel, the establishment of priorities irrespective of agency priorities, and the apportionment of the funds allocated for RD by each agency to Viet-Nam (bounded only by statutory limitations).

"2. To strengthen Porter administratively, it might be well to assign him a competent Principal Deputy and Executive Officer -- a military officer of two or three-star rank. If this officer is desired, General Westmoreland can supply him or, if he requests, the officer can be provided from here. This officer would not be to command U.S. military forces or operations or to perform MACV's functions of advising and prodding the ARVN, but would be to provide administrative strength on the civilian side and to serve as a bridge to MACV, ensuring efficient interface between the civilian and military structures.

"3. We understand General Westmoreland is already considering a MACV Special Assistant for Pacification or a Deputy for Pacification. We presume that the appointment of such a Special Assistant or Deputy could be timed to coincide with the changes on the civilian side, making possible the highest-level command focus and consolidation to MACV's RD concerns and staff.

"4. Careful definition and delineation of responsibilities of the U.S. civilian and U.S. military sides would be necessary in the whole RD establishment in South Viet-Nam to ensure that nothing falls between the stools and that the two efforts fully mesh.

"We are most anxious, as we know you are, to make progress in RD. So this new organizational arrangement would be on trial for 90-120 days, at the end of which we would take stock of progress and reconsider whether to assign all responsibility for RD to COMUSMACV." 52/

As mentioned above, this cable was not repeated to Saigon until after the Manila Conference. Presumably, in the intervening period, the President had had a chance to talk directly to Lodge and Westmoreland about the matter, since they were both at Manila (Porter was not). In addition, Komer had gone from Manila back to Saigon for a week's stay, and had given Porter a clear warning that the reorganization was impending. When he left, Komer left behind two members of his staff to assist Porter with the planning for the reorganization, although Porter and Lodge, for some reason not clear today, still seemed doubtful that the reorganization Washington was pressing on them was really necessary, and really desired by the President.

The cable -- unchanged from the text cited above -- arrived in Vietnam on November 4, 1966. 53/ It was slugged "Literally Eyes Only for Ambassador from Secretary, SecDef, and Komer," and because Lodge decided to interpret that slug line literally, the entire process was delayed one week -- a sorry spectacle and wholly unnecessary on all counts. When Lodge answered the cable by requesting permission to discuss it with his assistants, there was an understandable suspicion in Washington that he was simply doing so to delay action a little while longer. But on the other hand, the cable had received the highest slug normally available to State Department messages -- "Literally Eyes Only" -- and Lodge could say truthfully that he was just following instruction.

In any event, Lodge sent his answer to Washington November 6:

"I agree that progress has been 'slight and unsatisfactory' and, undoubtedly some organizational changes can be helpful. However, before commenting on that I would like to set out some basic considerations.

"Crux of the problem is not defective organization. It is security. Civilian reorganization can affect progress only

indirectly, because security will remain outside civilian purview...

"To meet this need we must make more U.S. troops available to help out in pacification operations as we move to concentrate ARVN effort in this work. U.S. forces would be the catalyst; would lead by example; and would work with the Vietnamese on the 'buddy' system. They would be the 10 percent of the total force of men under arms (90 percent of whom would be Vietnamese) which would get the whole thing moving faster.

"This has been done on a small scale already by elements of the U.S. Marines, 1st and 25th U.S. Infantry Divisions, and the Koreans. We think it can be made to work and the gains under such a program, while not flashy, would hopefully be solid. Everything depends on whether we can change ARVN habits. Experiments already made indicate that U.S. casualties would be few. While it would take time, it would be clear to everyone at home that time was working for us and it might create a 'smell of victory.' It would eventually get at Viet Cong recruiting -- surely an achievement which would fundamentally affect the course of the war.

"I wonder whether the above result could not be achieved if the phrase 'offensive operations' were to be redefined so that instead of defining it as meaning 'seek out and destroy,' which I understand is now the case, it would be defined as 'split up the Viet Cong and keep him off balance.'

"This new definition of the phrase 'offensive operations' would mean fewer men for the purely 'military war, fewer U.S. casualties and more pacification.

"It would also hasten the revamping of the ARVN, which Ky says is now due to have been completed by normal Vietnamese bureaucratic methods by July 1967 (which seems optimistic to me). What I propose in this telegram would in effect revamp the ARVN by 'on-the-job-training.' It is the only way that I can think of drastically to accelerate the present pace.

* * * * *

"The question of transferring Revolutionary Development civilian functions to COMUSMACV raises questions and I understand you recognize certain objections. I doubt whether it would solve any existing problems, and it would certainly create many new ones. I agree with your second paragraph in which you say civilian functions should be left under civilian management.

"I agree that civilian lines of command within U.S. agencies dealing with Revolutionary Development should be consolidated under Ambassador Porter. He should take unto himself the direct operation of the five categories of manpower now in the field. I refer to USAID public safety, USAID province reps; JUSPAO; CIA and the civil functions performed by the military advisers. They would all stay exactly where they are as far as rationing, housing and administration is concerned. Porter would have the operational authority and responsibility.

"I am not clear what another Deputy Ambassador would do and advise against such an unnecessary and unwieldy structure. Ambassador Porter does not now absorb 'substantial other responsibilities' which distract his attention from revolutionary development. Administrative matters involving the U.S. Mission as a whole are handled by the Mission Coordinator, and political affairs are handled by me with close support from the political counselor. Economic affairs, in which Porter as the man responsible for revolutionary development is intimately and necessarily involved, are well covered by AID and the Economic Counselor. Public affairs not connected with field operations associated with revolutionary development are well in hand and do not take Ambassador Porter's time.

"The only 'substantial other responsibility' which Porter carries outside of RD, is to take charge in my absence. I ~~see no~~ need, and would find it most inappropriate, for this to be changed.

"I think there is great merit in the idea of having a high-ranking military man involved in pacification work. He should be in charge of all the military aspects of pacification -- working with ARVN and selecting, expediting, and assigning the U.S. troops who would operate as suggested in para 3 above. He should be an officer with proper knowledge of and talent for the subject and I, of course, think of General Weyand. If the decision is made by all hands to put the military into pacification as suggested in para 3, the decision as to where to place such a general should not be too difficult.

"I agree that careful definition and delineation of responsibilities of the U.S. civilian and military sides is necessary. We intend that the two efforts fully mesh.

"Clearly there is very little that can be done economically, socially, psychologically, and politically for the 'hearts and minds' of men, if these men have knives sticking into their collective bellies. The knife must first be removed. It is

not the case -- as has so often been said -- of which came first, the hen or the egg...

* * * * *

"This is obviously not reflected in our present organization under which, nonetheless, much has been accomplished. When Mac Bundy told me in February, after the Vice President's visit, of the decision to relieve Porter of all of his duties as Deputy (except that of being Charge d'Affaires in case of my absence) so that he could take charge of the civilian aspects of pacification, I did not at first welcome the idea. I must, however, recognize that under Porter a real asset has been built.

"To sum up, therefore, the first priority is more U.S. troops to be allotted to pacification as set forth in paragraph 3; the second priority is better operation and tightening up of the present organization; thirdly, are organizational changes.

