

Final Draft Position Paper Produced by Working Group

"Draft Position Paper on Southeast Asia" circulated to the principal top-level officials concerned, Nov. 29, 1964. The draft was accompanied by a memorandum from William Bundy saying: "I attach a draft action paper for review at the meeting at 1:30 on Monday in Secretary Rusk's conference room. Secretary Rusk has generally approved the format of these papers, and they have been given a preliminary review for substance by Ambassador Taylor and Messrs. McNaughton and Forrestal. However, I am necessarily responsible for the way they are now drafted." The Pentagon study says this paper was originally a draft national security action memorandum but that it was changed to a draft position paper at the instructions of the principals. Words and phrases that were deleted from the final version are shown in italics. Hand-written interpolations or revisions are shown in double parentheses.

I. Concept

A. US objectives in South Vietnam (SVN) are unchanged. They are to:

1. Get Hanoi and North Vietnam (DRV) support and direction removed from South Vietnam, and, to the extent possible, obtain DRV cooperation in ending Viet Cong (VC) operations in SVN.

2. Re-establish an independent and secure South Vietnam with appropriate international safeguards, including the freedom to accept US and other external assistance as required.

3. Maintain the security of other non-Communist nations in Southeast Asia including specifically the maintenance and observance of the Geneva Accords of 1962 in Laos.

B. We will continue to press the South Vietnamese Government (GVN) in every possible way to make the government itself more effective and to push forward with the pacification program.

C. We will join at once with the South Vietnamese and Lao Governments in a determined action program aimed at DRV activities in both countries and designed to help GVN morale and to increase the costs and strain on Hanoi, foreshadowing still greater pressures to come. Under this program the first phase actions ((see TAB D)) within the next thirty days will be intensified forms of action already under way, plus (1) US armed reconnaissance strikes in Laos, and already under way, plus (1) US armed reconnaissance strikes in Laos, and (2) GVN and possible US air strikes against the DRV, as reprisals against any major or spectacular Viet Cong action in the south, whether against US personnel and installations or not.

D. Beyond the thirty-day period, first phase actions may be continued without change, or additional military measures may be taken including the withdrawal of dependents and the possible initiation of strikes a short distance across the border against the infiltration routes from the DRV. In the later case this would become a transitional phase. ((Be prepared to stop flow of dependents to SVN at [illegible word] time we start air strikes in force.))

E. Thereafter, if the GVN improves its effectiveness to an acceptable degree and Hanoi does not yield on acceptable terms, or if the GVN can only be kept going by stronger action the US is prepared—at a time to be determined—to enter into a second phase program, in support of the GVN and RLG, of graduated military pressures directed systematically against the DRV. Such a program would consist principally of progressively more serious air strikes, of a weight and tempo adjusted to the situation as it develops (possibly running from two to six months). Targets in the DRV would start with infiltration targets south of the 19th parallel and work up to targets north of that point. This could eventually lead to such measures as air strikes on all major military-related targets, aerial mining of DRV ports, and a US naval blockade of the DRV. The whole sequence of military actions would be designed to give the impres-

sion of a steady, deliberate approach, and to give the US the option at any time (subject to enemy reaction) to proceed or not, to escalate or not, and to quicken the pace or not. Concurrently, the US would be alert to any sign of yielding by Hanoi, and would be prepared to explore negotiated solutions that attain US objectives in an acceptable manner. *The US would seek to control any negotiations and would oppose any independent South Vietnamese efforts to negotiate.*

Heading Illegible

A. A White House statement will be issued following the meeting with Ambassador Taylor, with the text as in Tab B, attached.

B. Ambassador Taylor will consult with the GVN promptly on his return, making a general presentation ((in accordance with the draft instructions)) as stated in Tab B, attached. He will further press for the adoption of specific measures as listed in the Annex to Tab B.

C. At the earliest feasible date, we will publicize the evidence of increased DRV infiltration. This action will be coordinated by Mr. Chester Cooper in order to insure that the evidence is sound and that senior government officials who have testified on this subject in the past are in a position to defend and explain the differences between the present estimates and those given in the past. The publicizing will take four forms:

1. An on-the-record presentation to the press in Washington, concurrently with an on-the-record or background presentation to the press in Saigon.

2. Available Congressional leaders will be given special briefings. (No special leadership meeting will be convened for this purpose).

3. The Ambassadors of key allied nations will be given special briefings.

4. A written report will be prepared and published within the next ten days giving greater depth and background to the evidence.

D. Laos and Thailand

The US Ambassadors in these countries will inform the government leaders ((in general terms)) of the concept we propose to follow and of specific actions requiring their concurrence or participation. In the case of Laos, we will obtain RLG approval of an intensified program of ((US armed)) reconnaissance strikes both in the Panhandle area of Laos and along the key infiltration routes in central Laos. These actions will not be publicized except to the degree approved by the RLG. It is

important, however, for purposes of morale in SV, that their existence be generally known.

Thailand will be asked to support our program fully, to intensify its own efforts in the north and northeast, and to give further support to operations in Laos, such as additional pilots and possible artillery teams.

E. Key Allies

We will consult immediately with the UK, ((DC)) Australia, New Zealand, ((Bundy)) and the Philippines. ((Humphrey?))

1. UK. The President will explain the concept and proposed actions fully to Prime Minister Wilson, seeking full British support, but without asking for any additional British contribution in view of the British role in Malaysia.

