

Evaluation and Conclusions Of Taylor's Report on Vietnam

Excerpts from General Taylor's report, Nov. 3, 1961, on his mission to South Vietnam for President Kennedy.

... Limited Partnership

... Following are the specific categories where the introduction of U.S. working advisors or working military units are suggested ... an asterisk indicating where such operations are, to some degree, under way.

—A high-level government advisor or advisors. General Lansdale has been

requested by Diem; and it may be wise to envisage a limited number of Americans—acceptable to Diem as well as to us—in key ministries. ...

—A Joint U.S.-Vietnamese Military Survey, down to the provincial level, in each of three corps areas, to make recommendations with respect to intelligence, command and control, more economical and effective passive defense, the build-up of a reserve for

offensive purposes, military-province-chief relations, etc. ...

—Joint planning of offensive operations, including border control operations.* ...

—Intimate liaison with the Vietnamese Central Intelligence Organizations (C.I.O.) with each of the seven intelligence [rest of sentence illegible].

—Jungle Jim. ...

—Counter infiltration operations in Laos.* ...

—Increased covert offensive operations in North as well as in Laos and South Vietnam.* ...

—The introduction, under MAAG operational control, of three helicopter squadrons—one for each corps area—and the provision of more light aircraft, as the need may be established. ...

—A radical increase in U.S. trainers at every level from the staff colleges, where teachers are short—to the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Corps, where a sharp expansion in competence may prove the key to mobilizing a reserve for offensive operations. ...

—The introduction of engineering and logistical elements within the proposed U.S. military task force to work in the flood area within the Vietnamese plan, on both emergency and longer term reconstruction tasks. ...

—A radical increase in U.S. special force teams in Vietnam: to work with the Vietnamese Ranger Force proposed for the border area ... ; to assist in unit training, including training of Clandestine Action Service. ...

—Increase in MAAG support for the Vietnamese Navy.* ...

—Introduction of U.S. Naval and/or Coast Guard personnel to assist in coastal and river surveillance and control, until Vietnamese naval capabilities can be improved. ...

—Reconsideration of the role of air power, leading to more effective utilization of assets now available, including release from political control of the 14 D-6 aircraft, institution of close-support techniques, and better employment of available weapons. ...

To execute this program of limited partnership requires a change in the charter, the spirit, and the organization of the MAAG in South Vietnam. It must be shifted from an advisory group to something nearer—but not quite—an operational headquarters in a theater of war. ... The U.S. should become a limited partner in the war, avoiding formalized advice on the one hand, trying to run the war, on the other. Such a transition from advice to partnership has been made in recent

months, on a smaller scale, by the MAAG in Laos.

Among the many consequences of this shift would be the rapid build-up of an intelligence capability both to identify operational targets for the Vietnamese and to assist Washington in making a sensitive and reliable assessment of the progress of the war. The basis for such a unit already exists in Saigon in the Intelligence Evaluation Center. It must be quickly expanded. ...

In Washington, as well, intelligence and back-up operations must be put on a quasi-wartime footing. ...

Contingencies

The U.S. action proposed in this report—involving as it does the overt lifting of the MAAG ceiling, substantial encadrement and the introduction of limited U.S. forces—requires that the United States also prepare for contingencies that might arise from the enemy's reaction. The initiative proposed here should not be undertaken unless we are prepared to deal with any escalation the communists might choose to impose. Specifically we must be prepared to act swiftly under these three circumstances: an attempt to seize and to hold the Pleiku-Kontum area; a political crisis in which the communists might attempt to use their forces around Saigon to capture the city in the midst of local confusion; an undertaking of overt major hostilities by North Vietnam.

As noted earlier, the present contingency plans of CINCPAC must embrace the possibility both of a resumption of the communist offensive in Laos and these Vietnamese contingency situations. Taken together, the contingencies in Southeast Asia which we would presently choose to meet without the use of nuclear weapons appear to require somewhat more balanced ground, naval, and air strength in reserve in the U.S. than we now have available, so long as we maintain the allocation of the six divisions for the Berlin crisis.

Therefore, one of the major issues raised by this report is the need to develop the reserve strength in the U.S. establishment required to cover action in Southeast Asia up to the nuclear threshold in that area, as it is now envisaged. The call up of additional support forces may be required.

In our view, nothing is more calculated to sober the enemy and to discourage escalation in the face of the limited initiatives proposed here than the knowledge that the United States has prepared itself soundly to deal with aggression in Southeast Asia at any level.