

Geneva Called a 'Disaster'

New York

The secret Pentagon study of the Vietnam war found that the Eisenhower administration's national security council decided, a few days after the Geneva agreement on Vietnam in 1954, that the agreement was a "disaster," the New York Times said yesterday.

The council subsequently approved actions to prevent further Communist expansion in Vietnam and these decisions, the Pentagon study concludes, meant that the United States had "a direct role in the ultimate breakdown of the Geneva settlement."

That judgment, says the New York Times in its ninth article based on the mammoth Pentagon study, contradicts the repeated assertion of several American administrations that North Vietnam alone was to blame for the undermining of the Geneva accords.

GENEVA

Under the Geneva settlement, which ended the French Indochina war, Vietnam was to be temporarily divided into two zones pending reunification through elections scheduled for 1956. The introduction of foreign troops or bases and the use of Vietnamese territory for military purposes were for-

bidden. The United States did not join with the nations that endorsed the accords, but issued a declaration taking note of their provisions and promising not to disturb them.

The Geneva agreement was concluded on July 21, 1954. Less than two weeks later, on August 3, the Pentagon study says, the National Security Council ordered an urgent program of economic and military aid to the new South Vietnamese government of Premier Ngo Dinh Diem.

The study describes in detail how the Eisenhower administration sent a team of

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agents to carry out clandestine warfare against North Vietnam from almost the minute the Geneva conference closed.

TEAM

The team was headed by the legendary intelligence operative, Colonel Edward G. Lansdale, whose exploits were so extensive that he became widely known as the model for the leading characters in two novels of Asian intrigue — "The Quiet American," by Graham Greene, and "The Ugly American," by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick.

When the October 9 deadline for the French evacuation of Hanoi approached, the team sought to sabotage some of Hanoi's key facilities.

The report says the team spent the last days of Hanoi contaminating the oil supply of the bus company for a gradual wreckage of engines in the buses, in taking actions for delayed sabotage of the railroad (which required

teamwork with a C.I.A. special technical team in Japan who performed their part brilliantly), and in writing detailed notes of potential targets for future paramilitary operations."

PENTAGON

The Pentagon study, commissioned by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara in 1967 to determine how the U. S. became involved so deeply in Vietnam, devotes nine lengthy sections to the 1940's and '50's.

At key points during these years, the Pentagon study says, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations made far-reaching decisions on Vietnam policy that the public knew little about or misunderstood. And by the time John F. Kennedy became president in 1961, the writers recount, the American government already felt itself heavily committed to the defense of South Vietnam.

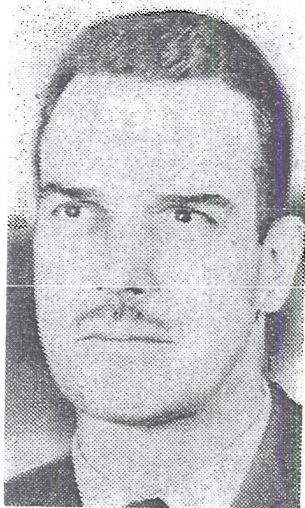
Of the early years in this period, the study says that, at the end of World War II, President Roosevelt never made up his mind whether to support the French desire

to reclaim their Indochina colonies from the Japanese.

When open conflict broke out in 1945 and '46 between the French and the Viet Minh, forerunners of the Viet Cong, the Truman administration had no clear-cut reaction and, according to the study, remained "ambivalent."

The study says the Truman administration refused French requests for aid to help fight the Viet Minh, and also rebuffed appeals for help from Ho Chi Minh. From October, 1945, until the following February, the study says, Ho sent eight letters to President Truman or the Secretary of State, formally appealing for U.S. and United Nations intervention against French Colonialism. There is no record, the account says, that any of these letters were answered.

In 1948 and '49, as concern about the Soviet Union's expansion in Eastern Europe grew, Washington became in-



EDWARD LANSDALE
Insurgency expert

creasingly anxious about Ho's communist affiliations. Nevertheless, the Pentagon study discloses that a survey by the State Department's Office of Intelligence and Research, in the fall of 1948, concluded that it could find no evidence that Ho took orders from Moscow.

When China fell to Mao Tse-Tung's armies a year later, however, Washington's ambivalence ended.

At this point, in the winter of 1949-50, the U.S. made what the study describes as a watershed decision affecting American policy in Vietnam for the next two decades, when the Truman administration moved to support Emperor Bao Dai and provide military aid to the French against the Communist-led Viet Minh.

