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13. Vietnamization and the Drama of the Pentagon Papers

by Peter Dale Scott

The Nixon strategy which underlies both Vietnamization and the Peking visit envisages a return from overt to covert operations in Southeast Asia. The U.S. Army is being withdrawn from Vietnam, while Congressional exposures reveal the Mafia influence behind the corruption there of its senior personnel.¹ But the Army's place is being filled by a billion-dollar "pacification" program, including an expansion of the CIA's controversial assassination project, Operation Phoenix.² Generally speaking, the responsibility for ground operations in Indochina (as opposed to the ongoing air war) is being taken from the regular military, and given back to the various U.S. intelligence agencies, particularly the CIA. The political success or "momentum" of the antiwar movement, at this point, is thus being exploited to strengthen the very intelligence activities which did so much to bring about the war in the first place.

This amazing capacity of the intelligence apparatus to gather strength from its defeats was illustrated earlier after the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Then as now the response of the government to the fiasco (an interagency fiasco, involving not only CIA but Air America, air force, and special forces personnel) was to strengthen, consolidate, and rationalize the "Special Group" or "303 Committee" apparatus which had produced it.³ In 1971 there were similar signs that the Vietnam fiasco is being used to strengthen the case for relying on the "expertise" of the intelligence professionals.

The elaborate drama of the Pentagon Papers must be assessed in the light of this bureaucratic retrenchment and consolidation. One feels about their publication as one does about Mr. Nixon's Peking visit (which was announced just fifteen days after the courtroom drama of the Pentagon Papers had brought public support for the Vietnam military adventure to a probable all-time low). It is possible to approve of both events, while fearing that they will help to perpetuate the imperialist intervention which superficially they appear to challenge. Daniel Ellsberg is undoubtedly a powerful and moving critic of conventional warfare in Vietnam, and one does not wish to sound ungrateful for his courageous revelations. When, however, he told the American nation on TV that "for the first time we are hearing the truth" about the war, he was proclaiming a false millennium.

The Pentagon Papers are of value, but more for what they reveal inadvertently than for what they reveal by design. It would be foolish to expect candor from any government documents on Vietnam, whether written for internal or external consumption: at least one disaffected veteran from the White House staff has commented that he would have a less biased picture of the war if he had confined his reading to the newspapers. One Pentagon study repeats the old cliché about a "pro-communist . . . offensive" of May 1964 in Laos: it is considerably

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more misleading than the original *New York Times* story which it partly echoes, and is inexcusable in the light of authoritative accounts which had already been published.⁴ Another Pentagon study's account of the Tonkin Gulf incidents is little more than an abridgment of McNamara's clumsy misrepresentations of 1964 and 1968 to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.⁵ The House Committee's censored text of this study deletes its references to McNamara's "proof" of the second incident from alleged radio intercepts, including one "indicating that North Vietnamese naval forces had been ordered to attack the patrol."⁶ The most likely reason for censoring this already-published "proof" is that its falsehood had already been demonstrated.⁷

More serious than such particular instances of self-serving disinformation is the overall inherent bias in a record of Defense Department papers. Though the true history of our escalating involvement in Indochina is a history of covert and intelligence operations, most of the recent ones are barely recorded (two striking exceptions, the Diem coup of 1963 and the 34A Operations Plan of 1964, had already been amply publicized). Needless to say, there is even less documentation of key escalation decisions (such as Johnson's decision of 12 November 1966 to bomb Hanoi) which the President arrived at privately—either alone, or after consulting with his political intimates, such as Ed Weisl, Tommy Corcoran, and James Rowe, who represented the highest financial interests in the nation.⁸

With respect to events in November 1963, the bias and deception of the original Pentagon documents are considerably reinforced in the Pentagon studies commissioned by Robert McNamara. Nowhere is this deception more apparent than in the careful editing and censorship of the Report of a Honolulu Conference on November 20, 1963, and of National Security Action Memorandum 273, which was approved four days later. Study after study is carefully edited so as to create a false illusion of continuity between the last two days of President Kennedy's presidency and the first two days of President Johnson's. The narrow division of the studies into topics, as well as periods, allows some studies to focus on the "optimism"⁹ which led to plans for withdrawal on November 20 and 24, 1963; and others on the "deterioration" and "gravity"¹⁰ which at the same meetings led to plans for carrying the war north. These incompatible pictures of continuous "optimism" or "deterioration" are supported generally by selective censorship, and occasionally by downright misrepresentation:

. . . National Security Action Memorandum 273, approved 26 November 1963. The immediate cause for NSAM 273 was the assassination of President Kennedy four days earlier; newly-installed President Johnson needed to reaffirm or modify the policy lines pursued by his predecessor. President Johnson quickly chose to reaffirm the Kennedy policies. . . .

Emphasis should be placed, the document stated, on the Mekong Delta area, but not only in military terms. Political, economic, social, educational, and informational activities must also be pushed; "We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle but of belief. . . ." Military operations should be initiated, under close political control, up to within fifty kilometers inside of Laos. U.S. assistance programs should be maintained at levels at least equal to those under the Diem government so that the new GVN would not be tempted to regard the U.S. as seeking to disengage.

The same document also revalidated the planned phased withdrawal of U.S. forces announced publicly in broad terms by President Kennedy shortly before his death:

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U.S. military personnel remains as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963.

*No new programs were proposed or endorsed, no increases in the level or nature of U.S. assistance suggested or foreseen. . . . The emphasis was on persuading the new government in Saigon to do well those things which the fallen government was considered to have done poorly. . . . NSAM 273 had, as described above, limited cross-border operations to an area 50 kilometers within Laos.*¹¹

The reader is invited to check the veracity of this account of NSAM 273 against the text, as reconstructed from various sources, in our Appendix A. If the author of this study is not a deliberate and foolish liar, then some superior had denied him access to the second and more important page of NSAM 273, which "authorized planning for specific covert operations, graduated in intensity, against the DRV," i.e., North Vietnam.¹² As we shall see, this covert operations planning soon set the stage for a new kind of war, not only through the celebrated 34A Operations which contributed to the Tonkin Gulf incidents, but also through the military's accompanying observations, as early as December 1963, that "only air attacks" against North Vietnam would achieve these operations' "stated objective."¹³ Leslie Gelb, the Director of the Pentagon Study Task Force and the author of the various and mutually contradictory Study Summaries, notes that, with this planning, "A firebreak had been crossed, and the U.S. had embarked on a program that was recognized as holding little promise of achieving its stated objectives, at least in its early stages."¹⁴ We shall argue in a moment that these crucial and controversial "stated objectives," proposed in CINCPAC's OPLAN 34-63 of September 9, 1963, were rejected by Kennedy in October 1963, and first authorized by the first paragraph of NSAM 273.

The Pentagon studies, supposedly disinterested reports to the Secretary of Defense, systematically mislead with respect to NSAM 273, which McNamara himself had helped to draft. Their lack of *bona fides* is illustrated by the general phenomenon that (as can be seen from our Appendix A), banal or misleading paragraphs (like 2, 3, and 5) are quoted verbatim, sometimes over and over, whereas those preparing for an expanded war are either omitted or else referred to obliquely. The *only* study to quote a part of the paragraph dealing with North Vietnam does so from subordinate instructions: it fails to note that this language was authorized in NSAM 273.¹⁵

And study after study suggests (as did press reports at the time) that the effect of NSAM 273, paragraph 2, was to perpetuate what Mr. Gelb ill-advisedly calls "the public White House promise in October" to withdraw 1,000 U.S. troops.¹⁶ In fact the public White House statement on October 2 was no promise, but a personal estimate attributed to McNamara and Taylor. As we shall see, Kennedy's decision on October 5 to implement this withdrawal (a plan authorized by NSAM 263 of October 11), was not made public until the Honolulu Conference of November 20, when an Accelerated Withdrawal Program (about which Mr. Gelb is silent) was also approved.¹⁷ NSAM 273 was in fact approved on Sunday, November 24, and its misleading opening paragraphs (including the meaningless re-affirmation of the "objectives" of the October 2 withdrawal statement) were leaked to selected correspondents.¹⁸ Mr. Gelb, who should know better, pretends that NSAM 273 "was intended primarily to endorse the policies pursued by President Kennedy and to ratify provisional decisions reached [on November 20] in Honolulu."¹⁹ In fact the secret effect of NSAM 273's sixth paragraph (which unlike the second was not leaked to the press) was to annul the NSAM 263 with-

NSAM 273 approved
on a Sunday!!

drawal decision announced four days earlier at Honolulu, and also the Accelerated Withdrawal Program: "both military and economic programs, it was emphasized, should be maintained at levels as high as those in the time of the Diem regime."²⁰

The source of this change is not hard to pinpoint. Of the eight people known to have participated in the November 24 reversal of the November 20 withdrawal decisions, five took part in both meetings.²¹ Of the three new officials present, the chief was Lyndon Johnson, in his second full day and first business meeting as President of the United States.²² The importance of this second meeting, like that of the document it approved, is indicated by its deviousness. One can only conclude that NSAM 273(2)'s public reaffirmation of an October 2 withdrawal "objective," coupled with 273(6)'s secret annulment of an October 5 withdrawal plan, was deliberately deceitful. The result of the misrepresentations in the Pentagon studies and Mr. Gelb's summaries is, in other words, to perpetuate a deception dating back to NSAM 273 itself.

This deception, I suspect, involved far more than the symbolic but highly sensitive issue of the 1,000-man withdrawal. One study, after calling NSAM 273 a "generally sanguine" "don't-rock-the-boat document," concedes that it contained "an unusual Presidential exhortation": "The President expects that all senior officers of the government will move energetically to insure full unity of support for establishing U.S. policy in South Vietnam."²³ In other words, the same document which covertly changed Kennedy's withdrawal plans ordered all senior officials not to contest or criticize this change. This order had a special impact on one senior official: Robert Kennedy, an important member of the National Security Council (under President Kennedy) who was not present when NSAM 273 was rushed through the forty-five minute "briefing session" on Sunday, November 24. It does not appear that Robert Kennedy, then paralyzed by the shock of his brother's murder, was even invited to the meeting. Chester Cooper records that Lyndon Johnson's first National Security Council meeting was not convened until Thursday, December 5.²⁴

NSAM 273. PARAGRAPH 1: THE CENTRAL OBJECTIVE

While noting that the "stated objectives" of the new covert operations plan against North Vietnam were unlikely to be fulfilled by the OPLAN itself, Mr. Gelb, like the rest of the Pentagon Study Authors, fails to inform us what these "stated objectives" were. The answer lies in the "central objective" defined by the first paragraph of NSAM 273:

It remains the central objective of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported communist conspiracy. The test of all U.S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contribution to this purpose.²⁵

To understand this bureaucratic prose we must place it in context. Ever since Kennedy came to power, but increasingly since the Diem crisis and assassination, there had arisen serious bureaucratic disagreement as to whether the U.S. commitment in Vietnam was limited and political ("to assist") or open-ended and military ("to win"). By its use of the word "win," NSAM 273, among other things, ended a brief period of indecision and division, when indecision itself was

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favoring the proponents of a limited (and political) strategy, over those whose preference was unlimited (and military). 26

In this conflict the seemingly innocuous word "objective" had come, in the Aesopian double-talk of bureaucratic politics, to be the test of a commitment. As early as May 1961, when President Kennedy was backing off from a major commitment in Laos, he had willingly agreed with the Pentagon that "The U.S. objective and concept of operations" was "to prevent Communist domination of South Vietnam." 27 In November 1961, however, Taylor, McNamara, and Rusk attempted to strengthen this language, by recommending that "We now take the decision to commit ourselves to the objective of preventing the fall of South Vietnam to Communism." 28 McNamara had earlier concluded that this "commitment . . . to the clear objective" was the "basic issue," adding that it should be accom- panied by a "warning" of "punitive retaliation against North Vietnam." Without this commitment, he added, "We do not believe major U.S. forces should be introduced in South Vietnam." 29

Despite this advice, Kennedy, after much thought, accepted all of the recom- mendations for introducing U.S. units, except for the "commitment to the ob- jective" which was the first recommendation of all. NSAM 111 of November 22, 1961, which became the basic document for Kennedy Vietnam policy, was issued without this first recommendation. 30 Instead he sent a letter to Diem on Decem- ber 14, 1961, in which "the U.S. officially described the limited and somewhat ambiguous extent of its commitment: . . . 'our primary purpose is to help your people. . . . We shall seek to persuade the Communists to give up their attempts of force and subversion.'" 31 One compensatory phrase of this letter ("the cam- paign . . . supported and directed from the outside") became (as we shall see) a rallying point for the disappointed hawks in the Pentagon; and was elevated to new prominence in NSAM 273(1)'s definition of a Communist "conspiracy." It would appear that Kennedy, in his basic policy documents after 1961, avoided any use of the word "objective" that might be equated to a "commitment." The issue was not academic: as presented by Taylor in November 1961, this commit- ment would have been open-ended, "to deal with any escalation the communists might choose to impose." 32

In October 1963, Taylor and McNamara tried once again: by proposing to link the withdrawal announcement about 1,000 men to a clearly defined and public policy "objective" of defeating communism. Once again Kennedy, by subtle changes of language, declined to go along. His refusal is the more interesting when we see that the word and the sense he rejected in October 1963 (which would have made the military "objective" the overriding one) are explicitly sanc- tioned by Johnson's first policy document, NSAM 273.

A paraphrase of NSAM 273's seemingly innocuous first page was leaked at the time by someone highly-placed in the White House to the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* (see Appendix B). As printed in the *Times* by E. W. Ken- worthy this paraphrase went so far as to use the very words, "overriding objec- tive," which Kennedy had earlier rejected. 33 This tribute to the words' symbolic importance is underlined by the distortion of NSAM 273, paragraph 1, in the Pentagon Papers, so that the controversial words "central objective" never once appear. 37 Yet at least two separate studies understand the "objective" to consti- tute a "commitment": "NSAM 273 reaffirms the U.S. commitment to defeat the VC in South Vietnam." 38 This particular clue to the importance of NSAM 273 in generating a policy commitment is all the more interesting, in that the Govern- ment edition of the Pentagon Papers has suppressed the page on which it appears.