"Considering that your message was "EYES ONLY," I request authority to discuss it and my comments and plans with the heads of the different Mission agencies involved here. We are all anxious to make progress in RD, and the effort will involve all of us. It requires security and time. Whatever the trial period may be, I suggest we maintain a constant taking stock of progress and of problems. Lodge." 54/

Back came Washington's answer on November 12, giving Lodge permission to discuss the matter and show the cables to Porter, Westmoreland, and "once plans mature, inform members Mission Council." With the civilians in Washington already feeling that their trial period was underway, they sought to get the Mission moving faster to reorganize. The cables became a series of hints and threats and detailed guidance. The difficulty in communication was quite high. Thus, the November 12 cable, drafted by Ambassador Unger and cleared with McNamara, Helms, Gaud, Komer, Marks, Katzenbach, and Rusk, and slugged "for Ambassador from Secretary, SecDef, and Komer," laid out for Lodge and Porter a detailed description of how the new structure should look -- although everyone knew that the plans had already been drawn up and were sitting on Lodge and Porter's desks in Saigon -- and began with this warning-hint:

"Following steps need to be taken promptly if we are, in the time available, to give adequate test to organization which is intended to keep RD civilian functions under civilian management, an objective to which we know you attach considerable important." 55/

The cable went on to outline the organization, and discuss the question of the use of U.S. troops:

"...We understand General Westmoreland plans use of limited number U.S. forces in buddy system principle to guide and motivate ARVN in RD/P. However, we have serious doubts about any further involvement U.S. troops beyond that in straight-pacification operations. We fear this would tempt Vietnamese to leave this work more and more to us and we believe pacification, with its intimate contact with population, more appropriate for Vietnamese forces, who must after all as arm of GVN establish constructive relations with population. Hence we believe there should be no thought of U.S. taking substantial share of pacification. The urgent need is to begin effectively pressing ARVN." 56/

In Saigon, the Mission moved slowly. Three days later, with still no answer from Saigon, the State Department sent out the following very short and curt cable:

"Personal for Lodge and Porter from the Secretary

"Ref State 83699

"REFTEL was discussed today at highest levels, who wished to emphasize that this represents final and considered decision and who expressed hope that indicated measures could be put into effect just as rapidly as possible." 57/

This produced, at last, two long answers from Lodge and Porter, which laid out what the new structure was going to look like, and added some personal comments from Lodge:

"FOR THE SECRETARY, SECDEF AND KOMER

"NODIS

"1. This is in reply to your 83699 as amended by your 85196 concerning which General Westmoreland, Porter and I have had extensive consultation.

"2. We will, of course, carry out your instructions just as rapidly as possible, and our planning is already far advanced.

"3. It is very gratifying that you feel as we do on the urgent need to revamp the ARVN, on the importance of putting all civilians in the field under Porter and of having single civilian responsibility in province and corps -- measures which we have long advocated. Doubt whether we can change over night habits and organization of ARVN acquired during the last ten years. Unless our success against main force daytime activity is equalled by success against guerrillas during the night, swift improvement cannot be expected to result simply by reorganization on the U.S. civilian side. It is our ability to infuse

courage and confidence into all the Vietnamese under arms who are involved in pacification -- both military and police -- which is at stake.

"4. As regards your instruction for a military deputy for Porter, General Westmoreland proposes Major General Paul Smith, who is acceptable to Porter. Porter believes General Smith should be attached to civilian agency (State Department - Embassy Saigon) while on this duty, along lines precedents already established. He could wear civilian or military garb as circumstances require.

* * *

"6. General Westmoreland does not wish to have a separate deputy for Revolutionary Development, but has nominated Brigadier General William Knowlton as Special Assistant for Pacification.

* * *

"8. Concerning paragraph 4(c). Mission directive will state clearly that Deputy Ambassador Porter will be primarily occupied with RD and that other Mission business will be handled by appropriate sections of Mission. There are certain other aspects to consider, however. Porter has assumed charge when I have been absent. Any change in that respect could only derogate from his position in eyes of American community and GVN. He believes, and I concur, that his assumption of charge cannot be 'nominal' without risk of downgrading him in local eyes. Additionally, it is essential that there be a point of decision in Mission, without ambiguity. In practice, Porter intends to leave routine functions of Mission (political, protocol, administrative, personnel, consular, visitors, etc.) to sections normally handling them. He expects, however, to remain closely cognizant of political developments and together with political counselor and CAS chief to consult and decide course of action to take or recommend to department as circumstances dictate. I believe this is reasonable approach and have full confidence in his intention to concentrate on RD.

* * *

"10. Your paragraph 5. I have always believed that Revolutionary Development/Pacification must be carried out by Vietnamese forces, who, as you say, must establish constructive relations with the population. I have never advocated U.S. forces taking on 'substantial' share of this task. I do believe, however, that an American presence in this field amounting to a very small percentage of the total manpower involved could induce ARVN to take the proper attitude by 'on the job' training and could give the necessary courage and confidence to the Vietnamese. Lodge" 58/

"FOR THE SECRETARY, SECDEF AND KOMER

"NODIS

"1. Herewith I transmit our recommendations carrying out your 83699 and 85196. This is the best we can do in the immediate future and we think it is a forward step. But I believe that you may wish to change it as we advance along this untrod path and learn more about circumstances and people. Our proposal is as follows:

"a. The establishment of an office of operations, headed by a Director of Operations. This headquarters office of operations will include the present staff of: (1) USAID/Field Operations; (2) USAID/Public Safety; (3) USAID/Refugees; (4) JUSPAO/Field Services (minus North Viet-Nam branch); (5) CAS/Cadre Operations Division. The Office of Operations will be organized so that the above offices will not necessarily remain intact when they are merged into a single office. For example, I intend to disband USAID/FO's cadre office, and put those people now representing AID on cadre affairs directly under the cadre office. Thus there may be a net saving in manpower.

"b. All other divisions of AID and JUSPAO will remain under the control of their respective directors -- MacDonald and Zorthian -- who will be responsible to Porter, as they are now, for their operations. (I exempt from this the special question of press relations, on which Zorthian will continue to report to me directly.) Thus, for example, MacDonald will continue to oversee to Agriculture, Education, Health, Industry, etc., Divisions, as well as continue, along with the economic counselor Wehrle, to be responsible for the anti-inflation efforts. The Director of USAID will be freed from responsibilities for the field operations, but his job continues to be one of vast importance. I think it will now become more manageable.

* * *

"d. At province level we will select a single civilian to be in charge of all other U.S. civilians in the province, in same way as MACV senior advisor is responsible for the military involved in the advisory effort in the province. This senior civilian representative will be the U.S. counterpart for civilian affairs to the VN province chief and, together with the MACV senior advisor (sector) and the province chief, will form the provincial coordinating committee. The practice of assaulting the province chief with a multiplicity of advisors, often giving conflicting advice, should cease under this arrangement. The senior civilian representative will write the efficiency reports of the American civilians in the province,

regardless of their parent agency, and those reports will be reviewed by Porter's office, which will also control transfers and assignments.

