

Memo on Pentagon Meeting Following Up Honolulu Session

Excerpts from memorandum by Richard C. Steadman, special assistant to Secretary of Defense McNamara, Feb. 9, 1966, summarizing a Pentagon meeting after the Honolulu talks. According to Mr. Steadman the participants included the Secretary, his deputies, the secretaries of each of the armed services and other Defense Department officials.

... 3. Southeast Asia Program Office.

It is essential that the Department of Defense has at all times a readily available and centralized bank of information with respect to the Southeast Asia build-up. To this end, Dr. Enthoven is to establish a Southeast Asia Program Office which is to be able to furnish Mr. McNamara and Mr. Vance all information that may be required with respect to Southeast Asia. Among other things, this unit is to be able to provide immediate

information on what overseas units are being depleted in order to accommodate Southeast Asia needs. If there is any drawdown anywhere, Mr. McNamara wants to know it promptly. We must know the full price of what we are doing and propose to do.

Mr. McNamara suggested that each Service Secretary establish a similar Southeast Asia Program Unit to bring

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together and keep current data relating to that Service involving Southeast Asia, and that the Joint Staff might establish a similar set-up.

Mr. McNamara said that it was mandatory that the situation be brought under better control. For example, the Southeast Asia construction program was \$1.2-billion in the FY 66 Supplement; yesterday at Honolulu the figure of \$2.5-billion was raised. Yet there is only the vaguest information as to how these funds will be spent, where, on what, and by whom. This is part of the bigger problem that there is no proper system for the allocation of available resources in Vietnam. McGeorge Bundy is to help organize the country team to deal with this problem, including reconciling military and non-military demands.

4. Manpower Controls. Mr. McNamara designated Mr. Morris as the person to be responsible for the various manpower requirements. He is either to insure that the requirements are met or to let Mr. McNamara know if they are not being met. Mr. McNamara wants a written statement whenever we have been unable to do something that General Westmoreland says he needs for full combat effectiveness. (In this regard, General Westmoreland recognizes

that it is not possible to have 100 percent combat effectiveness for all the 102 battalions. For example, there are not sufficient helicopter companies. Roughly, he estimates he will get 96 battalion combat effectiveness out of the 102 battalions.)

At this point there was a brief discussion concerning the use of U.S. troops for pacification purposes. Mr. Nitze indicated that in his view the Marines were doing this to some degree. The point was disputed. At any rate, Mr. McNamara said that the 102 combat battalions contemplated under Case 1 were not to be used for pacification but only for defense of base areas and offensive operations. Mr. McNamara outlined briefly the South Vietnamese Government's plan for pacification. It will affect some 235,000 people in the whole country. The major allocation of resources and personnel will be to four very limited areas, one of which is near Danang. There will also be a general program extending throughout the country involving some 900 hamlets.

5. Call-Up of Reserves. Mr. McNamara said that it was important that everyone understand why a Reserve call-up is receiving such careful study. There are at least two important considerations. First, the problem is a very complicated

one and we do not yet have all the facts. Mr. Morris and others will amass the necessary data as soon as possible. Second, the political aspects of a Reserve call-up are extremely delicate. There are several strong bodies of opinion at work in the country. Look, for example, at the Fulbright Committee hearings. One school of thought, which underlies the Gavin thesis, is that this country is over-extended economically and that we cannot afford to do what we are doing. Another school of thought feels that we plain should not be there at all, whether or not we can afford it. A third school of thought is that although we are rightly there, the war is being mismanaged so that we are heading straight toward war with China. Furthermore, there is no question but that the economy of this country is beginning to run near or at its capacity with the resulting probability of a shortage of certain skills and materials. If this continues we may be facing wage and price controls, excess profits taxes, etc., all of which will add fuel to the fire of those who say we cannot afford this. With all these conflicting pressures it is a very difficult and delicate task for the Administration to mobilize and maintain the required support in this country to carry on the war properly. The point of all this is to emphasize that a call-up of the Reserves presents extremely serious problems in many areas and a decision cannot be made today.

General Johnson said he wished to add three additional considerations. First, a Reserve call-up might be an important factor in the reading of the North Vietnamese and the Chinese with respect to our determination to see this war through. Second Reserve call-ups are traditionally a unifying factor. Third, as a larger problem, a hard, long-term look should be taken at the degree to which we as a government are becoming committed to a containment policy along all the enormous southern border of China. Mr. McNamara said he would ask for a JCS study of this last point and discussed it briefly.

During the course of the meeting, General Johnson also pointed out that with respect to overseas deployment, the Army is already shortchanging certain overseas areas so as to increase the training cadres in CONUS. He pointed out that because of the effect on the strategic reserve of deployments already made, the quality of new units will be lower than at present. He raised certain additional points affecting the Army. Mr. McNamara, Mr. Vance, Mr. Resor and General Johnson will discuss these problems further. . . .