PROPOSED
STATEMENT
OCT. 2, 1963
(McNamara-Taylor)

The security of South Vietnam remains vital to United States security. For this reason we adhere to the overriding objective of denying this country to Communism and of suppressing the Viet Cong insurgency as promptly as possible.

Although we are deeply concerned by repressive practices, effective performance in the conduct of the war should be the determining factor in our relations with the GVN.³⁸

ACTUAL STATEMENT
OCT. 2, 1963
(White House-Kennedy)

The security of South Vietnam is a major interest of the United States as other free nations. We will adhere to our policy of working with the people and Government of South Vietnam to deny this country to communism and to suppress the externally stimulated and supported insurgency of the Viet Cong as promptly as possible. Effective performance in this undertaking is the central objective of our policy in South Vietnam.

While such practices have not yet significantly affected the war effort, they could do so in the future.

It remains the policy of the United States, in South Vietnam as in other parts of the world, to support the efforts of the people of that country to defeat aggression and to build a peaceful and free society.³⁴

NSAM 273 (SECRET)
NOV. 26, 1963
(White House-Johnson)

It remains the central objective of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported communist conspiracy. The test of all U.S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contributions to this purpose.³⁵

NSAM 273, PARAGRAPH 9(?): THE "CASE" FOR ESCALATION

NSAM 273's suppression of Kennedy's political goal ("to build a peaceful and free society"), is accompanied by its authorization of planning for "selected actions of graduated (i.e., escalating) scope and intensity" against North Vietnam.³⁹ This shift from political to military priorities was properly symbolized by NSAM 273's use of the word "objective": for in November 1961 the rejected word had been linked to escalation proposals such as "the 'Rostow plan' of applying graduated pressures" on North Vietnam,⁴⁰ which Kennedy had then also rejected and which Johnson now also revived. Rostow personally was able to submit to the new President "a well-reasoned case for a gradual escalation" within days of Kennedy's assassination;⁴¹ and it is clear that NSAM 273 saw where such escalations might lead. In its last provision, which sounds almost as if it might have been drafted by Rostow personally, "State was directed to develop a strong, documented case 'to demonstrate to the world the degree to which the Viet Cong is controlled, sustained, and supplied from Hanoi, through Laos and other channels.'" ⁴²

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At the time of this directive it was known, and indeed admitted in the U.S. press, that "all the weapons captured by the United States . . . were either homemade or had been previously captured from the GVN/USA."⁴³ William Jordan, an official directed in January 1963 to get information on Northern infiltration, had already reported on April 5 that he could not: "we are unable to document and develop any hard evidence of infiltration after October 1, 1962."⁴⁴ In the words of a State Department representative on the Special Group, "the great weight of evidence and doctrine proved 'that the massive aggression theory was completely phony.'"⁴⁵

But where the January directive was to get information, NSAM 273's was different, to make a "case."⁴⁶ The evidence for the "case" seems to have been uncovered soon after the directive, but at the price of controversy.

By February 1964, apparently,

The Administration was firmly convinced from interceptions of radio traffic between North Vietnam and the guerrillas in the South that Hanoi controlled and directed the Vietcong. Intelligence analyses of the time [February 12, 1964] stated, however, that "The primary sources of Communist strength in South Vietnam are indigenous."⁴⁷

This is interesting, for radio intercepts also supplied firm grounds for escalation during the Tonkin Gulf incidents of August 1964, the *Pueblo* incident of January 1968, and the Cambodian invasion of May 1970—three escalations which were all preceded by like controversies between intelligence operations and analysts. And in these three escalations the key intercept evidence later turned out to be highly suspicious if not indeed deliberately falsified or "phony."⁴⁸ In like manner Congress should learn whether the radio intercepts establishing Hanoi's external direction and control of the Vietcong emerged before or (as it would appear) after the directive to develop just such a "case."

It is clear that at the time the military and CIA understood the novel opportunities afforded them by NSAM 273: within three weeks they had submitted an operations plan (the famous OPLAN 34A memorandum of December 19) which unlike its predecessors included overt as well as covert and nonattributable operations against North Vietnam, up to and including air attacks.⁴⁹ Yet this novelty is denied by all the Pentagon studies which mention NSAM 273; it is admitted by only one Pentagon study (IV.C.2.b), which (as we shall see) discusses NSAM 273 without identifying it.

The full text of NSAM 273 of November 26, 1963, remains unknown. In all three editions of the Pentagon Papers there are no complete documents between the five cables of October 30 and McNamara's memorandum of December 21; the 600 pages of documents from the Kennedy Administration end on October 30. It is unlikely that this striking lacuna is accidental. We do, however, get an ominous picture of NSAM 273's implications from General Maxwell Taylor's memorandum of January 22, 1964:

National Security Action Memorandum No. 273 makes clear the resolve of the President to ensure victory over the externally directed and supported communist insurgency in South Vietnam. . . . The Joint Chiefs of Staff are convinced that, in keeping with the guidance in NSAM 273, the United States must make plain to the enemy our determination to see the Vietnam campaign through to a favorable conclusion. To do this, we must prepare

for whatever level of activity may be required and, being prepared, must then proceed to take actions as necessary to achieve our purposes surely and promptly.⁵⁰

The Joint Chiefs urged the President to end "self-imposed restrictions," to go beyond planning to the implementation of covert 34A operations against the North and Laos, and in addition to "conduct aerial bombing of key North Vietnam targets."

It was not only the military who drew such open-ended conclusions from the apparently "limited" wording of NSAM 273. As a State Department official told one Congressional committee in February 1964, "the basic policy is set that we are going to stay in Vietnam in a support function as long as needed to win the war."⁵¹ McNamara himself told another committee that the United States had a commitment to win, rather than "support":

The survival of an independent government in South Vietnam is so important . . . that I can conceive of no alternative other than to take all necessary measures within our capability to prevent a Communist victory.⁵²

All of this, like the text of NSAM 273 itself, corroborates the first-hand account of the November 24 meeting reported some years ago by Tom Wicker. According to that account Johnson's commitment, a message to the Saigon government, was not made lightly or optimistically. The issue was clearly understood, if not the ultimate consequences:

Lodge . . . gave the President his opinion that hard decisions would be necessary to save South Vietnam. "Unfortunately, Mr. President," the Ambassador said, "you will have to make them." The new President, as recalled by one who was present, scarcely hesitated. "I am not going to lose Vietnam," he said. "I am not going to be the President who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went." . . . His instructions to Lodge were firm. The Ambassador was to return to Saigon and inform the new government there that the new government in Washington intended to stand by previous commitments and continue its help against the Communists. In effect, he told Lodge to assure Big Minh that Saigon "can count on us." That was a pledge. . . . All that would follow . . . had been determined in that hour of political decision in the old Executive Office Building, while . . . Oswald gasped away his miserable life in Parkland Hospital.⁵³

The new President's decisions to expand the war by bombing and to send U.S. troops would come many months later. But he had already satisfied the "military" faction's demand for an unambiguous commitment, and ordered their "political" opponents to silence.

NSAM 273(2) AND 273(6): THE DOUBLETALK ABOUT "WITHDRAWAL"

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had consistently and persistently advised their civilian overseers (e.g., on May 10, 1961 and January 13, 1962) that for what they construed as the "unalterable objectives" of victory a decision should be made to

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and persistently advised their civilian aide (on July 13, 1962) that for what they contended a decision should be made to

deploy additional U.S. forces, including combat troops if necessary.⁵⁴ They were opposed from the outset by the proponents of a more political "counterinsurgency" concept, such as Roger Hilsman. But in April 1962 Ambassador Galbraith in New Delhi proposed to President Kennedy a different kind of (in his words) "political solution." Harriman, he suggested, should tell the Russians

of our determination not to let the Viet Cong overthrow the present government. . . . The Soviets should be asked to ascertain whether Hanoi can and will call off the Viet Cong activity in return for *phased American withdrawal*, liberalization in the trade relations between the two parts of the country and general and non-specific agreement to talk about reunification after some period of tranquility.⁵⁵

It is of course highly unusual for ambassadors to report directly to presidents outside of "channels." Contrary to usual practice the memorandum did not come up through Secretary Rusk's office; the White House later referred the memorandum for the comments of the Secretary of Defense (and the Joint Chiefs), but *not* of the Secretary of State. The very existence of such an unusual memorandum and procedure demonstrates that President Kennedy was personally interested in at least keeping his "political" options open. This was the second occasion on which Kennedy had used the former Harvard professor as an independent "watchdog" to evaluate skeptically the Rusk-McNamara consensus of his own bureaucracy; and there are rumors that Professor Galbraith (who for some unexplained reason saw President Johnson on November 23, 1963) continued to play this role in late 1963, after his return to Harvard. Another such independent "watchdog" was Kennedy's White House assistant, Michael Forrestal.

The response of the Joint Chiefs to Galbraith's "political solution" was predictably chilly. They argued that it would constitute "disengagement from what is by now a well-known commitment," and recalled that in the published letter of December 14, 1961 to Diem, President Kennedy had written that "we are prepared to help" against a campaign "supported and directed from outside."⁵⁶ In their view this language affirmed "support . . . to whatever extent may be necessary," but their particular exegesis, which Kennedy declined to endorse in October 1963, did not become official until Johnson's NSAM 273(1).

On the contrary, for one reason or another, the Defense Department began in mid-1962 "a formal planning and budgetary process" for precisely what Galbraith had contemplated, a "phased withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam."⁵⁷ Pentagon Paper IV.B.4, which studies this process, ignores the Galbraith memorandum entirely; and refers instead to what Leslie Gelb calls "the euphoria and optimism of July 1962."⁵⁸ Assuredly there were military professions of optimism, in secret as well as public documents.⁵⁹ These professions of optimism do not, however, explain why in 1963 the actual level of U.S. military personnel continued to rise, from 9,865 at New Year's⁶⁰ (with projected highs at that time of 11,600 in Fiscal Year 1963, 12,200 in February 1964, and 12,200 in February 1965) to unanticipated levels of 14,000 in June and 16,500 on October.⁶¹ About these troop increases, which Diem apparently opposed,⁶² the Pentagon Papers are silent.

By mid-1963, with the aggravating political crisis in Vietnam, the pressure to move ahead with withdrawal plans was increasing. This increased pressure was motivated not by military "euphoria" (if indeed it ever had been) but by political dissatisfaction. A State Department telegram from Rusk to Lodge on August 29, 1963, expresses the opinion that U.S. political pressures on Diem would otherwise be futile:

Unless such talk included a real *sanction* such as a threatened *withdrawal* of our support, it is unlikely that it would be taken seriously by a man who may feel that we are inescapably *committed* to an anti-Communist Vietnam.⁶³

Pentagon Paper IV.B.4 ignores this telegram as well; yet even it (in marked contrast to Leslie Gelb's "Summary and Analysis" of it) admits that

Part of the motivation behind the stress placed on U.S. force withdrawal, and particularly the seemingly arbitrary desire to effect the 1,000-man withdrawal by the end of 1963, apparently was as a signal to influence both the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese and set the stage for possible later steps that would help bring the insurgency to an end.⁶⁴

At the time of Galbraith's proposal for talks about phased U.S. withdrawal between Harriman and the Russians, Harriman was Chairman of the American delegation to the then deadlocked Geneva Conference on Laos, which very shortly afterwards reconvened for the rapid conclusion of the 1962 Geneva Agreements. Relevant events in that development include a sudden U.S. troop buildup in Thailand in May, the agreement among the three Laotian factions to form a coalition government on June 11, and Khrushchev's message the next day hailing the coalition agreement as a "pivotal event" in Southeast Asia and good augury for the solution of "other international problems which now divide states and create tension."⁶⁵ The signing of the Geneva Accords on July 23 was accompanied by a partial withdrawal of U.S. troops in Thailand, as well as by a considerable exacerbation of Thai-U.S. relations, to the extent that Thailand, infuriated by lack of support in its border dispute with Cambodia, declared a temporary boycott of SEATO.⁶⁶

The 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos were marked by an unusual American willingness to "trust" the other side.⁶⁷ Chester Cooper confirms that their value lay in

a private deal worked out between the leaders of the American and Soviet delegations—the "Harriman-Pushkin Agreement." In essence the Russians agreed to use their influence on the Pathet Lao, Peking, and Hanoi to assure compliance with the terms agreed on at the Conference. In exchange for this, the British agreed to assure compliance by the non-Communists.⁶⁸

He also confirms that, before Harriman and Kennedy could terminate U.S. support for the CIA's protege in Laos, Phoumi Nosavan, "some key officials in our Mission there . . . had to be replaced."⁶⁹ The U.S. *Foreign Service List* shows that the officials recalled from Vientiane in the summer of 1962 include both of the resident military attachés and also the CIA Station Chief, Gordon L. Jorgensen.⁷⁰

This purge of right-wing elements in the U.S. Mission failed to prevent immediate and conspicuous violation of the Agreements by Thai-based elements of the U.S. Air Force through jet overflights of Laos. These same overflights, according to Hilsman, had been prohibited by Kennedy, on Harriman's urging, at a National Security Council meeting. In late October 1963 Pathet Lao Radio began to complain of stepped-up intrusions by U.S. jet aircraft, as well as of a new military offensive by Phoumi's troops (about which we shall say more later).⁷¹

According to Kenneth O'Donnell, President Kennedy had himself (like Galbraith) abandoned hopes for a military solution as early as the spring of 1963.

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O'Donnell allegedly heard from Kennedy then "that he had made up his mind that after his re-election he would take the risk of unpopularity and make a complete withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam . . . in 1965."⁷² Whether the President had so unreservedly and so early adopted the Galbraith perspective is debatable; there is, however, no questioning that after the Buddhist crisis in August the prospect of accelerated or total withdrawal was openly contemplated by members of the bureaucracy's "political" faction, including the President's brother.

