

William Bundy Draft on Handling World and Public Opinion

Draft section of a paper, "Conditions for Action and Key Actions Surrounding Any Decision," by Assistant Secretary of State Bundy, Nov. 5, 1964.

1. Bien Hoa may be repeated at any time. This would tend to force our hand, but would also give us a good springboard for any decision for stronger action. The President is clearly thinking in terms of maximum use of a Gulf of Tonkin rationale, either for an action that would show toughness and hold the line till we can decide the big issue, or as a basis for starting a clear course of action under the broad options.

2. Congress must be consulted before any major action, perhaps only by notification if we do a reprisal against another Bien Hoa, but preferably by careful talks with such key leaders as Mansfield, Dirksen, the Speaker, Albert, Halleck, Fulbright, Hickenlooper, Morgan, Mrs. Bolton, Russell, Saltonstall, Rivers, (Vinson?), Arends, Ford, etc. He probably should wait till his mind is moving clearly in one direction before such a consultation, which would point to some time next week. Query if it should be combined with other topics (budget?) to lessen the heat.

3. We probably do not need additional Congressional authority, even if we decide on very strong action. A session of this rump Congress might well be the scene of a messy Republican effort.

4. We are on the verge of intelligence agreement that infiltration has in fact mounted, and Saigon is urging that we surface this by the end of the week or early next week. Query how loud we want to make this sound. Actually Grose in the Times had the new estimate on Monday; so the splash and sense of hot new news may be less. We should decide this today if possible. . . . In general, we all feel the problem of proving North Vietnamese participation is less than in the past, but we should have the Jordan Report updated for use as necessary.

5. A Presidential statement with the rationale for action is high on any check list. An intervening fairly strong Presidential noise to prepare a climate for an action statement is probably in-

dicated and would be important in any event to counter any SVN fears of a softening in our policy. We should decide the latter today too if possible.

6. Secretary Rusk is talking today to Dobrynin. For more direct communication Seaborn can be revved up to go up the 15th if we think it wise. He is not going anyway, and we could probably hold him back so that the absence of any message was not itself a signal.

7. Our international soundings appear to divide as follows:

a. We should probably consult with the U.K., Australia, New Zealand, and possibly Thailand before we reach a decision. We would hope for firm moral support from the U.K. and for participation in at least token form from the others.

b. SEATO as a body should be consulted concurrently with stronger action. We should consult the Philippines a day or so before such action but not necessarily before we have made up our minds.

c. The NATO Council should be notified on the Cuban model, i.e., concurrently, by a distinguished representative.

d. For negative reasons, France probably deserves VIP treatment also.

e. In the UN, we must be ready with an immediate affirmative presentation of our rationale to proceed concurrently either with a single reprisal action or with the initiation of a broader course of action.

f. World-wide, we should select reasonably friendly chiefs of state for special treatment seeking their sympathy and support, and should arm all our representatives with the rationale and defense of our action whether individual reprisal or broader.

8. USIA must be brought into the planning process not later than early next week, so that it is getting the right kind of materials ready for all our information media, on a contingency basis. The same [word illegible] true of CIA's outlets.