* * *

"f. At the more complex region/corps level, we will consider a similar system, with a senior civilian representative responsible for the overall U.S. civilian effort in the corps area. He will work with the MACV senior advisor, and will in effect be my agent (and Bill Porter's) at the corps. I have long believed in the need for a sophisticated politically-minded man in charge of our effort with the politically volatile corps commanders, and this is a step in that direction. Porter and I will be looking carefully for the best men for these four difficult jobs...

"2. I do not want another deputy Ambassador. I intend to provide office space for Porter in the new chancery (his present office will remain at his disposal even after he moves). There is simply no job for another deputy Ambassador, particularly since the present political counselor works closely with me, reporting directly.

"3. There is no doubt that the steps mentioned above are major ones. Clearly I cannot predict now how long they will take to achieve, or how much disruption they will cause in their early stages. For one thing, I feel that a physical relocation of certain offices now spread out across the city is vital, and we are now studying the details of how to do this. Porter will probably need to establish his offices in a building other than the Chancery, in order to give the office of operations a firm guiding hand. He will, however, keep an office close to me, and he will be kept closely informed of policy developments.

* * *

"5. I will need your personal support during the period which lies ahead. I am sure that all hands here, regardless of agency affiliation, will support this effort to unify the U.S. team. The same must be true of the agencies that must continue to backstop us in Washington. Personnel recruitment will remain in your hands, and it ultimately determines the caliber of our efforts. Porter will send you separate messages on the question of personnel, so that new guidance and requirements can be put into effect as quickly as possible.

"6. We look forward through reorganization to tightening and simplifying contacts, advice and coordination with GVN authorities repsonsible for RD. 59/

E. The Manila Conference

President Johnson arrived in Manila on October 23, 1966, to attend the seven-nation conference of troop contributing countries to the Vietnam war. While the meeting was hectic and short, it did produce a communique which contained some major statements about policy, strategy, and intentions. The three most important points in the communique of October 25 were:

a. The pledge that "allied forces...shall be withdrawn, after close consultation, as the other side withdraws its forces to the North, ceases infiltration, and the level of violence thus subsides. Those forces will be withdrawn as soon as possible and not later than six months after the above conditions have been fulfilled."

b. The announcement of a new program, which had been thought up in Washington, for "National Reconciliation." Since the GVN was not in genuine agreement with the idea, but under great pressure from the Americans to commit themselves to it, the communique was quite vague on what difference there was, if any, between the new National Reconciliation program and the old Chieu Hoi program.*

c. The formalization, in public, of the move towards getting ARVN more deeply involved with the RD program: "The Vietnamese leaders stated their intent to train and assign a substantial share of the armed forces to clear-and-hold actions in order to provide a shield behind which a new society can be built." This public confirmation of the tentative steps that MACV had been taking was important. Classified documents could not be used as the basis for a far-reaching reform of the ARVN; they would never have received wide enough distribution, nor would they have been fully accepted as doctrine by the doubters within both the RVNAF and MACV. But here was a piece of paper signed by the President and by General Thieu which said in simple language that a new direction and mission was given to the ARVN. After Manila, MACV and the JCS began in seriousness the formation of the mobile training teams which were designed to retrain every RVNAF unit so that it was more aware of the importance of the population.

*Those Americans who hoped that National Reconciliation would become a major new appeal to VC at middle and higher levels were to be in for a disappointment in the year following Manila. The GVN did not agree with the philosophy behind total forgiveness to the enemy, and continually hedged its statements and invitations to the VC so that they resembled surrender with amnesty rather than "national reconciliation." In fact, the GVN did not make an internal announcement on the National Reconciliation program until Tet, 1967, almost four months after the Manila conference, and three months after the GVN had "promised" the U.S. that it would make the announcement. Then, when the Vietnamese finally did make the announcement, they used the phrase "Doan Ket," which is accurately translated as "National Solidarity," rather than "National Reconciliation." The difference in meaning is, of course, significant, just as the earlier mistranslation of "Xay Dung" into "Revolutionary Development" reflected a divergence of views.

The reasoning behind the move to commit more troops to the relatively static missions involved in pacification had been laid out in documents and briefings by people as varied as Major General Tillson, in his August briefings of the Mission Council (cited in Section III.C.7) and Robert Komer, in his memorandum to the President. But a key assumption underlying the new emphasis on population control was the growing belief, in late 1966, that the main force war was coming to a gradual end. No other single factor played as great a role in the decision to commit troops to pacification as the belief that they were going to be less and less needed for offensive missions against main force units. The enemy-initiated large unit action statistics showed a sharp drop all through 1966, with a low point of less than two battalion sized or larger enemy initiated actions per month in the last quarter of 1966. There was increasing talk of the "end of the big battalion war," both in the press and in the Mission. Moreover, the first big U.S. push into VC base areas was getting under way, and it was possible to believe that when operations like Junction City and Cedar Falls were completed, the VC would have few placed left to hide within the boundaries of South Vietnam. Thus, some people were arguing in late 1966 and early 1967 that the number of troops that could be committed to RD was considerably higher than the amount that General Westmoreland was then contemplating; that the "substantial number" of the Manila communique could well be over half of all ARVN. These arguments were usually made orally and tentatively, rather than in formal written papers, since they usually raised the ire of the military. When military opposition to such a large RD commitment stiffened, the suggestions of civilians were often hedged or partially withdrawn. But nonetheless, the fact remains that the undeniable success against the main forces in 1966 was the major justifying factor for those advocating increased commitment of regular units -- even some U.S. units -- to pacification. At that time, officials were less worried about the possibility of a major resurgence of the enemy than about the possibility of a new guerrilla war phase. The fighting in and near the DMZ during Operations Hastings and Prairie (August-December 1966) had been the heaviest of the war, and had been judged not only as a major defeat for the enemy but as a possible turning point for the enemy, after which he "had begun to shift some of his effort away from conventional, or 'mobile warfare,' toward the more productive (from his standpoint) guerrilla tactics." 60/ The Marines considered Hastings and Prairie a foolhardy aberration on the enemy's part, although they noted that the region of the DMZ "is remote, favoring him with interior lines and working to our disadvantage through extension of our own supply lines." 61/

The Marines felt that the enemy attacks at the DMZ had been designed primarily to draw down resources from the Marine pacification efforts near Da Nang, an interesting example of how important they thought their embryonic pacification effort was. But, the Marines added, whenever the enemy probed or patrolled, he was "pursued by Marine infantry and pounded by air, artillery, and naval gunfire. The effort cost him an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 NVA troops killed or disabled and 414 weapons lost...and meant a severe loss of prestige, and a further erosion of the morale of his troops." 62/

Thus, the slowdown in large enemy actions, according to the Marine estimate, and signs that the future would see an increase in guerrilla activity -- "Major main force and NVA formations have been relatively inactive since September, as far as large unit actions are concerned. However, by the end of December, corresponding increases were already beginning to appear in rates of guerrilla activity." 63/

To what extent other military and civilian leaders accepted the Marine assessment of enemy capability and intentions is not clear from the documents, but the mood of the time was not far removed from the sentiments cited above. The end of the "big war" was coming, and pacification was the next step. It all fueled the proponents of greater pacification efforts by regular troops, and now, after Manila, the debate was already being conducted on terrain favorable for the first time to the pro-pacification advocates.