How profoundly this issue had come to divide "political" and "military" inter-
preters of Administration policy is indicated by General Krulak's minutes of a
meeting in the State Department on August 31, 1963:

Mr. Kattenburg stated . . . it was the belief of Ambassador Lodge that, if
we undertake to live with this repressive regime . . . we are going to be
thrown out of the country in six months. He stated that at this juncture it
would be better for us to make the decision to get out honorably. . . .
Secretary Rusk commented that Kattenburg's recital was largely speculative;
that it would be far better for us to start on the *firm basis of two things—
that we will not pull out of Vietnam until the war is won, and that we will
not run a coup.* Mr. McNamara expressed agreement with this view. Mr.
Rusk . . . then asked the Vice President if he had any contribution to
make. The Vice President stated that he agreed with Secretary Rusk's con-
clusions completely; that he had great reservations himself with respect to
a coup, particularly so because he had never really seen a genuine alternative
to Diem. He stated that from both a practical and a political viewpoint, it
would be a *disaster to pull out*; that we should stop playing cops and robbers
and . . . once again go about *winning the war.*⁷³

At this meeting (which the President did not attend) the only opposition to
this powerful Rusk-McNamara-Johnson consensus was expressed by two more
junior State Department officials with OSS and CIA backgrounds: Paul Katten-
burg (whom Rusk interrupted at one heated point) and Roger Hilsman. One
week later, however, Robert Kennedy, who was the President's chief trouble-
shooter in CIA, Vietnam, and counterinsurgency affairs, himself questioned
Secretary Rusk's "firm basis" and entertained the solution which Johnson had
called a "disaster":

The first and fundamental question, he felt, was what we were doing in
Vietnam. As he understood it, we were there to help the people resisting a
Communist take-over. The first question was whether a Communist take-
over could be successfully resisted with any government. If it could not,
now was the time to get out of Vietnam entirely, rather than waiting. If the
answer was that it could, but not with a Diem-Nhu government as it was
now constituted, we owed it to the people resisting Communism in Vietnam
to give Lodge enough *sanctions* to bring changes that would permit success-
ful resistance.⁷⁴

One way or another, in other words, withdrawal was the key to a "political"
solution.

These reports show Robert Kennedy virtually isolated (save for the support
of middle-echelon State officials like Hilsman and Kattenburg) against a strong
Rusk-McNamara bureaucratic consensus (supported by Lyndon Johnson). Yet

in October and November both points of Mr. Rusk's "firm basis" were undermined by the White House: unconditional plans for an initial troop withdrawal were announced on November 20; and the United States, by carefully meditated personnel changes and selective aid cuts, gave signals to dissident generals in Saigon that it *would* tolerate a coup. The first clear signal was the unusually publicized removal on October 5 of the CIA station chief in Saigon, John Richardson, because of his close identification with Diem's brother Ngo dinh Nhu. And, as Leslie Gelb notes, "In October we cut off aid to Diem in a direct rebuff, giving a green light to the generals."⁷⁵

But this brief political trend, publicly announced as late as November 20, was checked and reversed by the new President at his first substantive policy meeting on November 24. As he himself reports,

I told Lodge and the others that I had serious misgivings. . . . Congressional demands for our withdrawal from Vietnam were becoming louder and more insistent. I thought we had been mistaken in our failure to support Diem. . . . I told Lodge that I had not been happy with what I read about our Mission's operations in Vietnam earlier in the year. There had been too much internal dissension. I wanted him to develop a strong team. . . . In the next few months we sent Lodge a new deputy, a new CIA chief, a new director of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) operations, and replacements for other key posts in the U.S. Embassy.⁷⁶

In other words, Richardson's replacement (presumably Frederick W. Flott) was himself replaced (by Peer de Silva, an Army Intelligence veteran). Others who were purged included the number two Embassy official, William Trueheart, a former State intelligence officer, and John W. Mecklin, the USIA director; both Trueheart and Mecklin were prominent, along with Kattenburg and Hilsman, in the "get Diem" faction. This purge of the Embassy was accompanied by the replacement, on January 7, 1964, of Paul Kattenburg as Chairman of the Vietnam Inter-Department Working Group, and soon after by the resignation of Roger Hilsman.⁷⁷ The State Department's *Foreign Service List* failed to reflect the rapidity with which this secret purge was affected.⁷⁸

Above all NSAM 273 sent a new signal to the confused Saigon generals, to replace the "political" signals of October and November. For the first time (as we shall see) they were told to go ahead with a "graduated" or escalating program of clandestine military operations against North Vietnam.⁷⁹ On January 16 these 34A Operations were authorized to begin on February 1. In Saigon as in Washington, a brief interlude of government by politically minded moderates gave way to a new "military" phase. On January 30, Nguyen Khanh ousted the Saigon junta headed by Duong van Minh, on the grounds that some of its members were "paving the way for neutralism and thus selling out the country."⁸⁰ According to the Pentagon Papers Khanh notified his American adviser, Col. Jasper Wilson, of the forthcoming coup; but in a recent interview Khanh has claimed Wilson told him of the American-organized coup less than twenty-four hours in advance.⁸¹

Lyndon Johnson, like other observers, discounts the novelty of NSAM 273, by referring back to President Kennedy's firm statements in two TV interviews of early September. In one of these Kennedy had said, "I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw." In the other, he had argued against any cut in U.S. aid to South Vietnam: "I don't think we think that would be helpful at this time. . . . You might have a situation which could bring about a col-

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lapse."⁸² From these two statements Ralph Stavins has also concluded that "had John F. Kennedy lived, he would not have pulled out of Southeast Asia and would have taken any steps necessary to avoid an ignominious defeat at the hands of the Viet Cong."⁸³

But Kennedy had clearly shifted between early September 1963 (when he had pulled back from encouraging a reluctant Saigon coup) and late November (after he had given the signals for one). The TV interviews soon proved to be poor indicators of his future policy: by mid-October Kennedy was making significant aid cuts, as requested by dissident generals in Saigon, in order to weaken Diem's position, and above all to remove from Saigon the CIA-trained Special Forces which Diem and Nhu relied on as a private guard.⁸⁴ And on October 2 the White House statement had announced that

Secretary McNamara and General Taylor reported their judgment that the major part of the U.S. military task can be completed by the end of 1965, though there may be a continuing requirement for a limited number of U.S. training personnel. They reported that by the end of this year, the U.S. program for training Vietnamese should have progressed to the point where 1,000 U.S. military personnel assigned to South Viet-Nam can be withdrawn.⁸⁵

This language constituted a personal "judgment" rather than an authorized "plan" (or, as Mr. Gelb calls it, a "public . . . promise"). The distinction was recognized by the secret McNamara-Taylor memorandum of October 2 which proposed it. McNamara and Taylor, moreover, recommended an announcement as "consistent" with a program whose inspiration was explicitly political:

an application of selective short-term pressures, principally economic, and the conditioning of long-term aid on the satisfactory performance by the Diem government in meeting military and political objectives which in the aggregate equate to the requirements of final victory.⁸⁶

The memo called for the Defense Department "to announce in the very near future presently prepared plans [as opposed to intentions] to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel"⁸⁷ (p. 555). This recommendation was approved by the President on October 5, and incorporated in NSAM 263 of October 11, but with the proviso that "no formal announcement be made of the implementation of plans to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963."⁸⁸

Instead the President began to leak the NSAM 263 plans informally. In his press conference of October 31, on the eve of the coup against Diem, the President answered an informed question about "any speedup in the withdrawal from Vietnam" by speculating that "the first contingent would be 250 men who are not involved in what might be called front-line operations."⁸⁹ A fortnight later he was more specific, in the context of a clearly political formulation of U.S. policy objectives:

That is our object, to bring Americans home, permit the South Vietnamese to maintain themselves as a free and independent country, and permit democratic forces within the country to operate. . . . We are going to bring back several hundred before the end of the year. But on the question of the exact number, I thought we would wait until the meeting of November 20th.⁹⁰

The November 20 meeting was an extraordinary all-agency Honolulu Conference of some 45 to 60 senior Administration officials, called in response to the President's demand for a "full-scale review" of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, following the overthrow of Diem.⁹¹ This all-agency Conference, like the follow-up "Special Meeting" of June 1964, is apparently to be distinguished from the regular SecDef Honolulu Conferences, such as the Seventh in May 1963 and the Eighth in March 1964.⁹² It was extraordinary in its size and high-level participation (McNamara, Rusk, McCone, McGeorge Bundy, Lodge, Taylor, Harkins), yet Robert Kennedy, the President's Vietnam trouble-shooter, did not attend: on November 20 he celebrated his birthday at home in Washington. (The only Cabinet members left in Washington were Attorney General Robert Kennedy, HEW Secretary Celebrezze, and the new Postmaster General John Gronouski. Because of a coincident Cabinet trip to Japan, Dillon of Treasury, Hodges of Commerce, Wirtz of Labor, Freeman of Agriculture, and Udall of the Interior were also in Honolulu during this period.)⁹³

As the President's questioner of October 31 was apparently aware, the issue was no longer whether 1,000 men would be withdrawn (with a Military Assistance Program reduction in Fiscal 1965 of \$27 million), but whether the withdrawal program might not be *accelerated* by six months, with a corresponding MAP aid reduction of \$33 million in Fiscal 1965.⁹⁴ Planning for this second "Accelerated Plan" had been stepped up after the October 5 decision which authorized the first.⁹⁵ The issue was an urgent one, since the Fiscal 1965 budget would have to be presented to Congress in January.

The chronology of Pentagon Paper IV.B.4, on Phased Withdrawal of U.S. Forces, tells us that on November 20, two days before the assassination, the Honolulu Conference secretly "agreed that the Accelerated Plan (speed-up of force withdrawal by six months directed by McNamara in October) should be maintained."⁹⁶ In addition the Honolulu Conference issued a press release which, according to the *New York Times*, "reaffirmed the United States plan to bring home about 1,000 of its 16,500 troops from South Vietnam by January 1."⁹⁷ Thus the language of NSAM 273 of November 26, by going back to the status quo ante October 5, was itself misleading, as is the careful selection from it in the Pentagon Study. By reverting to the informal "objective" of October 2, NSAM 273(2) tacitly effaced both the formalized plans of NSAM 263 (October 5 and 11) announced on November 20, and *also* the Accelerated Plan discussed and apparently agreed to on the same day. NSAM 273(6), according to most citations of it, would have explicitly "maintained both military and economic programs . . . at levels as high as those . . . of the Diem regime."⁹⁸

Most volumes of the Pentagon Papers attribute the letter and spirit of NSAM 273 to a misplaced military "optimism."⁹⁹ But President Johnson's memoirs confirm the spirit of urgency and "serious misgivings" which others have attributed to the unscheduled Sunday meeting which approved it.¹⁰⁰ President Kennedy had envisaged no formal meetings on that Sunday: instead he would have met Lodge privately for lunch at his private Virginia estate (or, according to William Manchester at Camp David).¹⁰¹ But President Johnson, while still in Dallas on November 22, "felt a national security meeting was essential at the earliest possible moment"; and arranged to have it set up "for that same evening."¹⁰²

Johnson, it is true, tells us that his "first exposure to the details of the problem of Vietnam came forty-eight hours after I had taken the oath of office,"¹⁰³ i.e., on Sunday, November 24. But Pentagon Study IV.B.4 and the *New York Times* make it clear that on Saturday morning, for fifty minutes, the President and McNamara discussed a memorandum of some four or five typewritten pages:

extraordinary all-agency Honolulu Conference officials, called in response to "review" of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, all-agency Conference, like the follow-up apparently to be distinguished from the such as the Seventh in May 1963 and the primary in its size and high-level participation. George Bundy, Lodge, Taylor, Harkins), Vietnam trouble-shooter, did not attend: only at home in Washington. (The only were Attorney General Robert Kennedy, Postmaster General John Gronouski, Japan, Dillon of Treasury, Hodges of Agriculture, and Udall of the Interior

October 31 was apparently aware, the issue would be withdrawn (with a Military Assistance of \$27 million), but whether the was extended by six months, with a corresponding Fiscal 1965.¹⁰⁴ Planning for this second step after the October 5 decision which was the urgent one, since the Fiscal 1965 budget was not ready until January.

Study IV.B.4, on Phased Withdrawal of U.S. troops, two days before the assassination, the fact that the Accelerated Plan (speed-up of the plan by McNamara in October) should be discussed at the All-agency Conference issued a press release which "reaffirmed the United States plan to withdraw 100,000 troops from South Vietnam by January 1965." NSAM 273 of November 26, by going back to the original plan, is a bit misleading, as is the careful selection of the informal "objective" of October 5. The formalized plans of NSAM 263 of October 20, and also the Accelerated Plan of October 20, same day. NSAM 273(6), according to the study, "maintained both military and political objectives as those . . . of the Diem regime."¹⁰⁸ The study attributes the letter and spirit of NSAM 263 to President Johnson's memoirs concerning "misgivings" which others have attributed to the study. The study says that Johnson approved it.¹⁰⁰ President Kennedy was at Sunday: instead he would have met at his Virginia estate (or, according to William Westmoreland, while still in Dallas on a meeting was essential at the earliest possible date "for that same evening."¹⁰² The study says that the exposure to the details of the problem was "I had taken the oath of office,"¹⁰³ i.e., Study IV.B.4 and the *New York Times* article, for fifty minutes, the President and some four or five typewritten pages:

In that memo, Mr. McNamara said that the new South Vietnamese government was confronted by serious financial problems, and that the U.S. must be prepared to raise planned MAP levels.¹⁰⁴

The Chronology adds to this information the statement that "funding well above current MAP plans was envisaged."¹⁰⁵

The true significance of the symbolic 1,000-man withdrawal was as a political signal; and politics explains why NSAM 263 was overridden. As we have seen, another Pentagon study admits that

The seemingly arbitrary desire to effect the 1,000-man reduction by the end of 1963, apparently was as a signal to influence both the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese and set the stage for possible later steps that would help bring the insurgency to an end.¹⁰⁶

Different officials no doubt had different "possible later steps" in mind. But, as the Kennedy Administration must have known in early October, the August 29 proposal by de Gaulle for the reunification and neutralization of Vietnam could only have been strengthened by this signal.¹⁰⁷ Precisely the same thinking, as we have seen, dictated the policy reversal of November 24: U.S. programs would be maintained at at least their old levels, "so that the new GVN would not be tempted to regard the U.S. as seeking to disengage."¹⁰⁸

