

Joint Chiefs' April 20 Report To McNamara on Troop Needs

Excerpts from Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum 218-67 to Secretary of Defense McNamara, April 20, 1967, as provided in the body of the Pentagon study. Paragraphs in italics are the study's paraphrase or explanation.

On 20 April, the JCS, in JCSM-218-67, formally reported to the Secretary of Defense that MACV required additional forces to achieve the objectives they considered the U.S. was pursuing in Vietnam. The JCS announcement came as little surprise to the Secretary of Defense since as early as 23 March *he* had seen the original message in which COMUSMACV had outlined the minimum essential and optimum force requirements.

JCSM 218-67 reaffirmed the basic objectives and strategic concepts contained in JCSM 702-66 dated 4 November 1966. Briefly, these entailed a national objective of attaining a stable and independent non-communist government in South Vietnam and a four-fold military contribution toward achieving the objectives of:

- (a) Making it as difficult and costly as possible for the NVA to continue effective support of the VC and to cause North Vietnam to cease direction of the VC insurgency.
- (b) To defeat the VC/NVA and force the withdrawal of NVA forces.
- (c) Extend government dominion, direction and control.
- (d) To deter Chinese Communists from direct intervention in SEA.

The JCS listed three general areas of military effort that they felt should be pursued in the war:

- (1) Operations against the Viet Cong/ North Vietnamese Army (VC/NVA) forces in SVN while concurrently assisting the South Vietnamese Government in their nation-building efforts.
- (2) Operations to obstruct and reduce the flow of men and materials from North Vietnam (NV) to SVN.
- (3) Operations to obstruct and reduce imports of war-sustaining materials into NVN.

They continued by assessing the achievements of the US and allies in these three areas:

In the first area, the United States and its allies have achieved considerable success in operations against VC/NVA forces. However, sufficient friendly forces have not been made available to bring that degree of pressure to bear on the enemy throughout SVN which would be beyond his ability to accommodate and which would provide the secure environment essential to sustained progress in Revolutionary Development. The current reinforcement of I CTZ by diversion of forces from II to

III CTZs reduces the existing pressure in those areas and inevitably will cause a loss of momentum that must be restored at the earliest practicable date.

In the second area, US efforts have achieved appreciable success. Greater success could be realized if an expanded system of targets were made available.

In the third area, relatively little effort has been permitted. This failure to obstruct and reduce imports of war-sustaining materials into NVN has affected unfavorably the desired degree of success of operations in the other areas.

The Joint Chiefs strongly recommended not only the approval of additional forces to provide an increased level of effort in SVN but that action be taken to reduce and obstruct the enemy capability to import the material support required to sustain the war effort. They argued that the cumulative effect of all these operations, in South Vietnam, in North Vietnam and against the enemy's strategic lines of communication would hasten the successful conclusion of the war and would most likely reduce the overall ultimate force requirements. Their rationale for the 1968 forces was summarized as follows:

The FY 1968 force for SVN is primarily needed to offset the enemy's increased posture in the vicinity of the DMZ and to improve the environment for Revolutionary Development in I and IV CTZs. To achieve the secure environment for lasting progress in SVN, additional military forces must be provided in order to (1) destroy the enemy main force, (2) locate and destroy district and provincial guerrilla forces, and (3) provide security for the population. The increased effort required to offset VC/NVA main forces' pressure is diminishing the military capability to provide a secure environment to villages and hamlets. Diversion of forces from within SVN and the employment of elements of CINCPAC's reserve are temporary measures at the expense of high-priority programs in other parts of SVN. Thus, if sufficient units are to be available to provide both direct and indirect support to Revolutionary Development throughout SVN, added forces must be deployed.

The three-TFS force for Thailand and the additional Navy forces in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Tonkin are required to bring increased pressures to bear on NVN.