IV. OCO to CORDS

A. OCO on Trial: Introduction

With the cable exchange completed, except for a few minor matters, Ambassador Lodge announced the formation of the Office of Civil Operations on November 26, 1966 -- one month after the original go-ahead signal had been given in Washington, and three weeks after the cable to Lodge telling him that the President wanted rapid action. While delays of this kind are common in government and do not normally affect events, in this case the delay got OCO off to a visibly slow start despite the fact that the President had clearly indicated to Lodge and Porter that he was putting OCO on trial and would review its accomplishments in a fairly short time.

The reasons for the Mission's slow start revealed again just how far apart Washington and its representatives in Saigon were in their philosophy and approach to the war.

Washington officials consistently underestimated the difficulty of the actions they wanted the Mission to do, and continually expected movement at speeds literally beyond the capability of the Mission. They held these ambitious expectations and exerted pressure accordingly -- not primarily because of the situation in the pacification program in South Vietnam (which was fairly static), but because of growing pressure from the public, the press, and Congress for visible progress in the war, because of growing American domestic dissatisfaction with the course of the war. If the American public could not see progress in Vietnam, the support the Administration had for the war would drop steadily.

In its efforts to show progress some members of the Administration were continually interpreting statistics and events in the most favorable light possible, and its critics -- particularly the press -- were interpreting the same events in the most unfavorable light possible. Since events in Vietnam were usually open to at least two different interpretations, the gap between the Administration and its critics over the basic question of How are We Doing? grew steadily during 1966 and 1967. But beyond the disagreements over facts and statistics, there was a continual effort by Washington officials to prod Saigon forward at a faster pace. Thus, if the Mission had just started a crash program at the highest speed ever achieved by the Mission, Washington officials, particularly Komer, acting (he said) in the President's name, would demand that the Mission redouble its efforts again. Komer, in a reflective moment, called it "creative tension."

The Saigon Mission responded to this pressure with resistance and hostility towards its Washington "backstops." When warned, for example, that the President was giving OCO 90 to 120 days to prove itself, Lodge and Porter both shot back pointed comments to the effect that this was an inadequate time period, and at the end of it results would probably

not yet be visible. They were right, of course, but being right was not good enough. They fought the time deadline with too great a vehemence and did not do enough to "prove" OCO's worth. The result was the decision of March 1967 to put OCO under MACV.

The Mission thought that because they were "on the ground" they had a unique understanding of the problems of Vietnam, and that because they were on the ground they were the only accurate judges of the rate at which events needed to move. This point of view did not take into account domestic pressures in the United States; or, worse, it deliberately disregarded them. Thus, the Mission in Vietnam has generally tended to formulate strategy as though the United States will be fighting a slow war in Indochina for decades, while the Washington policymakers and strategists have tended to behave as though time runs out in November of 1968. (The mood of the Mission towards Washington is seen more clearly in press leaks than in cables. Thus, for example, the Evans and Novak column, from Saigon, on November 30, 1966, as OCO was being formed and the trial period beginning: "A note of quiet desperation is creeping into the top echelons of the U.S. Mission charged with winning the war in Vietnam. It grows partly out of frustration with what one top Embassy official describes as 'the hot blow torch on our rear ends' that comes from Washington, and, particularly, from the White House in search of ever-new victory proposals...Much of this frustration and gloom would vanish if attention in Washington were centered not on impossible trance tables for ending the war next month or next year but on a realistic projection of the modest gain now being made at great and painstaking effort." The difference in mood is reinforced by the climate of Vietnam, which is sluggish and humid, and by the influence of the Vietnamese, who after many years of war are rarely ready to race out and seek instant immortality on the field of battle or in the Ministries.

The one exception to this dangerous generalization has often been the individual American officer, usually military, serving in advisory or combat positions. There, with a 12-month tour standard, the Americans have pushed their Vietnamese counterparts hard, and often encountered great resistance. Indeed, the Americans in Vietnam often think they are already pushing the Vietnamese as hard as is desirable, and that Washington is asking the impossible when they send out instructions to get more out of the Vietnamese.

These were some of the background factors which were playing themselves out in late 1966 and early 1967. While tension between Washington and Saigon had existed before, and is inevitable between headquarters and the field, the pressure had by now reached a level higher than ever before. (It is ironic to note that the same tensions that exist between Washington and Saigon tend to exist between the Americans in Saigon and the Americans in the field. The phrase "Saigon commando" is used continually to castigate the uninformed officials in Saigon. There are too few people serving in Saigon with previous field experience, an unavoidable by-product of the 12-month tour, and this increases the gap.)

So Washington officials talked about the lack of a sense of urgency in the Mission in Vietnam, and the Americans in Saigon talked about the dream world that Washington lived in, and the Americans in the provinces talked about the lack of understanding of the Americans in Saigon who had never seen the real war. Washington was dissatisfied with the progress in Vietnam, and since it could not influence the real obstacle, the Vietnamese, except through the American Mission, it deliberately put extra heat on the Mission. At least one high official involved in this period in Washington felt that it was a necessary and deliberate charade, and that only by overdoing its representations to the Mission could Washington assure that some fraction of its desires got through. More than one high-ranking official in Saigon felt that the only way to handle Washington was to hold out to them promises of progress and generally calm the home front down, or else run the risk of inflaming Washington and bringing still more reorganization down upon the Mission's head.

Rather than try to apportion responsibility for this sorry state of affairs, it would be useful to see the situation as the by-product of tensions produced by the Viet Cong strategy of survival and counter-punching at GVN weak spots, and the GVN's inability to be as good as we dream they should be. The United States could perhaps live with these problems in an age in which communications were not instantaneous, and publicity not so unrelenting.

Beyond this broad philosophical point, however, the fact is that the Mission in Vietnam was badly organized to conduct almost any kind of large and complex operation, let alone a war. Thus Washington was right to reorganize the Mission, and Saigon's reaction to each reorganization inevitably suggested that still more was needed.

Beyond that, the Mission in Vietnam did not have the full confidence of the Washington bureaucracy and Porter still lacked Lodge's full support.

B. OCO on Trial: Too Little Too Late -- Or Not Enough Time?

With the formation of OCO in late November the civilian mission began to move at a more rapid pace than it had in the post-Honolulu period. Most of this motion, of course, was internal to the U.S. Mission and could not produce visible results against the VC, an understandable fact when one considers the amount of work that the decision involved.

First, a Director of Civil Operations had to be chosen. Since Washington demanded rapid action, it was decided that the choice had to be someone already in Vietnam and ready to work, which sharply narrowed the list of possible men. The final selection was L. Wade Lathram, who had been the deputy director of USAID. Lathram was to prove to be the wrong man at the wrong time, a methodical and slow worker with strong respect for the very interagency system that he was supposed to supercede. In normal bureaucracies, Lathram could, and had, compiled excellent records, but OCO was demanding extraordinary results, and these required leadership and drive which Lathram did not possess.