With this action, the study says, "The course of U.S. policy was set to block further Communist expansion in Asia," and "The United States thereafter was directly involved in the developing tragedy in Vietnam."

The Pentagon history discloses that most of these major decisions from 1950 on were made against the advice of the American intelligence community.

Intelligence analysts in the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department and sometimes the Pentagon repeatedly warned that the French, Emperor Bao Dai and Diem were weak and unpopular and that the Communists were strong.

QUESTION

The Pentagon study does not deal at length with a major question: Why did the policy-makers go ahead despite the intelligence estimates prepared by their most senior intelligence officials?

The most important reason advanced by the Pentagon study is that after the takeover of China by the Communists and the hardening of American anti-Communist attitudes, "Indochina's importance to U.S. security interests in the Far East was taken for granted."

It was at this time that the "Domino Theory" was born.

"It is important to U.S. security interests," the study quotes the National Security Council as saying in February, 1950, "that all practicable measures be taken to prevent further Communist expansion in Southeast Asia."

Indochina is a key area and is under immediate threat.

"The neighboring countries of Thailand and Burma could be expected to fall under Communist domination if Indochina is controlled by a Communist government.

The balance of Southeast Asia would then be in grave hazard."

In January, 1954, the Pentagon account relates, a council paper approved by President Eisenhower further said that the "loss of any single country" in Southeast Asia would ultimately lead to the loss of all Southeast Asia, then India and Japan, and finally "endanger the stability and security of Europe."

YEARS

Speaking of the Eisenhower years, the Pentagon study comments: "The Domino Theory and the assumptions behind it were never questioned."

When Peking and Moscow recognized Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam in January, 1950, the study says, Washington countered by recognizing the government of Emperor Bao Dai in the South and provided the French with the first \$10 million in an aid program that ultimately reached \$1.1 billion in 1954.

In the spring of 1954, as the French military position in Indochina deteriorated and the date for the Geneva Conference approached, the Eisenhower administration twice hinted to Paris that it was ready to intervene with American forces.

The Pentagon study contends that while some information about these two episodes has become public, the American people have never been told how seriously the Eisenhower inner circle debated intervening.

In the debates over intervention, the study says, advocates of American action advanced several novel ideas. Admiral Arthur W. Radford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, proposed to the French, for example, that the U.S. help create an "international volunteer air corps" for Indochina. The French in April had suggested an American air strike with the planes painted with French markings. And late in May the French suggested that the President might be able to get around Congress if he sent just a division of Marines — some 15,000 men.

But as the military situation deteriorated, the idea of intervention was abandoned.

The major decision for American involvement in Vietnam, according to the Pentagon study, was made Aug. 20, 1954, when President Eisenhower approved a na-

tional security council paper recommending aid to Vietnam and working with Premier Diem despite intelligence warnings that it was unlikely that a strong government would be established in South Vietnam and a memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff that "it is absolutely essential that there be a reasonably strong, stable government in control."

Doubts about Diem contin-

ued until the next spring when he suppressed an uprising. Thereafter, the study relates, Diem had full American backing. The following October, Diem organized a referendum between himself and the emperor, Bao Dai, and won it with what the Pentagon account describes as a "too resounding" 98.2 per cent of the vote.

Under the provisions of the Geneva accords, the two

zones of Vietnam were to begin consultations in July, 1955, on reunification elections scheduled for the following year.

But Diem refused to talk with the Communists, and in July, 1956, refused to hold the elections, asserting that his government had not signed the Geneva accords and therefore was not bound by them.

The U.S. also had opposed

the elections at that time, fearing a Communist victory, and wanted to postpone them. The study quotes a secret cablegram from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to Under Secretary Walter Bedell Smith as follows:

"Since undoubtedly true that elections might eventually mean unification Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh, this makes it all more important

they should be only held as long after cease-fire agreement as possible and in conditions free from intimidation to give Democratic elements best chance."

The Pentagon study contends, however, that the "United States did not — as it is often alleged — connive with Diem to ignore the elections." Diem's actions, it says "were at his own initiative."

Despite Diem's consolidation of power, insurgency picked up again in 1957 and particularly in 1959 as South Vietnamese dissatisfaction with the Diem regime grew. In August, 1960, the study says, a special national intelligence estimate said:

"Dissatisfaction and discontent with the government will probably continue to rise.

N.Y. Times Service