2. Australia and New Zealand will be pressed through their Ambassadors, not only for support but for additional contributions.

3. The Philippines will be particularly pressed for contributions along the lines of the program for approximately 1800 men already submitted to President Macapagal.

F. We will press generally for more third country aid, stressing the gravity of the situation and our deepening concern. A summary of existing third country aid and of the types of aid that might now be obtained is in Tab C, attached.

G. Communist Countries

1. We will convey to Hanoi our unchanged determination ((and)) our objectives, and that we have a growing concern at the DRV role, to see if there is any sign of change in Hanoi's position.

2. We will make no special approaches to Communist China in this period.

3. We will convey our determination and grave concern to the Soviets, not in the expectation of any change in their position but in effect to warn them to stay out, and with some hope they will pass on the message to Hanoi and Peiping.

H. Other Countries

1. We will convey our grave concern to key interested governments such as Canada, India, and France, but avoid spelling out the concept fully.

2. In the event of a reprisal action, will explain and defend our action in the UN as at the time of the Gulf of Tonkin incident. We do not plan to raise the issue otherwise in the UN. (The Lao Government may stress the DRV infiltration in Laos in its speech, and we should support this and spread the information.)

I. Intensified Military Actions

1. The GVN maritime operations (MAROPS) will be intensified, ((including U.S. air protection of GVN vessels from attacks by MIGs or DRV surface vessels)) and we will urge the GVN to surface and defend these as wholly justified in response to the wholly illegal DRV actions.

2. Lao air operations will be intensified, especially in the corridor areas and close to the DRV border. US air cover and flak suppression will ((may)) be supplied where ((if)) needed.

3. US high-level reconnaissance over the DRV will be stepped up.

4. US armed ((air)) reconnaissance ((and air)) strikes will be carried out in Laos, first against the corridor area and within a short time against Route 7 and other infiltration routes. in a major operation to cut key bridges. (These actions will be publicized only to the degree agreed with Souvanna.) ((At this time we prepare to stop flow of dependents to V.N.))

J. Reprisal Actions.

For any VC provocation similar to the following, a reprisal will be undertaken, preferably with 24 hours, against one or more selected targets in the DRV. GVN forces will be used to the maximum extent, supplemented as necessary by US forces. The exact reprisal will be decided at the time, in accordance with a quick-reaction procedure which will be worked out.

The following may be appropriate occasions for reprisals, but we should be alert for any appropriate occasion.

1. Attacks on airfields.
 2. Attack on Saigon.
 3. Attacks on provincial or district capitals.
 4. Major attacks on US citizens.
 5. Attacks on major POL facilities.
- ((expand))

6. Attacks on bridges and railroad lines after the presently damaged facilities have been restored and warning given.

7. Other "spectaculars" such as earlier attack on a US transport carrier at a pier in Saigon.

In these or similar cases, the reprisal action would be linked as directly as possible to DRV infiltration, so that we have a common threat of justification.

A flexible list of reprisal targets has been prepared running from infiltration targets in the southern part of the DRV up to airfields, ports, and naval bases also located south of the 19th parallel.

K. US/GVN joint planning will be initiated both for reprisal actions and for possible later air strikes across the border into the DRV.

L. Major statement or speech. Depending on US public reaction, a major statement or speech may be undertaken by the President during this period. This will necessarily be required if a reprisal action is taken, but some other significant action, such as the stopping of the flow of US dependents, might be the occasion. Such a statement or speech would re-state our objectives and our determination, why we are in

South Vietnam, and how gravely we view the situation. It should in any event follow the full publicizing of infiltration evidence.

M. Dependents. The flow of dependents to South Vietnam will be stopped [at an early date, probably immediately after Ambassador Taylor has consulted with the GVN] [at the start of the second phase], and this will be publicly announced.

N. Deferred Actions. ((See TAB D))

The following actions will not be taken within the thirty-day period, but will be considered for adoption in the transitional or second phases of the program:

1. Major air deployment to the area.
2. Furnishing US air cover for CVN MAROOPS.

((2)) 3. ((Be required to resume)) Resuming destroyer patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin. If attacked, these would be an alternative basis for reprisals, and should be considered primarily in this light.

((5)) 4. ((Be prepared to evacuate)) Evacuation of US dependents

((3)) 5. US low-level reconnaissance into the DRV.

((4)) 6. GVN/((LAO/)) US air strikes across the border ((s)), initially against the infiltration routes and installations

and then against other targets south of the 19th parallel.

NOTE

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend immediate initiation of sharply intensified military pressures against the DRV, starting with a sharp and early attack in force on the DRV, subsequent to brief operations in Laos and US low-level reconnaissance north of the boundary to divert DRV attention prior to the attack in force. This program would be designed to destroy in the first three days Phuc Yen airfield near Hanoi, other airfields, and major POL facilities, clearly to establish the fact that the US intends to use military force to the full limits of what military force can contribute to achieving US objectives in Southeast Asia, and to afford the GVN respite by curtailing DRV assistance to and direction of the Viet Cong. The follow-on-military program—involving armed reconnaissance of infiltration routes in Laos, air strikes on infiltration targets in the DRV, and then progressive strikes throughout North Vietnam—could be suspended short of full destruction of the DRV if our objectives were earlier achieved. The military program would be conducted rather swiftly, but the tempo could be adjusted as needed to contribute to achieving our objectives.