It had been anticipated that Porter, a popular Ambassador and a knowledgeable and realistic man, would supply that leadership and drive, and that Lathram would simply run the OCO staff below Porter. But neither Porter nor Lathram saw their roles that way. Once OCO was formed, Porter to an unexpected degree stayed away from the day to day decisions, leaving them to Lathram. And Lathram simply did not have the position nor the stature to stand up to the full members of the Mission Council, whose assets he now partially controlled. (There was continued confusion over what was the responsibility of OCO and what remained under the control of the USAID, CIA and JUSPAO directors, and this confusion was never resolved -- and continues today under the CORDS structure.)

Moreover, Porter, who had not wanted a second Deputy Ambassador to come in to relieve him of all non-RD matters, soon found himself tied down in the business of the Embassy. Lodge went on a long leave shortly after the formation of OCO, taking about one month's vacation in Europe and the United States. This left Porter with responsibility for the full gamut of Ambassadorial activities, and he unavoidably became less and less concerned with the progress of OCO, even though it was in its first critical month. He had been given an office in the new OCO building (appropriated from AID), but he rarely used it, staying in the Embassy in another part of Saigon, and showing, in effect, by his failure to use his OCO office often that he could not devote much time to OCO.

The failure, therefore, to isolate Porter from all non-RD matters and provide Lodge with a full time DCM turned out to be a serious error. McNamara had clearly foreseen this in his 15 October memorandum to the President. In retrospect, we can see that Porter should have been given one job or the other, and the vacancy filled -- as Washington had suggested.

But Washington had just finished cramming an unpleasant action down the Mission's throat, and it was felt that there were limits to how much the Mission should be asked to take, especially since Lodge and Porter were so adamant on the subject. 1/ Also, no one could foresee how diverting other matters would become to Porter, or how much he would delegate to Lathram.

The second major decision for OCO was the selection of the Regional Directors -- men who would be given full control over all American civilians in their respective regions. Here Porter presented Lathram with three nominees (II Corps was left unfilled until a few weeks later) and the choices appeared to be quite good ones: in I Corps, Porter's former Assistant Deputy Ambassador, Henry Koren; in III Corps, the former MACV Division Senior Advisor, then with AID, John Paul Vann; and in the Delta, the CIA's former support chief, Vince Heymann. These were three respected men, and they came from three different agencies, which emphasized the interagency nature of OCO. In picking Vann, Porter had made a major decision which involved possibly antagonizing both the CIA and MACV, for Vann was without question one of the most controversial Americans in Vietnam. He stood for impatience with the American Mission, deep and often publicly-voiced disgust with the course of the past five years, strong convictions on what needed to be done, driving energy and an encyclopedic knowledge of recent events in Vietnam -- and was a burr in the side of the CIA, with which he had frequently tangled, particularly over the cadre program, and MACV, with which he had fought ever since disagreeing publicly with General Harkins in 1963 (a fight which led to his resignation from the Army and was extensively discussed in David Halberstam's book, The Making of a Quagmire.)

The importance of the appointments was not lost on the Mission or the press. While Lathram's appointment had stirred the bureaucracy but not the press, the regional directors came as a surprise and a major story. In a front-page story in The Washington Post, Ward Just described Vann as "one of the legendary Americans in Vietnam," and said that Koren's appointment indicated the great importance the Mission attached to the jobs. Just added that "there were indications that, if OCO did not succeed, the military command would take charge of pacification, or 'Revolutionary Development.'" 2/

Next came the selection of OCO Province Representatives, to be chosen out of the available talent in each province. Here the slowness of the civilians began to tell, and it was not until January that the appointments could be made for every province. Trying to pick men on the basis of their knowledge and ability takes time and requires trips to each province, consultations with other Mission Council members, etc., and the civilians set out to do all this.

Meanwhile, a huge job which no one in Washington could fully appreciate was underway -- the physical relocation of offices that Lodge had

described as necessary in his November 16 cable. Even in Washington it may be difficult to get furniture and phones moved, except for very high-ranking people; in Saigon a major relocation was more difficult to mount than a military operation. While this was going on, involving literally over one thousand people, work in OCO was even more confused and sporadic than usual.

None of these minor organizational events would be of any importance if it were not for the fact that they were eating away at the meager time allotted to the civilians to prove that OCO should remain independent of MACV. But they did consume time, and this was to prove to be a factor in evaluating OCO.

The documents do not answer the question of whether or not OCO ever really had a chance to survive, or whether it was just allowed to start up by people who had already decided to turn RD over to MACV in a few months. Both possibilities fit the available facts. An educated guess would be that the decision to give Westmoreland control was tentatively made by the President in the late fall of 1966, but that he decided he would gain by allowing the civilians to reorganize first. If OCO proved to be a major success, he could always continue to defer his decision. If OCO fell short of the mark, then it still would be an organization in-being ready to be placed into MACV without further internal changes, and that in itself would be a major gain. Moreover, if the changes came when Lodge and Porter were gone, there would be less difficulties.

If OCO moved too slowly for Washington's satisfaction, it nonetheless accomplished many things which had previously been beyond the Mission's ability:

-- Uniting personnel from AID, CIA, and JUSPAO into a single Plans & Evaluations Section, OCO produced the first integrated plans for RD on the U.S. side. These plans were ambitious and far-reaching, and required MACV inputs. The fact that the civilians were asking MACV for inputs to their own planning, rather than the reverse, so startled MACV that MACV, in turn, began more intensive discussions or plans. The planning effort involved several military officers on loan to OCO, a fact which further heightened tension between OCO and MACV. When the plans first formulated were presented to General Westmoreland, he indicated that he was not going to be bound by any plans which reduced his flexibility and ability to respond to military pressure whenever and wherever it occurred; that is, he was reluctant to commit many military assets to permanent RD support activities. But the relentless pressure from OCO, from Komer in Washington, and even from the public attention focused on the issue by Article 11 of the Manila communique ("The Vietnamese leaders stated their intent to train and assign a substantial share of the armed forces to clear-and-hold actions in order to provide a shield behind which a new society can be built") all were working against General Westmoreland, and towards the assignment of ARVN units to RD missions.

-- The civilians in the provinces spoke with a single voice for the first time. The province chiefs welcomed the change for this reason, according to most observers. Within the American team in each province, there was now a built-in obligation to consult with each other, instead of the previous situation in which more and more agencies were sending down to the provinces their own men who worked alone on their own projects.

-- The very act of physical relocation of the five major branches of OCO into a single building changed attitudes and behavior patterns in the civilian mission. Public Safety and the Special Branch advisors, for example, now were co-located, and began working together closely. Previously, they had both advised the same people through completely separate channels which met only at the top; i.e., when the chief of the Public Safety branch and the deputy CIA station chief had something specific and urgent they had to resolve. On the day-to-day matters, there had actually been a deliberate compartmentalization before OCO was formed.

These examples of gains could be repeated across a broad front. They were first steps in a direction which might ultimately have created a strong civilian mission, given time, better leaders, and more support from Washington. But even without these things, OCO was a definite plus.