NSAM 263 of October 11, which approved Kennedy's ill-fated withdrawal plan, formalized a presidential decision of October 5, sandwiched between the return of his Paris Ambassador, Charles Bohlen, on October 3, and the arrival in Washington on October 5 of French Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville.¹⁰⁹ On October 7 Couve de Murville, after seeing the President, sent up another signal by his announcement (later confirmed by Arthur Schlesinger) that a visit to Washington by General de Gaulle was planned for "some time" (i.e., February) in 1964.¹¹⁰

The month of November 1963 saw significant signals from the other side of the Atlantic: renewed interest in a "political solution," signals which appalled Rusk and other members of the State Department:

The situation since the November coup had been further complicated by new proposals for a negotiated settlement involving the reunification of all of Vietnam, as envisaged in the 1954 agreements, and its neutralization on something like the Laotian pattern. The Ho Chi Minh regime . . . gave indications of renewed interest in a "political" solution of much the same character that General de Gaulle had suggested.¹¹¹

The Pentagon Papers note tersely in one chronology that in November 1963 "FRANCE proposed talks leading towards the establishment of a neutral, independent South Vietnam."¹¹² U Thant also presented Washington with proposals for a neutralist coalition government that would have included some of the pro-French Vietnamese exiles living in Paris.¹¹³ The clandestine radio of the National Liberation Front, broadcasting in South Vietnam, began in November a series of appeals for negotiations aimed not only at the Vietnamese people but also at members of the new military junta that succeeded Diem.¹¹⁴

It is true that Rusk (like Johnson and others in the Administration) was bitterly opposed to disengagement and said so both privately and publicly.¹¹⁵ But it is clear that through the last month of the Diem crisis (i.e., October) the

White House communicated more and more with Lodge directly via the CIA network, rather than through Rusk and regular State Department channels. It is also known that, in this same period, Kennedy authorized exploratory talks with Cuban representatives, in which his envoy, Ambassador William Atwood, was instructed to report to the White House directly, rather than through the State Department.¹¹⁶

Assessed in military terms, the matter of a 1,000-man troop withdrawal was not important, and one can speak loosely of a continuity between the bureaucratic policies of the Defense and State Departments (or of McNamara and Rusk) before and after the assassination. But in the steps taken by Kennedy, particularly after Diem's death, to implement and announce a withdrawal, the President was indeed giving signals of his own dissatisfaction with the existing policies of his own bureaucracy, and his willingness to entertain a new alternative.¹¹⁷

It is possible that the secret approval on November 20 of the Accelerated Troop Withdrawal Plan should be seen as flowing not from either military or diplomatic opportunity, so much as from financial necessity. The President was under double pressure to reduce government expenditure in general and the balance of payments deficit in particular. To strengthen both the domestic economy and his own political prospects he had already decided on a tax cut in 1964; in September as a consequence he had ordered "a policy of severe restraint" in the next budget, for fear of a huge \$12 to \$15 billion deficit.¹¹⁸ With respect to foreign aid in particular, Congress was even more economy-minded than the President, slashing his \$4.5 billion request for Fiscal Year 1964 by almost \$1 billion.¹¹⁹

But if the tax cut and projected budget deficit were not further to threaten the stability of the dollar in the international monetary system, it was particularly urgent that the President take steps to improve the U.S. balance of payments, and reduce the increasing outflow of gold. In early 1963 many U.S. government departments were ordered to balance their overseas expenditures against earnings (through so-called "gold dollar budgets").¹²⁰ Stringent measures taken by the Pentagon to curb overseas spending by U.S. army personnel and their dependents made it clear this was a significant factor in the balance of payments problem and gold outflow.

Partly to reduce this factor, the Pentagon proceeded with its much-publicized program to develop mobile task forces based in the United States. In October, on the eve of Operation "Big Lift," an unprecedented airlift of such mobile forces from America to Germany, Roswell Gilpatric predicted in a major policy speech that the time was near when the "United States should be able to make useful reductions in its heavy overseas military expenditures." As the *Times* noted, his "diplomatically phrased comments on reducing overseas forces" were approved by the White House.¹²¹

In this way the issue of U.S. overseas troop levels was, for both budgetary and monetary reasons, closely linked to the overall Kennedy strategy for movement towards international relaxation of the cold war and conversion to a full-employment civilian economy at home. On both scores the Kennedy Administration claimed progress in the second part of 1963, progress attested to by the increasing concern of spokesmen for the defense-aerospace industries. The signing of the U.S.-Soviet test-ban treaty on August 5 in Moscow, while a Soviet band played Gershwin's "Love Walked In," had been followed by a series of hints in both capitals of U.S.-Soviet cooperation, in the fields of space, civilian air travel, and arms limitation. In November 1963 Roswell Gilpatric announced a "major gov-

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ernment-industry planning effort" for possible transition from defense to civilian spending,¹²² while McNamara himself, in the week leading up to the assassination, hinted at a U.S.-Soviet strategic parity, "perhaps even at a lower level than today."¹²³ *Business Week*, in its last pre-assassination issue, saw no ambiguity in this delicate language: "The word came loud and clear this week from Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara: A major cut in defense spending is in the works."¹²⁴

This prediction, of course, proved false: the projected "major cut" never came, and a chief reason for this was the Vietnam war. I am not at all trying to suggest here that the new Johnson Administration moved consciously and at once to arrest the projected "civilianization" of the U.S. budget and economy. In fact the overall budget levels of the Fiscal '65 budget, initiated by Kennedy and presented by Johnson in January 1964, *did* show token reductions in spending overall, in defense, and even in defense research and development. It is said that, as late as the beginning of 1965, "aerospace companies were fully prepared for a decline in business," until the sudden "steep escalation of the Vietnam war."¹²⁵

Yet it is striking that the new Johnson Administration, while slightly reducing its overall defense procurement program (through a fall-off in the nearly completed missile procurement program) did move rapidly and significantly to increase its procurements of aircraft (the aircraft used, when finally delivered, in the Vietnam air war).¹²⁶ It is true that the 1963-1964 Kennedy budget had put forward \$6.4 billion for aircraft procurement, but in fact the Kennedy Administration made commitments from July to November at an annual rate of only \$5 billion, while the Johnson Administration finished the fiscal year with a whopping cumulative total of \$6.8 billion in new obligations. This was the highest aircraft procurement total in five years.

The huge commitment of \$1.1 billion for new aircraft procurement in February 1964 (as opposed to \$368 million in November 1963), can and indeed must be directly related to the JCS proposals in that month for the bombing of North Vietnam. These proposals, as we have seen, were put forward on the authority of NSAM 273 of November 26, 1963. Thus the budgetary and strategic implications of abandoning the November 20 decision (for an Accelerated Withdrawal Program) were far greater and more immediate than is indicated by the external budgetary outlines of overall defense spending.

It is clear that the Accelerated Withdrawal Program was abandoned three or four days after its approval on November 20, for it entailed the kind of reduction in support which NSAM 273 prohibited. In addition it would appear that the new Johnson Administration even cancelled the published decision for a 1,000-man troop withdrawal in late 1963. I myself believe that there was never any such withdrawal, or anything like it. Mr. Gelb's summary of Pentagon Study IV.B.4 states categorically that "the U.S. did effect a 1,000 man withdrawal in December of 1963"; but the study itself calls this an "accounting exercise" that "did not even represent a decline of 1,000 from the October peak of 16,732."¹²⁷ Its Chronology adds that "Although 1,000 men were technically withdrawn, no actual reduction of U.S. strength was achieved."¹²⁸

Another study states that on January 1, 1964, there were only 15,914 U.S. military personnel in Vietnam;¹²⁹ and this figure, if true, might represent an appreciable decline from the October high of 16,500 (up from 14,000 in June).¹³⁰ But this year-end figure has already been revised downwards too many times in recent years for any Pentagon estimate to have much credibility. In 1966, for example, the Pentagon told one Congressional Committee that the

1963 year-end figure was 16,575 (which if true would represent an actual increase of 75 men);¹³¹ and in 1968 it told another Committee that the figure was 16,263 (a reduction of 237).¹³² It seems possible that the only significant reduction was that of from 220 to 300 men on December 3, which had been publicly forecast by the President on October 31, and confirmed by the November 20 Honolulu press release. (This withdrawal, unlike the more drastic proposals, did not appear to entail any lowering of the MAP levels, and thus might be compatible with NSAM 273.)

NSAM 273, PARAGRAPH 7(?): GRADUATED
COVERT MILITARY OPERATIONS

All of this suggests that the Pentagon Studies misrepresent NSAM 273 systematically. Although it is of course possible that NSAM 273 had already been censored before it was submitted to some or all of the authors of the Pentagon Papers, it is striking that different studies use different fragments of evidence to arrive (by incompatible narratives) at the same false picture of continuity between November 20 and 24. One study (IV.B.3, p. 37) suggests that these were "no new programs" proposed either at the Honolulu Conference or in NSAM 273, because of the "cautious optimism" on both occasions. Another (IV.C.2.a, pp. 1-2) speaks of a "different . . . new course of action" in early 1964—the 34A covert operations—that flowed from a decision "made" at the Honolulu Conference under Kennedy and ratified on November 26 under Johnson:

The covert program was spawned in May of 1963, when the JCS directed CINCPAC to prepare a plan for GVN "hit and run" operations against NVN. These operations were to be "non-attributable" and carried out "with U.S. military material, training and advisory assistance." 4/ Approved by the JCS on 9 September as CINCPAC OPLAN 34-63, the plan was discussed during the Vietnam policy conference at Honolulu, 20 November 1963. Here a decision was made to develop a combined COMUSMACV-CAS, Saigon plan for a 12-month program of covert operations. Instructions forwarded by the JCS on 26 November specifically requested provision for: "(1) harassment; (2) diversion; (3) political pressure; (4) capture of prisoners; (5) physical destruction; (6) acquisition of intelligence; (7) generation of intelligence; and (8) diversion of DRV resources." Further, that the plan provide for "selected actions of graduated scope and intensity to include commando type coastal raids." 5/ To this guidance was added that given by President Johnson to the effect that "planning should include . . . estimates of such factors as: (1) resulting damage to NVN; (2) the plausibility of denial; (3) possible NVN retaliation; and (4) other international reaction." 6/ The MACV-CAS plan, designated OPLAN 34A, and providing for "a spectrum of capabilities for RVNAF to execute against NVN," was forwarded by CINCPAC on 19 December 1963. 7/ The idea of putting direct pressure on North Vietnam met prompt receptivity on the part of President Johnson.

The density of misrepresentations in this study, and especially this paragraph, suggest conscious deception rather than naïve error. The footnotes have unfortunately been suppressed, so we do not have the citation for the alleged directive

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of May 1963. The chronology summarizing this Study gives a clue, however, for
 it reads "11 May 63# NSAM 52# Authorized CIA-sponsored operations against
 NVN." 133 But the true date of NSAM 52, as the author must have known, was
 May 11, 1961; and indeed he makes a point of contrasting the sporadic CIA
 operations, authorized in 1961 and largely suspended in 1962, with the 34A
 "elaborate program" of *sustained* pressures, under a *military* command, in three
 planned "graduated" or *escalating* phases, which began in February 1964.

The inclusion in planning of MACV was in keeping with the Kennedy doc-
 trine, enacted after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, that responsibility for "any large
 paramilitary operation wholly or partly covert . . . is properly the primary
 responsibility of the Department of Defense." 134 Before November 26, 1963,
 U.S. covert operations in Asia had always (at least in theory) been "secret"
 and "plausibly deniable"; these were the two criteria set for itself in 1948 by
 the National Security Council when it first authorized CIA covert operations
 under its "other functions and duties" clause in the 1947 National Security
 Act. 135 Throughout 1963 the Kennedy Administration was under considerable
 pressure, public as well as within its personnel, to go beyond these guidelines,
 and intervene "frankly" rather than "surreptitiously." In May 1963 this appeal
 for escalation was publicly joined by William Henderson, an official of Socony
 Mobil which had a major economic interest in Southeast Asia, to an appeal to
 move from a "limited" to an "unlimited" commitment in that area. 136

The covert operations planning authorized by NSAM 273 seems to have been
 the threshold for at least the first of these policy changes, if not both. In contrast
 both were wholly incompatible with the Kennedy Administration's last move-
 ments toward withdrawal. In May 1963 McNamara had authorized changes in
 long-range planning "to accomplish a more rapid withdrawal" 137 and on
 November 20 in Honolulu, as we have seen, the resulting initial withdrawal of
 1,000 men was supplemented by the so-called Accelerated Plan. 138 It is hard
 to imagine, at either date, the same man or men contemplating a new 34A
 "elaborate program" of acts which threatened war, to coincide with an accelerated
 withdrawal of U.S. forces.

The next sentence of Study IV.C.2.a tells us that CINCPAC OPLAN 34-63
 was "approved by the JCS on 9 September"—this "approval" means only that,
 at the very height of the paralytic stand-off between the "political" and "military"
 factions, the Joint Chiefs forwarded one more tendentious "military" alternative
 for consideration by McNamara and above all by the 303 Committee (about
 whom the author is silent). One Gravel Pentagon Papers Chronology (III:141)
 suggests that Kennedy and his White House staff never were consulted by Mc-
 Namara about OPLAN 34-63.

