

View of Chiefs' Representative On Options B and C

Memorandum from Vice Adm. Lloyd M. Mustin of the staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Assistant Secretary Bundy as chairman of the Working Group on Southeast Asia, Nov. 14, 1964. The memorandum was headed "Additional Material for Project on Courses of Action in Southeast Asia."

References: a. Your memorandum of 13 November 1964 to the NSC Working Group

b. JCSM 902-64, dated 27 October 1964

c. JCSM 933-64, dated 4 November 1964

d. JCSM 955-64, dated 14 November 1964

1. Reference a requests JCS views spelling out Option "B" as a preferred alternative, with something like Option "C" as a fall-back alternative. Because of the way in which formal JCS views in the premises have been developed and expressed, this requires some degree of interpretation.

2. Reference b is the most recent recommendation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for courses of action with respect to South Vietnam, framed in context of initiation "in cold blood." Various JCS papers, the most recent dated 22 October 1964, identify the corresponding recommendations with respect to Laos. Reference b specifically identifies certain of its listed actions to begin now, with the balance of them "implemented as required, to achieve US objectives in Southeast Asia."

3. Reference c formalized the most recent JCS recommendation for reprisal (hot blood) actions and reference d provided an analysis of DRV/CHICOM reactions to these strikes, and the probable results thereof. The proposed actions are essentially the same as in reference c except for the principal difference that the "hot blood" actions are initiated at a substantial higher level of military activity.

4. Only in that the courses of action in either of these sets of documents can be completed in minimum time consistent with proper conduct of military operations do they match Option "B" as defined for purposes of the NSC Working Group study. The distinction is that while the Joint Chiefs of Staff offer the capability for pursuing Option "B" as defined, they have not explicitly recommended that the operations be conducted on a basis necessarily that inflexible. All implementing plans do in fact ex-

plicitly recognize a controlled phase which would permit suspension whenever desired by national authority.

5. I believe my draft contribution to PART VI provides a reasonable application of the JCS recommendations to Option "B" as defined for the study, but this does not mean that the Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended Option "B" as defined in the study.

6. There is in an advanced state of completion a JCS fall-back recommendation for a course of action which, subject to possible further modifications by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will provide essentially the same military actions listed in my draft input to PART VII. These include the same military actions listed in the above, but without the stress upon starting forthwith, and with more specific emphasis on some extension of the over-all time for execution of the complete list. Thus it imposes what amount to some arbitrary delays, which would provide additional intervals for diplomatic exchanges.

7. Because of the time delays which it reflects, it is specifically the JCS fall-back position.

8. For information, the analysis in reference d develops and supports the conclusion that the United States and its Allies can deal adequately with any course of action the DRV and/or CHICOMS decide to pursue. You may note that this conclusion is developed in the context of the most intense of all courses of action prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This reflects a position less pessimistic than some which have appeared in project drafts.

9. A final overall comment by the Joint Staff member of the Working Group:

Glossary of Terms Used in Texts

CHICOM—Chinese Communists.
DEPTEL—State Department telegram.
D.R.V.—Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam.
GVN—Government of (South) Vietnam.
H.N.C.—High National Council.
I.C.C.—International Control Commission.
J.C.S.—Joint Chiefs of Staff.
J.C.S.M.—Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum.
MACV—Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.
MAROPS—Marine Operations.
NSC—National Security Council.
OPERATION TRIANGLE—Code name for an operation not otherwise identified.
P.D.J.—Plaines des Jarres.
P.L.—Pathet Lao.
P.O.L.—Petroleum, oil, lubricants.
RECE—Reconnaissance.
R.L.A.F.—Royal Laotian Air Force.
R.L.G.—Royal Laotian Government.
RVNAF—Republic of (South) Vietnam Armed (or Air) Forces.
SEA—Southeast Asia.
SVN—South Vietnam.
U.S.G.—U. S. Government.
V.A.—Vietminh.
*VIAF—(South) Vietnamese Armed Forces.

We recognize quite clearly that any effective military action taken by the United States will generate a hue and cry in various quarters. The influence that this kind of "pressure" may have upon the United States acting in support of its national interests will be no more than what we choose to permit it to be. There are repeated expressions in various project draft materials indicating that this influence will necessarily be great. We do not agree. There are too many current examples of countries acting in what they presumably believe to be their own [word illegible] self-interest, in utter disregard for "world opinion," for us to accept the position that the United States must at all times conduct all its affairs on the basis of a world popularity contest. In short, we believe that certain strong US actions are required in Southeast Asia, that we must take them regardless of opinion in various other quarters, and that results of our failing to take them would be substantially more serious to the United States than would be any results of world opinions if we did take them. And as far as that goes, we do not believe that if we took the necessary actions the adverse pressures from other countries would prove to be very serious after all — at least from countries that matter to us.