The period between December and April was a period in which everyone paid lip service to the idea of supporting OCO, but in reality it was sniped at and attacked almost from the outset by the bureaucracies. In Saigon, Zorthian, and Hart, Directors of JUSPAO and CIA, respectively, made it clear that they wanted to remain very much involved in any decision affecting their respective fields of endeavor. While this was a reasonable point of view, it meant that CIA and even USIA officers in the field often refused to accept any guidance from the OCO representative, and cases began to come to light in which major actions were being initiated by the CIA without any consultation with OCO. (The CIA reasoning and defense rested on the fact that one of Hart's deputies was ostensibly an assistant director of OCO.)

In Washington, there was open skepticism to OCO from almost all quarters, particularly AID, which found itself footing most of the bill. USIA and CIA both indicated that they would continue to deal directly with their field personnel. In theory, everyone in Washington was to participate in the backstopping of the interagency OCO, but in practice, without a single voice in charge, this meant that no one was helping OCO, no one was trying to sell them as a going concern in Washington. Komer's role here was ambiguous; he supported OCO as long as it was in operation, and probably contributed more to its achievements than anyone else in Washington, but at the same time he was already on the record as favoring a military takeover, which was the very thing OCO sought to avoid.

Washington had decreed OCO, and had given Porter great responsibility. Unfortunately, they had failed to give him authority and stature needed to make the agencies work together.

As pointed out before, this might well have been overcome if time had not been so short. The slow methodical way of moving bureaucracies may be more effective than sweeping changes, anyway, if one has time. But in Vietnam no one was being given much time.

Shortly after OCO was formed, Komer's deputy, Ambassador William Leonhart, visited Vietnam, and when he returned, wrote the following penetrating assessment, which was sent to the President, Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, and Mr. Gaud and Mr. Helms:

> "Whether Porter's new Office of Civil Operations (OCO) is viewed as a final organizational solution or as an inevitable intermediate step it is achieving a number of useful purposes. It establishes, on the civil side for the first time, unified interagency direction with a chain of command and communication from Saigon to the regions and provinces. It centralizes US-GVN field coordination of civil matters in one US official at each level. It affords a civil-side framework which can work more effectively with US military for politico-military coordination and more integrated pacification planning.
>
> "At the time of my visit, OCO's impact had been felt mainly in Saigon. Its headquarters organization was largely completed. Three of the four Regional Directors had been named, all were at work, and one was in full time residence in his region. Regional staffs were being assembled but not yet in place. At province level, teams were being interviewed for the selection of Provincial Representatives. Porter expects them to be designated by January 1. Some slippage is possible, and it may be 90 days or so before the new organization is functioning. I participated in the initial briefings of the province teams I visited, passing along and emphasizing Bob Komer's admonitions against over-bureaucratization of effort and for fast and hard action. These were well-received. Morale was good. All the GVN Province Chiefs with whom I talked thought the new structure a great improvement." 3/

C. Time Runs Out

The decision to turn pacification over to MACV, with an integrated civil-military chain of command, was announced in Saigon on May 11, 1967, by Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker. In his announcement, Bunker said that the decision was entirely his.

But Bunker had been in Vietnam as Ambassador for less than two weeks, and he was therefore clearly acting under strong guidance, if not orders, from Washington. The decision to give MACV responsibility had actually stemmed from the clear and unmistakable fact that the President now considered such a reorganization highly desirable.

It is not clear when the President decided this in his own mind. The documents do not shed any light on this point, and, indeed, they simply fail to discuss the pros and cons of the decision in the early months of 1967, when the subject was a hot one in Washington and Saigon. This all suggests that whatever consideration of the issue was going on was confined strictly to private sessions between principals, and that the staff work previously done on a highly restricted basis was no longer considered necessary by the principals.

It has been suggested that the President had been strongly in favor of the move for months before he finally gave the go-ahead signal, and that he was held back by the strong opposition from Lodge and Porter, from Katzenbach, from the agencies in Washington -- and by the fact that it would appear to be a further "militarization" of the effort. This may well be the case; certainly nothing in the record disproves this possibility. But since there is no way that this study can answer the question, it must be left undecided.

Whenever the President made his decision in his own mind, he chose the Guam meeting as the place to discuss with a group of concerned officials outside his own personal staff. In a private meeting on March 20, or 21, 1967, with senior officials from Washington and Saigon, the President indicated that he felt the time had come to turn pacification over to MACV. The President enjoined those in the room at that meeting not to discuss the decision with anyone until it was announced, and he did not inform the GVN.

At the end of the Guam meeting, the President sent Komer back to Saigon with Westmoreland and Lodge, and Komer spent a week there, working out preliminary details of the reorganization. By this time Komer knew that he was to become Deputy to General Westmoreland, although many details remained to be ironed out.

When Komer returned to Washington, with the preliminary plans, a period followed during which no further action on the reorganization was taken. In all, nearly two months went by from the President's statement

at Guam to the public announcement, during which only a handful of people in Washington and Saigon knew what was going to happen. The delays were caused by a combination of factors: Bunker's understandable desire to spend some time on personal business before going to Saigon, the President's desire to have Bunker make the final announcement himself after he had reached Saigon, the need to work out final details. Since the President was the man who had pressed everyone else working on Vietnam to greater and greater effort, and since he stood to lose the most from loss of time, it is surprising that he was now willing to see two months lost, with a tired and lame-duck Mission in Vietnam, waiting for the new team in a highly apprehensive state, and confusion at the higher levels. But for reasons which are not readily apparent, the President did not push his new team, and it was not until May 13, 1967, that Bunker made his announcement (which had been drafted by Komer):

"Since being appointed U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam I have been giving a great deal of thought to how to organize most effectively the U.S. Advisory role in support of the Vietnamese government's Revolutionary Development effort. Like my predecessor, I regard RD -- often termed pacification -- as close to the heart of the matter in Vietnam.

"Support of Revolutionary Development has seemed to me and my senior colleagues to be neither exclusively a civilian nor exclusively a military function, but to be essentially civil-military in character. It involves both the provision of continuous local security in the countryside -- necessarily a primarily military task and the constructive programs conducted by the Ministry of Revolutionary Development, largely through its 59-member RD teams. The government of Vietnam has recognized the dual civil-military nature of the RD process by assigning responsibility for its execution to the Corps/Region Commanders and by deciding to assign the bulk of the regular ARVN, as well as the Regional and Popular forces, to provide the indispensable security so that RD can proceed in the countryside. As senior American official in Vietnam, I have concluded that the U.S. Advisory and supporting role in Revolutionary Development can be made more effective by unifying its civil and military aspects under a single management concept. Unified management, a single chain of command, and a more closely dovetailed advisory effort will in my opinion greatly improve U.S. support of the vital RD program. Therefore, I am giving General Westmoreland the responsibility for the performance of our U.S. Mission field programs in support of pacification or Revolutionary Development. To assist him in performing this function, I am assigning Mr. Robert Komer to his headquarters to be designated as a deputy to COMUSMACV with personal rank of ambassador.

"I have two basic reasons for giving this responsibility to General Westmoreland. In the first place, the indispensable first stage of pacification is providing continuous local security, a function primarily of RVNAF, in which MACV performs a supporting advisory role. In the second place, the greater part of the U.S. Advisory and Logistic assets involved in support of Revolutionary Development belong to MACV. If unified management of U.S. Mission assets in support of the Vietnamese program is desirable, COMUSMACV is the logical choice.