The same Gravel chronology reports that CIA cross-border operations, rad-
 ically curtailed after the 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos, were resumed by
 November 19, 1963, one day before the Honolulu Conference, even though the
 first Presidential authorization cited for such renewed operations is Johnson's
 NSAM 273 of November 26. 139 Kennedy's NSAM 249 of June 25, 1963, in
 rejecting State's proposals for actions against North Vietnam, had authorized
 planning for operations against Laos conditional on further consultation; and
 it had urged review whether "additional U.S. actions should be taken in Laos
 before any action be directed against North Vietnam." 140

Although the overall language of NSAM 249 (which refers to an unpublished
 memorandum) is obscure, this wording seems to indicate that in June 1963
 Kennedy had delayed authorization of *any* action against North Vietnam. Yet
 North Vietnamese and right-wing U.S. sources agree that in this very month of

June 1963 covert operations against North Vietnam were resumed by South Vietnamese commandoes; these actions had the approval of General Harkins in Saigon, but not (according to the U.S. sources) of President Kennedy.¹⁴¹ The same sources, further corroborated by the Pentagon Papers, both linked these raids to increased military operation between South Vietnam and the Chinese Nationalists, whose own commandoes began turning up in North Vietnam in increasing numbers.¹⁴²

It has also been suggested that KMT influences, and their sympathizers in Thailand and the CIA, were behind the right-wing political assassinations and military offensive which in 1963 led to a resumption of fighting in Laos, "with new American supplies and full U.S. political support."¹⁴³ This autumn 1963 military offensive in Laos coincided with escalation of activities against Prince Sihanouk in Cambodia by the CIA-supported Khmer Serei in South Vietnam. After two infiltrating Khmer Serei agents had been captured and had publicly confessed, Cambodia on November 19 severed all military and economic ties with the United States, and one month later broke off diplomatic relations.¹⁴⁴

All of these disturbing events suggest that, in late 1963, covert operations were beginning to escape the political limitations, both internal and international (e.g., the Harriman-Pushkin agreement), established during the course of the Kennedy Administration. During the months of September and October many established newspapers, including the *New York Times*, began to complain about the CIA's arrogation of power; and this concern was echoed in Congress by Senator Mansfield.¹⁴⁵ The evidence now published in the Pentagon Papers, including Kennedy's NSAM 249 of June and the Gravel chronology's testimony to the resumption of crossborder operations, also suggests that covert operations may have been escalated in defiance of the President's secret directives.

If this chronology is correct, then Pentagon Study IV.C.2.a's efforts to show continuity between the Kennedy and Johnson regimes suggest instead that President Kennedy had lost control of covert planning and operations. OPLAN 34-63, which "apparently . . . was not forwarded to the White House"¹⁴⁶

was discussed during the Vietnam policy conference at Honolulu, 20 November 1963. Here a decision was made to develop a combined COMUSMACV-CAS, Saigon plan for a 12-month program of covert operations.

That NSAM 273's innovations were hatched at Honolulu is suggested also by the Honolulu press communiqué, which, anticipating NSAM 273(1), spoke of "an encouraging outlook for the *principal objective* of joint U.S.-Vietnamese policy in South Vietnam." In Pentagon Study IV.B.4, this anticipatory quotation is completed by language reminiscent of Kennedy's in early 1961—"the successful prosecution of the war against the Viet Cong communists."¹⁴⁷ But at the Honolulu press conference the same key phrase was pointedly (and presciently) glossed by Defense and State spokesmen Arthur Sylvester and Robert C. Manning, in language which Kennedy had never used or authorized, to mean "the successful promotion of the war against the *North Vietnam Communists*."¹⁴⁸

Study IV.C.2.a's implication that the escalation planning decision was made officially by the Honolulu Conference (rather than at it without Kennedy's authorization) is hard to reconcile with the other Studies' references to the Conference's "optimism" and projections of withdrawal. The author gives no footnote for these and crucial sentences; and in contrast to his own Chronology he does not even mention NSAM 273. His next citation is to the JCS directive on November 26 (which, we learn from his own Chronology and Stavins, repeats

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NSAM 273, it seems clear, was an important document in the history of the 1964 escalations, as well as in the reversal of President Kennedy's late and ill-fated program of "Vietnamization" by 1965. The systematic censorship and distortion of NSAM 273 in 1963 and again in 1971, by the Pentagon study and later by the *New York Times*, raises serious questions about the *bona fides* of the Pentagon study and of its release. It also suggests that the Kennedy assassination was itself an important, perhaps a crucial, event in the history of the Indochina war.

Assuredly there is much truth to be learned from the Pentagon Papers. Nevertheless their preparation, if not the drama of their release, represents one more manipulation of "intelligence" in order to influence public policy. Someone is being carefully protected by the censorship of NSAM 273, and by the concealment of the way in which the assassination of President Kennedy affected the escalation of the Indochina War. It is almost certain that McCone, perhaps the leading hawk in the Kennedy entourage, played a role in this secret policy reversal.

Elsewhere in the *Times* version of the Pentagon Papers one finds the intelligence community, and the CIA in particular, depicted as a group of lonely men who challenged the bureaucratic beliefs of their time, but whose perceptive warnings were not listened to. In June 1964, we are told, the CIA "challenged the domino theory, widely believed in one form or another within the Administration," but the President unfortunately was "not inclined to adjust policy along the lines of this analysis challenging the domino theory."¹⁵⁰ In late 1964 the "intelligence community," with George Ball and almost no one else, "tended toward a pessimistic view" of the effect of bombing on the Hanoi leaders. . . . As in the case of earlier intelligence findings that contradicted policy intentions, the study indicates no effort on the part of the President or his most trusted advisers to reshape their policy along the lines of this analysis."¹⁵¹

In part, no doubt, this is true; just as the intelligence community did include within it some of the administration's more cautious and objective advisers. But once again the impression created by such partial truth is wholly misleading, for throughout this period McCone used his authority as CIA Director to recommend a sharp escalation of the war. In March 1964 he recommended "that North Vietnam be bombed immediately and that the Nationalist Chinese Army be invited to enter the war."¹⁵² A year later he criticized McNamara's draft guidelines for the war by saying we must hit North Vietnam "harder, more frequently, and inflict greater damage."¹⁵³ Meanwhile, at the very time that some intelligence personnel discreetly revived the possibility of a Vietnam disengagement, other intelligence operations personnel proceeded with the planning which led to the Tonkin Gulf incidents.

As presented by the *New York Times*, the Pentagon Papers suggested that the Indochina war was the result of a series of mistakes. According to this model, the war was to be analyzed as a sequence of official decisions reached by public officials through constitutional procedures, and these officials (now almost all departed from office) erred in their determination of the national interest. The *Times* Pentagon Papers suggested further that good intelligence was in fact available at the time, but was unfortunately ignored in a sequence of bad de-

cy conference at Honolulu, 20 November, to develop a combined COMUSMACV program of covert operations.

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cisions. One is invited to conclude that the intelligence community should have greater influence in the future.

In my researches of the past six years I have reached almost precisely the opposite conclusion. The public apparatus of government, with respect to Indochina, has been manipulated for the furtherance of private advantage, whether bureaucratic, financial, or both simultaneously. The policies which led to escalation after escalation, though disastrous when evaluated publicly, served very well the private purposes of the individuals and institutions that consciously pursued them. And the collective influence of the so-called "intelligence community" (no community in fact, but a cockpit of competing and overlapping cabals) has been not to oppose these disasters, but to make them possible.

This is not a blanket accusation against all intelligence personnel, least of all against the relatively enlightened professionals of the CIA. It is a blanket challenge to the system of secret powers which permits the manipulation of intelligence, and the staging of so-called "political scenarios" in other nations, with impunity and without public control. This country's constitution will be still further weakened if, as after the Bay of Pigs, the exposure of an intelligence "fiasco" becomes the prelude for a further rationalization and reinforcement of a secret intelligence apparatus.

In the evolution of the Indochina war, the impact of the intelligence community has not been represented by the neglected memoranda of cautious and scholarly analysts. The power and influence of these agencies has lain in the convergence of intelligence and covert operations, and even more in the proximities of the agencies and their "proprietary" (like Air America) to ultimate centers of private power such as the firms of Wall Street and the fortunes of the Brook Club. If the American public is to gain control of its own government, then it must expose, and hopefully repeal, those secret sanctions by which these ostensibly public agencies can engage us in private wars.

After the Bay of Pigs, Congress allowed the executive to clean its own house. This time it must struggle to recover its lost control of the power to make war. It is obvious that at present the majority of Congressmen are not so inclined. There may, however, be some who will exercise their investigatory powers to pursue, expose, and ultimately end the full story of the war conspiracy.

And if not, then, in the name of peace, others must do it for them.

Notes

1. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, *Fraud and Corruption in Management of Military Club Systems, Hearings*, 92nd Cong. 1st Sess. (8 October 1969), pp. 275-279. Capital for the supply and kickback operations of Sgt. William Higdon and Sgt. Major William Woolridge, the Army's senior noncommissioned officer, came "from Deak & Co. . . . in Hong Kong . . . through an individual name[d] Frank Furci." Frank's father, Dominic Furci, was a lieutenant in the Florida Mafia family of Santos Trafficante, allegedly a major narcotics trafficker. Trafficante and Dominic Furci visited Frank Furci in Hong Kong in 1968 (p. 279; cf. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, *Organized Crime and Illicit Traffic in Narcotics, Hearings*, 88th Cong., 1st Sess., Washington: G.P.O., 1964, pp. 522-523, 928).

2. *NYT*, 7 April 1971, pp. 1, 15.

3. Ralph Stavins, "Kennedy's Private War," *New York Review of Books*, 22 July 1971, p. 26; cp. Ralph Stavins et al., *Washington Plans an Aggressive War* (New York:

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' *New York Review of Books*, 22 July
n *Plans an Aggressive War* (New York:

Vintage, 1971), p. 60. While Mr. Stavins' account is useful, he is wrong in asserting that the "303 Committee . . . came into being as a direct consequence of the egregious blundering at the Bay of Pigs." In fact this committee of deputy secretaries, known earlier as the "54-12 Committee," had been established in December 1954; Kennedy's innovation was to bureaucratize and expand its activities, particularly by establishing a Special Group (Counter-Insurgency) to insure the development of programs for it (NSAM 124, 18 January 1962; cf. Harry Howe Ransom, *The Intelligence Establishment*, Cambridge, Mass., 1970, p. 89).

4. U.S. Government edition, IV.C.2.a, p. 20; Gravel edition, III:165. Cf. *NYT*, May 18, 1964, p. 1; Arthur J. Dommen, *Conflict in Laos* (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 256. The USG ed. claims that on May 21 "the United States obtained Souvanna Phouma's permission to conduct low-level reconnaissance operations," but this "permission" was apparently deduced from a general request for assistance. Souvanna Phouma's first known response to the question of reconnaissance flights in particular was to request their discontinuance (*NYT*, June 11, 1964, p. 1; Peter Dale Scott, *The War Conspiracy* [New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1972], pp. 37-39).

5. The Study even repeats (p. 10) McNamara's discredited claim that "Our ships had absolutely no knowledge" of the 34A swift-boat operations in the area, although McNamara himself had already backed down when confronted with references to the 34A operations in our ships' cable traffic. (*Gulf of Tonkin . . . Hearing* [1968], p. 31: "Secretary McNamara: The Maddox did know what 34A was. . . . I did not say they did not know anything about it.")

6. Gravel ed., III:184-185. This passage corresponds to the suppressed page seven of USG ed., IV.C.2.b. The full text is reprinted in this volume.

7. Anthony Austin, *The President's War* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1971), pp. 334-335; cf. Scott, pp. 58, 71-75. The same Study reveals (p. 8) that the Maddox's Task Group was itself the source of the disputed "Intercept Group No. 4," which McNamara cited as "proof" of the second incident on August 4, but which probably derives in fact from the first incident on August 2.

8. Johnson's decision to bomb Hanoi was made in the isolation of the LBJ ranch on November 12, 1966 (a date supplied by Admiral Sharp). One day earlier, on November 11, he received a personal report from Ambassador Harriman on current prospects for negotiation. Cf. Scott, *The War Conspiracy*, pp. 105-106; *NYT*, November 12, 1966, p. 8.

9. USG ed., IV.C.1, pp. ii, 2; Gravel ed., III:2, 17.

10. USG ed., IV.B.5, pp. viii, 67; Gravel ed., II:207, 275-276. Leslie Gelb, Director of the Pentagon Study Task Force and author of the study summaries, himself talks in one study summary of "optimism" (III:2); and in another of "gravity" and "deterioration" (II:207).

11. USG ed., IV.B.3, pp. 37-38; Gravel ed., II:457-459; emphasis added.

12. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. viii; Gravel ed., III:117; cf. *Pentagon Papers* (New York: Times/Bantam), p. 233. Another study on Phased Withdrawal (IV.B.4, p. 26; Gravel ed., II:191) apparently quotes directly from a close paraphrase of NSAM 273 (2), not from the document itself. Yet the second page of NSAM 273 was, as we shall see, a vital document in closing off Kennedy's plans for a phased withdrawal of U.S. forces.

13. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. ix; Gravel ed., III:117.

14. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. i; Gravel ed., III:106.

15. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. 2; Gravel ed., III:150-151; cf. Stavins *et al.*, pp. 93-94.

16. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. v; Gravel ed., II:163.

17. *NYT*, November 21, 1963, pp. 1, 8; Richard P. Stebbins, *The United States in World Affairs, 1963* (New York: Harper and Row, for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1964), p. 193: "In a meeting at Honolulu on November 20, the principal U.S. authorities concerned with the war could still detect enough evidence of improvement to justify the repatriation of a certain number of specialized troops." Jim Bishop (*The Day Kennedy Was Shot*, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968, p. 107) goes further: "They may also have discussed how best to extricate the U.S. from Saigon; in fact it was a probable topic and the President may have asked the military for a

timetable of withdrawal." Cf. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. d; Gravel ed., II:170: "20 Nov. 63 . . . officials agreed that the Accelerated Plan (speed-up of force withdrawal by six months directed by McNamara in October) should be maintained."

18. *NYT*, November 25, 1963, p. 5; *Washington Post*, November 25, 1963, A2. See Appendix B.

19. USG ed., IV.C.1, p. ii; Gravel ed., III:2.

20. USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 3; Gravel ed., III:18.

21. Rusk, McNamara, Lodge, McGeorge Bundy, and apparently McCone. McCone was not known earlier to have been a participant in the Honolulu Conference, but he is so identified by USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 25 (Gravel ed., II:190).

22. It would appear that the only other new faces were Averell Harriman (who represented State in the interdepartmental "303 Committee" for covert operations) and George Ball.

23. USG ed., IV.C.1, pp. 1-3; Gravel ed., III:17-18.

24. Chester Cooper, *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1970), p. 222. Cooper should know, for he was then a White House aide to McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. If he is right, then Pentagon study references to an NSC meeting on November 26 (USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 26; Gravel ed., II:191) are wrong—naïve deductions from NSAM 273's misleading title.

25. Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), p. 45. Cf. USG ed., IV.C.1, pp. 46-47, which for "objective" reads "object."

26. Some disgruntled officials told the *New York Times* that as late as the Honolulu Conference on November 20, two days before the assassination, "there had been a concentration on 'something besides winning the war'" (*NYT*, November 25, 1963, p. 5).