"I have directed that a single chain of responsibility for advice and support of the Vietnamese Revolutionary Development program be instituted from Saigon down to district level. Just as Mr. Komer will supervise the U.S. Advisory role at the Saigon level as Deputy To General Westmoreland, so will the present OCO regional directors serve as deputies to U.S. field force commanders.

"At the province level, a senior advisor will be designated, either civilian or military, following analysis of the local situation.

"While management will thus be unified, the integrity of the Office of Civil Operations will be preserved. It will continue to perform the same functions as before, and will continue to have direct communication on technical matters with its field echelons. The present Revolutionary Development support division of MACV will be integrated into OCO, and its chief will serve as deputy to the Director of OCO. Such a unified civil/military U.S. advisory effort in the vital field of Revolutionary Development is unprecedented. But so too is the situation which we confront. RD is in my view neither civil nor military but a unique merging of both to meet a unique wartime need. Thus my resolution is to have U.S. civilian and military officials work together as one team in order more effectively to support our Vietnamese allies. Many further details will have to be worked out, and various difficulties will doubtless be encountered, but I am confident that this realignment of responsibilities is a sound management step and I count on all U.S. officers and officials concerned to make it work effectively in practice." 4/

Bunker outlined to Washington the line he proposed to take during a question and answer period with the press:

"Besides the above announcement, I intend to stress the following basic points in answer to press questions or in backgrounding: (a) I made this decision not because I think

that U.S. civilian support of RD has been unsatisfactory -- on the contrary I am pleased with progress to date -- but because I think it is essential to bring the U.S. military more fully into the RD advisory effort and to pool our civil/military resources to get optimum results: (b) indeed I regard all official Americans in Vietnam as part of one team, not as part of competing civilian and military establishments: (c) as senior U.S. official in Vietnam, I intend to keep a close eye on all U.S. activities, including pacification -- I am not abdicating any of my responsibilities but rather am having the entire U.S. pacification advisory effort report to me through General Westmoreland rather than through two channels as in the past: (d) during 34 years in the business world I have learned that unified management with clear lines of authority is the way to get the most out of large scale and highly diversified programs: (e) since continuous local security, which RVNAF must primarily provide, is the indispensable first stage of the pacification process, the MACV chain of command can obviously be helpful to the RVNAF: and (f) I intend to see that the civilian element of the U.S. effort is not buried under the military -- in many instances soldiers will end up working for civilians as well as the reverse -- in fact Ambassador Komer will be General Westmoreland's principal assistant for this function while General Knowlton will be deputy to Mr. Lathram of OCO. I intend to keep fully informed personally about all developments in this field and to hold frequent meetings with General Westmoreland and Ambassador Komer for the purpose of formulating policy." 5/

The reaction of the civilians in Vietnam to the announcement of Ambassador Bunker was one of dismay. In the first confused days, before details of the reorganization could be worked out and announced, the press was able to write several articles which probably were accurate reflections of the mood of most civilians:

"Civilian reactions today ranged from the bitter ('We don't think they can do their own job -- how can they do ours?') to the resigned ('I'll be a good soldier and go along') to the very optimistic ('We've finally got a civilian in among the generals'). Almost nowhere was there much enthusiasm for what Bunker called 'a unique experiment in a unique situation.'

"Nor was there jubilation at the American military command. Westmoreland, who wanted to take charge of the pacification program two years ago, is now reported to be deeply skeptical of the possibility of producing the kind of quick results the White House apparently wants.

"'I did not volunteer for the job,' he is reported to have said privately this morning, 'but now that I've got it, I'll do my best with it.'

"...Serious officials -- both civilian and military -- realize there are limitations on how far an officer will go in reporting 'negative' information, and how hard a civilian, now his subordinate, will fight for realism.

"...Officials today sought to mitigate the effect of the announcement by saying that Komer and his staff, physically located in the American Military Command in Saigon, will be in a far better position to influence the course of Pacification than he would among 'all the guys with glasses and sack suits' in the Office of Civil Operations." 6/

The Vietnamese reaction to the reorganization was more difficult to gauge. Ward Just, in the same story cited above, said "There was surprisingly little comment today from South Vietnamese, who have seen so many efforts at pacification and so many efforts to attempt to organize and reorganize themselves. One high American who professed to have spoken with the South Vietnamese command reported they are 'delighted.'" But Komer's talk with General Nguyen Duc Thang, the Minister for Construction (RD), did not reveal any delight on Thang's part. Indeed, Thang's first reaction was that the GVN should emulate the U.S. and turn pacification over to the Ministry of Defense -- an action which would have run directly counter to the U.S. objective of encouraging civilian government in Vietnam.

There is no telegraphic record of the first series of talks that Komer and Bunker had with Ky, Thieu, Vien, and Thang on the reorganization. Not until a Komer-Ky talk of May 15 does the cable traffic reflect the GVN reaction to the reorganization. By this time, it should be noted, the GVN knew that the U.S. did not want the GVN to follow suit, and it knew all our arguments and could play them back to us with ease:

"Ky said that General Thang had suggested that the RD effort be brought under Defense Ministry to conform to the U.S. reorganization. Ky and General Vien had demurred on grounds that such a reorganization on the GVN side would be far more complex than on U.S. side, would disrupt RD process, and would stretch General Vien and MOD too thin. Besides it would not be politically advisable at the very time when there was a hopeful trend toward a more civilianized and representative government. Komer agreed with Ky-Vien reasoning..." 7/

D. The CORDS Reorganization

With Bunker's announcement, the Mission began its second massive reorganization in five months. This time, the reorganization was accompanied by one of the periodic turnovers in Mission Council personnel which have characterized the Mission: for some reason, the tours of many high-ranking officers seem to end at roughly the same time, and thus, in 1964, 1965, and again in the spring of 1967, several key members of the Mission Council all left within a few weeks of each other. This time, in addition to Ambassador Lodge, Porter, Habib, and Wehrle all left within a short period of time, and only a high-level decision -- announced by Bunker at the same time as the reorganization -- kept Zorthian and Lansdale on for extensions. Into the Mission came Bunker, Locke, Komer, General Abrams, the new Deputy COMUSMACV, and Charles Cooper, the new Economic Counselor, and Archibald Calhoun, the new Political Counselor.

Despite the turnover, the reorganization seemed to proceed with comparative ease. Perhaps the fact that CCO had already been formed was critical here, since it meant that instead of MACV dealing with three agencies simultaneously, the first discussions could be restricted primarily to MACV and CCO. Moreover, because CCO was already a going concern, the civilians were better organized than ever before to maintain their own position in dealings with the military.

But above all, it was the decision by Westmoreland and Bunker to let Komer take the lead in the reorganization which was important. Komer now made major decisions on how the new structure would look which were usually backed up by Westmoreland. The result looked much better than many people had dared hope.

The details of the reorganization are not worth detailed discussion here. But one point can illustrate the way CORDS could resolve previously unresolved issues: the question of the role of the ARVN Division in the chain of command.