27. NSAM 52 of May 11, 1961, in Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam, p. 126).

28. Rusk-McNamara memorandum of November 11, 1961, in Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), p. 152; Gravel ed., II:113.

29. McNamara memorandum of November 8, 1961, commenting on Taylor Report of November 3, 1961; Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), pp. 148-149; Gravel ed., II:108-109.

30. Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), pp. 107, 152; Gravel ed., II:110, 113, 117.

31. G. M. Kahin and J. W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam* (New York: Delta, 1967), p. 129; letter in Department of State, *Bulletin*, January 1, 1962, p. 13; Gravel ed., II:805-806.

32. Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), p. 148.

33. McNamara-Taylor Report of October 2, 1963, in Pentagon Papers (NYT/Bantam), p. 213; Gravel ed., II:753.

34. Gravel ed., II:188.

35. L. B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 45.

36. *NYT*, November 25, 1963, pp. 1, 5: "President Johnson reaffirmed today the policy objectives of his predecessor regarding South Vietnam. . . . The adoption of all measures should be determined by their potential contribution to this overriding objective."

37. In one case the disputed word "objective" is misquoted as "object" (USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 46; Gravel ed., III:50). In another, it is paraphrased as "purpose" (USG ed., IV.B.5, p. 67; Gravel ed., II:276). In all other studies this sentence is ignored.

38. USG ed., IV.B.5, p. xxxiv (suppressed); Gravel ed., II:223. Cf. USG ed., IV.B.3, p. 37; Gravel ed., II:457: "that the U.S. reaffirm its commitment."

39. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. viii; Gravel ed., III:117. Cf. The inexcusable *non sequitur* by Leslie Gelb in USG ed., IV.B.3, p. v; Gravel ed., II:412: "If there had been doubt that the limited risk gamble undertaken by Eisenhower had been transformed into an unlimited commitment under Kennedy, that doubt should have been dispelled internally by NSAM 288's statement of objectives." NSAM 288 of 17 March 1964 was of course a Vietnam policy statement under Lyndon Johnson, the first after NSAM 273, and a document which dealt specifically with the earlier noted discrepancy

1.4, p. d; Gravel ed., II:170: "20 Nov. 63 lan (speed-up of force withdrawal by six should be maintained." *Washington Post*, November 25, 1963, A2. See

8. Bundy, and apparently McCone. McCone ipant in the Honolulu Conference, but he vel ed., II:190).

new faces were Averell Harriman (who 03 Committee" for covert operations) and

II:17-18.

America in Vietnam (New York: Dodd for he was then a White House aide to resident for National Security Affairs. If an NSC meeting on November 26 (USG : wrong—naïve deductions from NSAM

Point (New York: Holt, Rinehart & . pp. 46-47, which for "objective" reads

York Times that as late as the Honolulu ore the assassination, "there had been a ; the war'" (*NYT*, November 25, 1963,

gon Papers (*NYT/Bantam*, p. 126).

omber 11, 1961, in *Pentagon Papers*

r 8, 1961, commenting on Taylor Report *NYT/Bantam*), pp. 148-149; Gravel ed.,

107, 152; Gravel ed., II:110, 113, 117.

ted States in Vietnam (New York: Delta, *Bulletin*, January 1, 1962, p. 13; Gravel

8.

: 2, 1963, in *Pentagon Papers* (*NYT/*

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: Gravel ed., II:223. Cf. USG ed., IV.B.3, firm its commitment."

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ertaken by Eisenhower had been trans- *Kennedy*, that doubt should have been

of objectives." NSAM 288 of 17 March nt under *Lyndon Johnson*, the first after

ifically with the earlier noted discrepancy

between NSAM 273's "stated objectives" and the policies it envisaged. As USG ed., IV.C.1 points out (p. 46; Gravel ed., III:50), "NSAM 288, being based on the official recognition of the fact that the situation in Vietnam was considerably worse than had been realized at the time of . . . NSAM 273, outlined a program that called for considerable enlargement of U.S. effort. . . . In tacit acknowledgment that this greater commitment of prestige called for an enlargement of stated objectives, NSAM 288 did indeed enlarge these objectives. . . . NSAM 288 escalated the objectives into a defense of all of Southeast Asia and the West Pacific."

40. Taylor Report of November 3, 1961, in Gravel ed., II:96, emphasis added; cf. USG ed., IV.C.2.b, p. 21 (not in Gravel edition).

41. Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 527; quoted in USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. 2, Gravel ed., II:151.

42. USG ed., IV.B.5, p. 67; Gravel ed., II:276; cf. W. W. Rostow, "Guerrilla Warfare in Underdeveloped Areas," in Lt. Col. T. N. Greene ed., *The Guerrilla—and How to Fight Him: Selections from the Marine Corps Gazette* (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 59: "We are determined to help destroy this international disease, that is, guerrilla war designed, initiated, supplied, and led from outside an independent nation."

43. Stavins, p. 70.

44. Report to Special Group, in Stavins, p. 69. Roger Hilsman (p. 533, cf. p. 529) later revealed that, according to official Pentagon estimates, "fewer infiltrators had come over the trails in 1963 [7,400] than in 1962 [12,400]."

45. Stavins, pp. 70-71.

46. This changed attitude towards the facts must have especially affected Roger Hilsman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, who had just circulated a contrary memorandum inside the government: "We have thus far no reason to believe that the Vietcong have more than a limited need for outside resources" (Hilsman, p. 525). Hilsman soon resigned and made his opposing case publicly.

47. *Pentagon Papers* (*NYT/Bantam*), p. 242; quoting SNIE 50-64 of February 12, 1964, in USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 4.

48. Cf. my forthcoming book, *The War Conspiracy*, cc. 3, 5, 6.

49. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. 46; Gravel ed., III:151.

50. *Pentagon Papers* (*NYT/Bantam*), pp. 274-275.

51. U.S. Cong., House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Winning the Cold War: the U.S. Ideological Offensive, Hearings*, 88th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Feb. 20, 1964), statement by Robert Manning, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs), p. 811.

52. U.S., Cong., House, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965, Hearings*, 88th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: G.P.O., 1964), Part IV, p. 12; cf. pp. 103-104, 117-118.

53. Tom Wicker, *JFK and LBJ: The Influence of Personality Upon Politics* (New York: William Morrow: 1968), pp. 205-206. Cf. I. F. Stone, *New York Review of Books*, March 28, 1968, p. 11; Marvin Kalb and Elie Abel, *Roots of Involvement* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 153: "Lyndon Johnson, President less than forty-eight hours, had just made a major decision on Vietnam and a worrisome one."

54. JCSM-33-62 of 13 Jan. 1962; Gravel ed., II:663-666.

55. Memorandum for the President of April 4, 1962; USG ed., V.B.4, pp. 461-462; Gravel ed., II:671, emphasis added.

56. USG ed., V.B.4, p. 464; Gravel ed., II:671-672.

57. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. i; Gravel ed., II:160.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Arthur Sylvester, the Pentagon press spokesman, reported after a Honolulu Conference in May 1963 the hopes of officials that U.S. forces could be reduced "in one to three years" (*NYT*, May 8, 1963, p. 10; Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 208).

60. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1967, Hearings*, 89th Cong., 2nd Sess., Washington: G.P.O., 1966, Part 1, p. 378.

61. Projected levels in January 1963 from USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 10; Gravel ed., II:179, cf. p. 163 (Gelb).

62. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 207; *NYT*, April 27, 1963. Cooper also tells us

that he "was sent to Vietnam in the spring [of] 1963 to search for the answer to 'Can we win with Diem?' The very phrasing of the question implied more anxiety about developments in Vietnam that official statements were currently admitting" (p. 202).

63. State 272 of August 29, 1963 to Lodge, USG ed., V.B.4, p. 538; Gravel ed., II:738; emphasis added.
64. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 23; Gravel ed., II:189.
65. *NYT*, June 13, 1962, p. 3.
66. Richard P. Stebbins, *The United States in World Affairs 1962* (New York: Harper and Row, for the Council on Foreign Relations), 1963, pp. 197-200.
67. Stebbins [1962], p. 199: "This was not the kind of ironclad arrangement on which the United States had been insisting in relation to such matters as disarmament, nuclear testing, or Berlin."
68. Cooper, p. 190.
69. Cooper, p. 189.
70. Hilsman, pp. 152-153; Scott, *The War Conspiracy*, pp. 33-35.
71. *FBI Daily Report*, October 24, 1963, PPP3; October 28, 1963, PPP4; October 31, 1963, PPP4. About the same time State Department officials began to refer to "intelligence reports" of increased North Vietnamese activity in Laos, including the movement of trucks; but it is not clear whether these intelligence sources were on the ground or in the air (*NYT*, October 27, 1963, p. 27; October 30, 1963, p. 1).
72. Kenneth O'Donnell, "LBJ and the Kennedy's," *Life* (August 7, 1970), p. 51; *NYT*, August 3, 1970, p. 16. O'Donnell's claim is corroborated by his correct reference (the first I have noted in print) to the existence of an authorized plan in NSAM 263 of October 11: "The President's order to reduce the American personnel in Vietnam by 1,000 men before the end of 1963 was still in effect on the day that he went to Texas" (p. 52).
73. *Pentagon Papers* (NYT/Bantam), pp. 204-205; USG ed., V.B.4, pp. 541-543; Gravel ed., II:742-743, emphasis added.
74. Hilsman, p. 501, emphasis added.
75. USG ed., IV.B.5, p. viii; Gravel ed., II:207. Cf. Chester Cooper, *The Lost Crusade* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1970), p. 220: "The removal of Nhu's prime American contact, the curtailment of funds for Nhu's Special Forces, and, most importantly, the cutting off of import aid must have convinced the generals that they could proceed without fear of subsequent American sanctions."
76. Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 44.
77. Kattenburg had been named Chairman on August 4, 1963, the same day that Frederick Flott assumed his duties in Saigon. Mecklin's replacement, Barry Zorthian, assumed duties in Saigon on February 2, 1964.
78. For the purposes of the April 1964 State Department *Foreign Service List* de Silva remained attached to Hong Kong, and both Richardson and Flott were still in Saigon. In fact de Silva was functioning as Saigon CAS station chief by February 9 (USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 33). Trueheart did not surface in Washington until May; his replacement, David Nes, officially joined the Saigon Embassy on January 19, but was already in Saigon during the McNamara visit of mid-December 1963 (USG ed., IV.C.8 [alias IV.C.11], p. 59; (Gravel ed., III:494).
79. USG ed., IV.B.5, p. 67.
80. Franz Schurmann, Peter Dale Scott, Reginald Zelnik, *The Politics of Escalation* (New York: Fawcett, 1966), p. 26.
81. USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 35; Gravel ed., III:37; *Stern* (January 1970).
82. Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 61.
83. Ralph Stavins et al., *Washington Plans an Aggressive War*, p. 81.
84. A White House message on September 17 had authorized Lodge to hold up any aid program if this would give him useful leverage in dealing with Diem (CAP Message 63516; USG ed., V.B.4, II, p. 545; Gravel ed., II:743).
85. *Public Papers of the Presidents*, John F. Kennedy: 1963 (Washington: G.P.O., 1964), pp. 759-760; Gravel ed., II:188.
86. USG ed., V.B.4, Book II, pp. 555, 573; Gravel ed., II:766; emphasis added.
87. *Loc. cit.*, p. 555.

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in *World Affairs 1962* (New York: Relations), 1963, pp. 197-200.

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inspiration, pp. 33-35.

PP3; October 28, 1963, PPP4; October Department officials began to refer to name activity in Laos, including the r these intelligence sources were on the p. 27; October 30, 1963, p. 1).

nedy's," *Life* (August 7, 1970), p. 51; is corroborated by his correct reference e of an authorized plan in NSAM 263 ice the American personnel in Vietnam ll in effect on the day that he went to

04-205; USG ed., V.B.4, pp. 541-543;

II:207. Cf. Chester Cooper, *The Lost 10*: "The removal of Nhu's prime Amer- s Special Forces, and, most importantly, ed the generals that they could proceed

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7; *Stern* (January 1970).

int, p. 61.

1 *Aggressive War*, p. 81.

- 17 had authorized Lodge to hold up il leverage in dealing with Diem (CAP vel ed., II:743).

7. Kennedy: 1963 (Washington: G.P.O.,

Gravel ed., II:766; emphasis added.

88. *Loc. cit.*, p. 578; cf. IV.B.4, p. d.

89. *Public Papers*, p. 828.

90. Press Conference of November 14, 1963; *Public Papers*, pp. 846, 852.

91. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 24; Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 62; NYT, November 21, 1963, p. 8; Weintal and Bartlett, p. 71.

92. USG ed., IV.B.4, pp. a. e; Gravel ed., II:166, 171.

93. William Manchester, *The Death of a President: November 20-25, 1963* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 101, 158.

94. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 29; cf. pp. 14-16; cf. Gravel ed., II:180-192. Another study (USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 15) quotes different figures, but confirms that a reduction in the Fiscal '65 support level was agreed to at Honolulu.

95. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 23.

96. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. d; Gravel ed., II:170. The text of the same study corroborates this very unclearly (IV.B.4, p. 25; II:190), but the text is strangely self-contradictory at this point and may even have been editorially tampered with. In comparing Honolulu to NSAM 273, the Study assures us of total continuity: "Universally operative was a desire to avoid change of any kind during the critical interregnum period." Yet the same Study gives us at least one clear indication of change. McNamara on November 20 "made it clear that he thought the proposed CINCPAC MAP [Military Assistance Program] could be cut back" (p. 25; II:190); yet McNamara on November 23, in a written memorandum to the new President, "said that . . . the U.S. must be prepared to raise planned MAP levels" (p. 26; II:191; the Chronology adds that "funding well above current MAP plans was envisaged"). The study itself, very circumspectly, calls this "a hint that something might be different," only ten lines after speaking of the "universally operative . . . desire to avoid change of any kind."

What is most striking is that this Study of Phased Withdrawal makes no reference whatsoever to NSAM 273(6), which emphasized that "both military and economic programs . . . should be maintained at levels as high as those in the time of the Diem regime" (USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 3; Gravel ed., III:18). Yet the Study refers to McNamara's memorandum of November 23, which apparently inspired this directive. Mr. Gelb's summary chooses to skip from October 2 to December 21, and is silent about the Accelerated Withdrawal Plan.

97. NYT, November 21, 1963, p. 8, emphasis added. Cf. USG ed., IV.B.5, p. 67: "An uninformative press release . . . pointedly reiterated the plan to withdraw 1,000 U.S. troops." Inasmuch as this was the first formal revelation of the plan the press release does not deserve to be called "uninformative." I have been unable to locate anywhere the text of the press release.

98. Pentagon Study IV.C.1, p. 2; Gravel ed., III:18, in Appendix A. Cf. USG ed., IV.C.9.a, p. 2; Gravel ed., II:304, in Appendix C.

99. USG ed., IV.B.3, p. 37; IV.C.1, p. ii.

100. Johnson, p. 43; cf. p. 22: "South Vietnam gave me real cause for concern." Chester Cooper (*The Lost Crusade*, New York, Dodd, Mead, 1970) also writes of the "growing concern" and "the worries that were subsumed" in this memorandum; cf. I. F. Stone, *New York Review of Books*, March 28, 1968, p. 11.

101. Johnson writes that Lodge "had flown to Washington a few days earlier for scheduled conferences with President Kennedy, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and other administration officials" (p. 43). But Rusk, if he had not been turned back by the assassination, would have been in Japan.

102. Johnson, p. 16.

103. Johnson, p. 43.

104. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 26; NYT, November 24, 1963, p. 7: "The only word overheard was 'billions,' spoken by McNamara."

105. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. d; Gravel ed., II:170. A page in another Pentagon study, suppressed from the Government volumes but preserved in the Gravel edition, claims, perhaps mistakenly, that Lodge first met with the President in Washington on Friday, November 22, the day of the assassination itself. Gravel ed., II:223 (suppressed page following USG ed., IV.B.5, p. xxxiii); cf. IV.B.5, p. 67.

106. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 23; Gravel ed., II:189.
107. A *New York Times* editorial of October 7, 1963 (p. 30), observed that the "disengagement" deadline of 1965 was "a warning to the Diem-Nhu regime"; and added that de Gaulle's neutralization proposal "should not be excluded from the Administration's current reappraisal."
108. USG ed., IV.B.3, p. 37.
109. USG ed., IV.B.4, pp. d, 23; *NYT*, October 4, 1963, p. 2, October 6, 1963, p. 1.
110. *NYT*, October 8, 1963, p. 5; Arthur J. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 1016. President Kennedy, if he had lived, would have visited Asia in the same month; this was one reason for the advance trip of so many Cabinet members to Japan in November.
111. Stebbins, pp. 193-194.
112. USG ed., VI.A.1, p. 1.
113. *NYT*, 9 March 1965, p. 4; cited in Franz Schurmann, Peter Dale Scott, Reginald Zelnik, *The Politics of Escalation in Vietnam* (New York: Fawcett, 1966), p. 28.
114. Schurmann, Scott, and Zelnik, pp. 28-29.
115. Dean Rusk explicitly rejected the French proposal at his Press Conference of November 8, 1963: "To negotiate on far-reaching changes in South Viet-Nam without far-reaching changes in North Viet-Nam seems to be not in the cards." U.S. Department of State *Bulletin*, 25 November 1963, p. 811.
116. William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 144. There are unconfirmed rumors that in late 1963 Kennedy sent former Ambassador Galbraith for similar private exploratory talks with the mainland Chinese in Nepal. This action would make sense in the light of both the President's Vietnam initiative and his decision to have Roger Hilsman prepare his important address of December 13, 1963, to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, which hinted significantly at a new era of improved U.S.-Chinese relations.
117. A collation of the McNamara-Taylor Report of October 2 with the White House announcement of the same day shows that although the 1963 withdrawal announcement was attributed to McNamara and Taylor and recommended by them for "the very near future," it did not form part of the policy announcement they had proposed (Gravel ed., II:188, 752-754). Cf. Weintal and Bartlett, p. 207.
118. *NYT*, September 15, 1963, p. 1.
119. *U.S. News and World Report*, December 2, 1963, p. 50.
120. *NYT*, August 4, 1963, p. 1.
121. *NYT*, October 20, 1963, p. 66.
122. *Aviation Week*, November 11, 1963, p. 31; cf. November 18, p. 25.
123. *NYT*, November 19, 1963, p. 11.
124. *Business Week*, November 23, 1963, p. 41. *Aviation Week* took the speech to mean merely that "the defense budget will level off" (November 25, 1963, p. 29), yet was obviously concerned about "these Soviet-engineered cold war thaws" (January 6, 1964, p. 21). All these professional analysts agreed that, with the imminent completion of the original Kennedy-McNamara five-year program of defense spending on a new missile-oriented defense system, the U.S. defense budget was now at a critical turning point: "Most heavy spending for major strategic weapons such as Polaris missiles, and big bombs, has been completed. No new costly weapons systems are contemplated." (*NYT*, January 6, 1964, p. 55.)
125. *NYT*, January 17, 1966, p. 117.
126. U.S. Department of Defense, *Military Functions and Military Assistance Program: Monthly Report of Status of Funds by Functional Title*; FAD 470 (Washington: Department of Defense, 1964), p. 6.
127. USG ed., IV.B.4, pp. v, 30; Gravel ed., II: 163, 191.
128. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. e; Gravel ed., II: 171.
129. USG ed., IV.C.9.a. p. 5; Gravel ed., II:306. USG ed., IV.B.4 (p. 30) claims that the authorized ceiling projected for this date under Kennedy was 15,732, a ceiling raised under Johnson to 15,894 (Gravel ed., II:192).
130. USG ed., IV.B.4 claims an October 1963 high of 16,732; but the same study

189.
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ing to the Diem-Nhu regime"; and added
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ber 4, 1963, p. 2, October 6, 1963, p. 1.
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1 Franz Schurmann, Peter Dale Scott,
1 *Vietnam* (New York: Fawcett, 1966),

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Weintal and Bartlett, p. 207.

π 2, 1963, p. 50.

31; cf. November 18, p. 25.

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63 high of 16,732; but the same study

makes it clear elsewhere that this was a planning or projected figure, not an actual one (USG ed., IV.B.4, p. c, p. 30; Gravel ed., II:191, cf. 183). Stavins (p. 83) claims that under Kennedy the actual figure "never exceeded 16,000."

131. U.S. Cong., House, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1967, Hearings*, 89th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: G.P.O., 1966) Part I, p. 378.

132. U.S. Cong., Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Gulf of Tonkin, 1964 Incidents*, Part Two, Supplement, Documents, 90th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: G.P.O., 1968), p. 2. None of these figures supports McNamara's informal estimate in February 1964 that the figure was then not 16,000 but "15,500, approximately"; U.S. Cong., House, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1965, Hearings*, 88th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington: G.P.O., 1964), Part IV., p. 98.

133. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. viii.

134. NSAM 57 of 1961, in Gravel ed., II:683.

135. David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, *The Invisible Government* (New York: Bantam, 1964), pp. 99-100.

136. William Henderson, "Some Reflections on United States Policy in Southeast Asia," in William Henderson, ed., *Southeast Asia: Problems of United States Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1963), p. 263; cf. pp. 253-254: "We shall ultimately fail to secure the basic objectives of policy in Southeast Asia until our commitment to the region becomes unlimited, which it has not been up till now. This does not mean simply that we must be prepared to fight for Southeast Asia, if necessary, although it certainly means that at a minimum. Beyond this is involved a much greater commitment of our resources. . . ."

137. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 12.

138. USG ed., IV.B.4, pp. 25, d.

139. Gravel ed., III:141; Stavins, p. 93.

140. USG ed., V.B.4, p. 525; Gravel ed., II:726.

141. Robert S. Allen and Paul Scott, "Diem's War Not Limited Enough," *Peoria Journal-Star*, September 18, 1963, reprinted in *Congressional Record*, October 1, 1963, p. A6155: "Since Diem—under a plan prepared by his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu—began sending guerrillas into North Vietnam in June, powerful forces within the administration have clamored for the President to curb the strong anti-Communist leader. . . . General Paul D. Harkins, head of the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Saigon, who favors the initiative by Diem's forces, violently disagreed . . . but President Kennedy accepted the diplomatic rather than the military view." Cf. *Radio Hanoi, FBIS Daily Report*, October 22, 1963, JJJ13; April 8, 1964, JJJ4.

142. Allen and Scott, *loc cit.*: "Diem also notified the White House that he was opening talks with a representative of Chiang Kai-shek on his offer to send Chinese Nationalist troops to South Vietnam from Formosa for both training and combat purposes. This . . . so infuriated President Kennedy that he authorized an undercover effort to curb control of military operations of the South Vietnam President by ousting Nhu . . . and to organize a military junta to run the war"; *Hanoi Radio*, November 10, 1963 (*FBIS Daily Report*, November 14, 1963, JJJ2): "The 47 U.S.-Chiang commandos captured in Hai Ninh declared that before intruding into the DRV to seek their way into China, they had been sent to South Vietnam and received assistance from the Ngo Dinh Diem authorities." Cf. USG ed., IV.C.9.b, p. vii (censored); Gravel ed., II:289-290: "GVN taste for foreign adventure showed up in small, irritating ways. . . . In 1967, we discovered that GVN had brought in Chinese Nationalists disguised as Nungs, to engage in operations in Laos." Hilsman (p. 461) relates that in January 1963 Nhu discussed with him "a strategy to defeat world Communism for once and for all—by having the United States lure Communist China into a war in Laos, which was 'an ideal theater and battleground.'" Bernard Fall confirmed that in Washington, also, one faction believed "that the Vietnam affair could be transformed into a 'golden opportunity' to 'solve' the Red Chinese problem as well" (*Vietnam Witness 1953-1966* [New York: Praeger, 1966] p. 103; cf. Hilsman, p. 311; Scott, *The War Conspiracy*, pp. 21-23, 208).

143. D. Gareth Porter, in Nina S. Adams and Alfred W. McCoy, eds., *Laos: War and Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 198. An Air America plane

shot down in September 1963 carried an American pilot along with both Thai and KMT troops, like so many other Air America planes in this period. The political assassinations of April 1963, which led to a resumption of fighting, have been frequently attributed to a CIA-trained assassination team recruited by Vientiane Security Chief Siho Lamphoutacoul, who was half Chinese (Scott, *The War Conspiracy*, p. 36). After Siho's coup of April 19, 1964, which ended Laotian neutralism and led rapidly to the U.S. air war, the *New York Times* noted of Siho that "In 1963 he attended the general staff training school in Taiwan and came under the influence of the son of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, General Chiang Ching-kuo, who had learned secret police methods in Moscow and was the director of the Chinese Nationalist security services" (*NYT*, April 27, 1964, p. 4).

144. *NYT*, November 20, 1963, p. 1: The two prisoners "said they had conducted activities against the Cambodian Government in a fortified hamlet in neighboring South Vietnam under control of U.S. military advisers. They said Radio Free Cambodia transmitters had been set up in such villages. One prisoner said he had been supplied with a transmitter by U.S. officials." For U.S. corroboration of CIA involvement in Khmer Serei operations, cf. Scott, *The War Conspiracy*, pp. 158-159.

145. A *New York Times* editorial (October 6, 1963, IV, 8), noting "long-voiced charges that our intelligence organization too often tends to 'make' policy," added that "there is an inevitable tendency for some of its personnel to assume the functions of kingmakers," in answer to its question "Is the Central Intelligence Agency a state within a state?" Cf. *Washington Daily News*, October 2, 1963, reprinted in *Congressional Record*, October 1963, p. 18602: "If the United States ever experiences a 'Seven Days in May' it will come from the CIA, and not the Pentagon, one U.S. official commented caustically. . . . People . . . are beginning to fear the CIA is becoming a third force, coequal with President Diem's regime and the U.S. government and answerable to neither."

146. Gravel ed., III:141.

147. USG ed., IV.B.4, p. 25; Gravel ed., III:190.

148. *Washington Post*, November 21, 1963, A19; *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 21, 1963, p. 13; emphasis added.

149. Stavins *et al.*, pp. 93-94; cf. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. viii: "NSAM 273 Authorized planning for specific covert operations, graduated in intensity, against the DRV."

150. *Pentagon Papers* (NYT/Bantam), p. 254 (summary by Neil Sheehan), emphasis added; cf. USG ed., IV.C.2.a, p. 36.

151. *Pentagon Papers* (NYT/Bantam), pp. 331-332; cf. NSG ed., IV.C.2(c), p. 8. A similar story of good intelligence neglected is told by General Lansdale's friend and admirer, Robert Shaplen, in *The Lost Revolution* (New York: Harper, 1966, e.g., pp. 393-394), a work frequently cited by the Pentagon study.

152. Edward Weintal and Charles Bartlett, p. 72.

153. *Pentagon Papers* (NYT/Bantam), p. 441.

APPENDIX A

NSAM 273 of November 26, 1963: a partial reconstruction of the text

IV.C.1, pp. 46-47; =

Gr. III:50; Johnson,

p. 45

*object, IV.C.1

TO: [All the senior officers of the government responsible for foreign affairs and military policy]

1. It remains the central objective^a of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported communist conspiracy. The test

merican pilot along with both Thai and
ica planes in this period. The political
umption of fighting, have been frequently
n recruited by Vientiane Security Chief
Scott, *The War Conspiracy*, p. 36). After
aotian neutralism and led rapidly to the
ho that "In 1963 he attended the general
the influence of the son of Generalissimo
who had learned secret police methods in
se Nationalist security services" (*NYT*,

two prisoners "said they had conducted
n a fortified hamlet in neighboring South
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October 2, 1963, reprinted in *Congress-*
United States ever experiences a 'Seven
not the Pentagon, one U.S. official com-
inining to fear the CIA is becoming a
me and the U.S. government and answer-

190.
A19; San Francisco *Chronicle*, Novem-

IV.C.2.a, p. viii: "NSAM 273 Authorized
ed in intensity, against the DRV."
254 (summary by Neil Sheehan), em-

331-332; cf. NSG ed., IV.C.2(c), p. 8.
is told by General Lansdale's friend and
ion (New York: Harper, 1966, e.g., pp.
gon study.