As noted in an earlier section, study groups had over the years advocated removing the ARVN Divisions from the chain of command on Pacification/RD. But MACV had large advisory teams with the Divisions and these teams controlled both the sector (Province) advisory teams and Regimental advisory teams below them. The structure followed normal military lines, and made good sense to most of the officers in the higher levels of MACV.

The counter-argument was that Division was a purely military instrument and could not adequately control the integrated civilian-military effort that was needed at the Province level. Thus the Roles and Missions Study Group, for example, had recommended that "Division be Removed from the RD Chain of Command...that the role of the Province

Chief be upgraded...that Province Chiefs have operational control (as a minimum) of all military and paramilitary forces assigned to operate exclusively in their sector." 8/ The Study Group recognized that "the power structure being what it is in the GVN, major progress toward this goal will not be short range or spectacular." But, they urged, the U.S. should begin to push forward on it.

MACV had nonconcurred in this recommendation. General Westmoreland, in a memorandum to Lodge on September 7, 1966, had said that he did not agree with the idea, and that, if carried out, "the Corps span of control would be too large for effective direction." The suggestion, he added, was "illogical." 9/

This was still the position of MACV when Komer arrived. In his attempts to find a workable civilian-military chain of command, he received two suggestions on the difficult question of the role of the Division advisory teams. The first, and more routine, was to continue the existing MACV system -- in which, no matter how good or bad the GVN chain of command may be, the U.S. simply duplicates it on the advisory side. This would mean that all American civilians and military at the Province level would come under the Division-Corps chain of command. The MACV staff assumed that this would happen.

John Paul Vann and a few colleagues had a different suggestion. Vann maintained that the evidence suggested that when the Americans made their desires known clearly to the Vietnamese, without the vagueness and contradictoriness which so often characterized them, then the Vietnamese usually would follow suit after a suitable period of time. Thus, said Vann, if the Americans remove the Division advisory team from the U.S. chain of command, except for tactical matters and logistical support, the GVN may follow, and reduce the power of their politically potent Divisions.

The thesis Vann was putting forward -- that the GVN would follow a strong U.S. example -- was untested and hotly disputed. Secondly, there was the matter of MACV's stand against downgrading the role of the ARVN Divisions. Few people observing the discussions thought that the Vann suggestion had a chance of success.

But Komer, persuaded by the argument, did overrule many of his staff and make the recommendation to Westmoreland. Westmoreland approved it, and in June, 1967, the new chains of command were announced to the U.S. Mission. After years of arguing, during all of which the trend had been towards stronger ARVN Divisions, the U.S. had suddenly reversed course on its own, without waiting for the Vietnamese to act. The change was so complete that it even extended to that last (and, to career officers, most important) question: who writes the efficiency report. Under the new MACV guidance, the Senior Province Advisor would be rated

not by the Division Senior Advisor, but by the Deputy for CORDS and the Corps level -- thus confirming the new command arrangements.

While it is still too early to tell if the GVN will completely follow the U.S. lead, the early evidence suggests that the Vann hypothesis was correct, and that following the U.S. action, the GVN has begun to reduce the role of their Divisions in RD. There are now indications that the GVN is seriously considering a plan in which the Divisions would no longer have area responsibility but rather be reduced to support of their forward units, and operational command on large operations of troops.

E. The Mission Assessment as CORDS Begins

The situation that CORDS and Ambassador Komer inherited was not a very promising one. Despite all the lip service and all the "top priorities" assigned RD by the Americans in the preceding 18 months, progress in the field was not only not satisfactory, it was, according to many observers, nonexistent. The question of whether we were inching forward, standing still, or moving backward always seemed to the Mission and Washington to be of great importance, and therefore much effort was spent trying to analyze our "progress."

A strong case can be made for the proposition that we have spent too much time looking for progress in a program in which measurements are irrelevant, inaccurate, and misleading. But, nonetheless, the Mission did try to measure itself, and in May of 1967, as OCO turned into CORDS, produced the following assessment of RD for the first quarter of 1967.

> "In truth, there has been little overall progress in RD activities, and the same must be said for the painful process of building a meaningful dialogue between the government and the people. A number of factors have been reported from Region III to account for this unhappy situation, but they might well apply to the rest of the country:
>
> "a. The RD program for 1967 involved many new and different concepts, command arrangements, administrative and procedural functions and allocation of resources. Only recently have the majority of provincial officials involved become aware of the program.
>
> "b. Many Ap Doi Moi (Real New Life Hamlets), through guidance from MORD, were located in fringe security areas. In most of these cases a great deal of military and jungle clearing operations were necessary. These take time, and, as a result, the deployment of the RD teams often were delayed.
>
> "c. The hobbling effect of ineffectual officials has retarded the program.
>
> "d. The people have had to develop new working relationships with the RD workers,* the ARVN, and the RF/PF. During this process, there has been a 'wait and see' attitude.

* "Workers" was another one of the special words the U.S. began using instead of accurate translations of the Vietnamese. This one was also Lodge's idea, as a more understandable word than "cadre" to describe the members of the 59-man teams.

"If, however, the picture is sombre, it is not unrelieved. The 1967 program may look at this point unencouraging statistically, but its progress is of a different and more important sort. In critical areas, progress has been registered. There has evolved an implicit understanding by many in the GVN that RD is a longer-term progress than hitherto believed, requiring a greater concentration of resources. In fact, there is increasing evidence that programming for 1967 has so concentrated scarce resources in the 11-point Ap Doi Moi that the GVN presence and services are spread very thin indeed in areas of lower priority. The fact that in general each RD team will remain in each hamlet for six months throughout the year, is a fundamental improvement in the program.

"As a result of the finer definition of the intent of RD and more interest in its possibilities, the 1967 program has become more vital than its predecessors. This vitality has produced new ideas, an increasing flexibility, which marks important progress in the program. Moreover, what the country has been engaged in is the process of laying a base for development; a long drawn out process which sees little initial reward, but without which nothing of permanence will be achieved. In other words, the first quarter of the year has not been witness to a vital social revolution, but has instead found evidence of a growing understanding of the nature of the revolution to come, and in so doing has taken a further step in the painful process of building a nation." 10/

--- --- --- --- ---

With the formation of CORDS, this history becomes current events. CORDS is charged now with solving what have previously been unsolvable problems -- energizing the GVN to do things which it is not as interested in as we are; winning the hearts and minds of people who do not understand us or speak our language; working under intense pressure for immediate results in a field in which success -- if possible at all -- may require years. We have concentrated on the history of the United States bureaucracy in this study because that, in retrospect, seems to have been where the push for pacification came from -- not the Vietnamese. We have not been able to analyze properly the actual course of the effort in the field, where contradictory assessments of progress have plagued the U.S. In the final section which follows, we try to draw a few lessons from the course of events described in this study.

When completed, CORDS had produced a structure in which, regardless of civil-military tensions that cannot be wished away, all hands were working together under a single chain of command. The structure was massive, so massive that the Vietnamese were in danger of being almost

forgotten -- and for that there can be no excuse. But at least the Mission was better run and better organized than it had ever been before, and this fact may in time lead to a more efficient and successful effort. Without a unified voice in dealing with the Vietnamese, we can never hope to influence the GVN to do the things we believe they must do to save their own country.