.72.
.1.

X A

partial reconstruction of the text

or officers of the government respon-
airs and military policy]

entral objective^a of the United States
to assist the people and Government
win their contest against the externally
orted communist conspiracy. The test

boverriding objective,
NYT, Nov. 25, 1963,
p. 5

IV.C.1, p. 2; = Gr.
III:18. IV.B.3, p. 37;
= Gr. II:276

objectives, IV.B.2, p.
26; IV.B.5, p. 67. ob-
jective, IV.B.3, p. 37

IV.C.1, p. 3; = Gr.
III:19

IV.C.1, p. 2; = Gr.
III:18; Johnson, p.
45; IV.B.5, p. 67

IV.C.1, p. 3; = Gr.
III:18; IV.B.5, p. 67

IV.B.5, p. 67; = Gr.
II:276

IV.C.1, p. 2; = Gr.
III:18

Cooper, p. 224

IV.B.3, p. 37; = Gr.
II:458

IV.C.2.a, p. viii; =
Gr. III:117

of all U.S. decisions and actions in this area should be
the effectiveness of their contribution to this purpose.^b

[2.] The objectives^c of the United States with respect to
the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel remains as
stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963.

3. It is a major interest of the United States government
that the present provisional government of South Viet-
nam should be assisted in consolidating itself in holding
and developing increased public support . . . [*NYT*:
for programs directed toward winning the war].

[4.] The President expects that all senior officers of the
government will move energetically to insure the full
unity of support for established U.S. policy in South
Vietnam. Both in Washington and in the field, it is essen-
tial that the government be unified. It is of particular
importance that express or implied criticism of officers
of other branches be assiduously avoided in all contacts
with the Vietnamese government and with the press.

5. We should concentrate our efforts, and insofar as possible
we should persuade the government of South Viet-
nam to concentrate its effort, on the critical situation in
the Mekong Delta. This concentration should include
not only military but economic, social, educational and
informational effort. We should seek to turn the tide not
only of battle but of belief, and we should seek to in-
crease not only the controlled hamlets but the productiv-
ity of this area, especially where the proceeds can be
held for the advantage of anti-Communist forces.

[6.] [Economic and military aid to the new regime should
be maintained at the same levels as during Diem's rule.]

[6.] [Both military and economic programs, it was em-
phasized, should be maintained at levels as high as those
in the time of the Diem regime.]

[Johnson . . . stressed that all military and economic
programs were to be kept at the levels maintained dur-
ing the Diem regime.]

[U.S. assistance programs should be maintained at levels
at least equal to those under the Diem government so
that the new GVN would not be tempted to regard the
U.S. as seeking to disengage.]

[7?] [NSAM 273 Authorized planning for specific covert
operations, graduated in intensity, against the DRV.]

- Stavins, pp. 94-95 [NSAM 273 authorized Krulak to form a committee and develop a coherent program of covert activities to be conducted during 1964, while the rest of the national security apparatus explored the feasibility of initiating a wider war against the North. . . . This NSAM provided that] . . . planning should include different levels of possible increased activity, and in each instance there should be estimates of such factors as:
- a. Resulting damage to NVN;
 - b. The plausibility of denial;
 - c. Possible NVN retaliation;
 - d. Other international reaction.
- Stavins, p. 93; = Gr. III:141; cf. IV.C.2.a, p. 2
- IV.B.5, p. xxxiv (suppressed); = Gr. II:223 [Clandestine operations against the North and into Laos are authorized.]
- IV.B.5, p. 67; = Gr. II:276 [And in conclusion, plans were requested for clandestine operations by the GVN against the North and also for operations up to 50 kilometers into Laos.]
- Gr. III:141 [8.] [The directive also called for a plan, to be submitted for approval, for military operations] "up to a line up to 50 km. inside Laos, together with political plans for minimizing the international hazards of such an enterprise" (NSAM 273).
- IV.B.3, p. 37; = Gr. II:458 [Military operations should be initiated, under close political control, up to within fifty kilometers inside of Laos.]
- IV.B.5, p. 67; = Gr. II:276; = NYT/Bantam, p. 233 [9?] [As a justification for such measures, State was directed to develop a strong, documented case] "to demonstrate to the world the degree to which the Viet Cong is controlled, sustained, and supplied from Hanoi, through Laos and other channels."
- Johnson, p. 45 [The NSAM also assigned various specific actions to the appropriate department or agency of government.]

APPENDIX B

Clues to the existence on November 24, 1963, of a White House paraphrase of NSAM 273 (paragraphs 1 to 4) for press purposes.

Both the *New York Times*¹ and *Washington Post*,² referring in customary terms to a White House source or sources, printed paraphrases of NSAM 273's first (i.e., more innocuous and misleading) page, and these paraphrases share certain divergences from the official text. These shared divergences suggest the existence of an intermediary written archetype, a background paper for the use of certain preferred correspondents. (The *Times* paraphrase was printed in a

1. *NYT*, November 25, 1963, p. 5.

2. *Washington Post*, November 25, 1963, A2.

authorized Krulak to form a committee and a program of covert activities to begin in 1964, while the rest of the national staff explored the feasibility of initiating a campaign against the North. . . . This NSAM planning should include different levels of activity, and in each instance there are a number of such factors as:

- 1. Damage to NVN;
- 2. Feasibility of denial;
- 3. NVN retaliation;
- 4. National reaction.

operations against the North and into Laos

On 11/23/63, plans were requested for clandestine operations in GVN against the North and also for operations 50 kilometers into Laos.]

It is also called for a plan, to be submitted for approval [of military operations] "up to a line up to 50 kilometers into Laos, together with political plans for international hazards of such an enter-prise (73).

Operations should be initiated, under close supervision, up to within fifty kilometers inside of

Justification for such measures, State was directed to submit a strong, documented case] "to demonstrate the degree to which the Viet Cong is dependent on, and supplied from Hanoi, through various channels."

Specific actions assigned various specific actions to the appropriate element or agency of government.]

IX B

NSAM 273(3), of a White House paraphrase of NSAM 273(3) purposes.

The Washington Post,² referring in customary fashion to the printed paraphrases of NSAM 273's purposes (p. 2) page, and these paraphrases share

These shared divergences suggest the type, a background paper for the use of which the Times paraphrase was printed in a

story by E. W. Kenworthy, who later helped write and edit the New York Times/Bantam Pentagon Papers.)

Sample Divergences:

NSAM 273(1)	It remains the central objective of the United States
Washington Post	central point of United States policy remains
New York Times	central point of United States policy remains
NSAM 273(1)	contribution to this purpose
Washington Post	directed toward that objective
New York Times	contribution to this overriding objective
NSAM 273(4)	senior officers . . . move . . . to insure the full unity of support
Washington Post	all Government agencies . . . complete unity of purpose
New York Times	All agencies . . . full unity of purpose

The press reports of this paraphrase suggest that the closing words of NSAM 273(3), as quoted in USG ed., IV.C.3 (p. 3), may have been suppressed; and that the increased "public support" referred to was not in fact political but military:

NYT, November 25, 1963, p. 5: "development of public support for programs directed toward winning the war."

San Francisco Chronicle (AP and UPI), November 25, 1963, p. 5: "to develop public support for its policies aimed at winning the war against the Communist Viet Cong."

Los Angeles Times, November 25, 1963, p. 6: "development of programs to oppose the Viet Cong."

AP, as quoted by Peking Radio, November 25, 1963 (FBIS Daily Report, November 26, 1963, BBB4): "consolidate its position and win public support for the policy mapped out by it, in order to win the war against the Vietnamese Communists."

NSAM 273(3), as quoted in USG ed., IV.C.1, p. 3: "the present provisional government of South Vietnam should be assisted in consolidating itself in holding and developing increased public support."

APPENDIX C

Honolulu Conference Report and NSAM 273

HONOLULU CONFERENCE REPORT

- IV.B.4, p. 25; = Gr. II:190
Sylvester and Manning, Wash. Post, Nov. 21, 1963, A19; "North Vietnam Communists"
- IV.B.4, p. 25; = Gr. II:190
- IV.C.1, p. 2; = Gr. III:18
- IV.B.4, p. 25; = Gr. II:190
- NSAM 273
- (1) "It remains the central objective of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported conspiracy. The test of all U.S. decisions and actions in this area should be the effectiveness of their contribution to this purpose."
- Johnson, p. 45; IV.C.1, pp. 46-47; = Gr. III:50
- (2) "The objectives of the United States with respect to the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel remain as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963."
- IV.C.1, p. 2; = Gr. III:18
- Lodge . . . advocated continuing to pursue the goal of setting dates for phasing out U.S. activities . . . and he volunteered that the announced withdrawal of 1000 troops . . . was already having a salutary effect.
- Lodge . . . was on the whole optimistic, and even mentioned that the statement on U.S. military withdrawal was having a continued "tonic" effect on the Republic of Vietnam.
- [Harkins:] All plans for the U.S. phasing out were to go ahead as scheduled.

out U.S. activities . . . and he volunteered that the announced withdrawal of 1000 troops . . . was already having a salutary effect.

IV.C.1, p. 2; =
Gr. III:18

Lodge . . . was on the whole optimistic, and even mentioned that the statement on U.S. military withdrawal was having a continued "tonic" effect on the Republic of Vietnam.

IV.B.4, p. 25; =
Gr. II:190

[Harkins:] All plans for the U.S. phasing out were to go ahead as scheduled.

military personnel remain as stated in the White House statement of October 2, 1963."

HONOLULU CONFERENCE REPORT

IV.B.4, p. d; =
Gr. II:170

In this light, officials agreed that the Accelerated Plan (speed-up of force withdrawal by six months directed by McNamara in October) should be maintained.

IV.C.9.a, pp. 4-5;
= Gr. II:306

Lodge . . . : "The U.S. press should be induced to leave the new government alone. . . . Extensive press criticism, at this juncture, could be disastrous.

IV.B.5, p. 66; =
Gr. II:275

Lodge voiced his optimism about the actions taken thus far by the new government to consolidate its popular support . . . to enlist the support of the . . . sects, and to consolidate and strengthen the strategic hamlet program.

IV.C.1, p. 14; =
Gr. III:27

When Gen. Harkins presented a summary of the situation in 13 critical provinces, 7 were in the Delta. Secretary McNamara . . . suggested that there were three things to be done in the Delta: (1) to get the Chieu Hoi program moving; (2) to get the fertilizer program going . . . , and (3) most important, to improve the security of strategic hamlets by arming and training and increasing the numbers of the militia.

NSAM 273

IV.C.1, p. 3; =
Gr. III:19

(3) It is a major interest of the United States government that the present provisional government of South Vietnam should be assisted in consolidating itself in holding and developing increased public support.

IV.C.1, p. 3; =
Gr. III:18

(5) "We should concentrate our efforts, and insofar as possible we should persuade the government of South Vietnam to concentrate its effort, on the critical situation in the Mekong Delta. This concentration should include not only military but political, economic, social, educational and informational effort. We should seek to turn the tide not only of battle but of belief, and we should seek to increase not only the controlled hamlets but the productivity of this area, espe-

NSAM 273

cially where the proceeds can be held for the advantage of anti-Communist forces."

[6] [Both military and economic programs, it was emphasized, should be maintained at levels as high as those in the time of the Diem regime.]

[U.S. assistance programs should be maintained at levels at least equal to those under the Diem government so that the new GVN would not be tempted to regard the U.S. as seeking to disengage.]

HONOLULU CONFERENCE REPORT

Time, Nov. 29, 1963, p. 40
A hardly surprising agreement to intensify anti-guerrilla operations in South Vietnam's rice bowl, a wedge-shaped section of the Mekong Delta. Another decision: to revise the government's strategic-hamlet program.

IV.C.9.a, p. 2; =
Gr. II:304
Lodge said it was essential "to provide some increase in overall level of economic aid. . . . It is in my view politically unacceptable and psychologically impossible to tell Big Minh that he is going to get less than Diem."

IV.B.5, p. 66; =
Gr. II:275
Lodge . . . urged the conferees not to press too much on the government too soon, either in the way of military and economic programs, nor steps to democratize and constitutionalize the country. His second major point was the psychological and political, as well as economic, need for U.S. aid to the new government in at least the amount of our aid to Diem, and preferably more. . . . What was required was greater motivation. McNamara immediately disagreed, saying that . . . the piaster deficit problem . . . was endangering all the programs, and that both AID and MAP were in need of increased funding. Concurring in this view, AID Admin-

IV.C.1, p. 3; =

Gr. III:18. cf.

IV.B.5, p. 67; =

Gr. II:276

IV.B.3, p. 37; =

Gr. II:458

even, since in the way of military and economic programs, nor steps to democratize and constitutionalize the country. His second major point was the psychological and political, as well as economic, need for U.S. aid to the new government in at least the amount of our aid to Dien, and preferably more. . . . What was required was greater motivation. McNamara immediately disagreed, saying that . . . the piaster deficit problem . . . was endangering all the programs, and that both AID and MAP were in need of increased funding. Concurring in this view, AID Admin-

istrators to regard the U.S. as seeking to disengage.]

HONOLULU CONFERENCE REPORT

NSAM 273

istrator Bell agreed to review the entire AID program.

IV.C.2.a, p. 2; =
Gr. III:150

In May of 1963 . . . the JCS directed CINCPAC to prepare a plan for GVN "hit and run" operations against NVN. These operations were to be "non-attributable" and carried out "with U.S. military materiel, training and advisory assistance." Approved by the JCS on 9 September as CINCPAC OPLAN 34-63, the plan was discussed during the Vietnam policy conference at Honolulu, 20 November 1963. Here a decision was made to develop a combined COMUSMACV-CAS, Saigon plan for a 12-month program of covert operations.

IV.C.2.a, p. viii;
= Gr. III:117

[7] [NSAM 273 Authorized planning for specific covert operations, graduated in intensity, against the DRV.]

Gr: III:141

9 Sep 1963 JCS approve CINCPAC OPLAN 34-63, which called for MACV and CAS, Saigon to provide advice and assistance to the GVN in certain operations against NVN. . . . Apparently, the plan was not forwarded to the White House by SecDef.