

Draft by William Bundy On Results of Policy in '65

Draft paper by William Bundy, "Where Are We Heading?," Feb. 18, 1965. An attached note, dated June 25, says, "Later than November paper, and unfinished."

This memorandum examines possible developments and problems if the US pursues the following policy with respect to South Viet-Nam:

a. Intensified pacification within South Viet-Nam. To meet the security problem, this might include a significant increase in present US force strength.

b. A program of measured, limited, and spaced air attacks, jointly with the GVN, against the infiltration complex in the DRV. Such attacks would take place at the rate of about one a week, unless spectacular Viet Cong action dictated an immediate response out of sequence. The normal pattern of such attacks would comprise one GVN and one US strike on each occasion, confined to targets south of the 19th parallel, with variations in severity depending on the tempo of VC action, but with a slow upward trend in severity as the weeks went by.

c. That the US itself would take no initiative for talks, but would agree to cooperate in consultations—not a conference—undertaken by the UK and USSR as Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference. As an opening move, the British would request an expression of our views, and we would use this occasion to spell out our position fully, including our purposes and what we regard as essential to the restoration of peace. We would further present our case against the DRV in the form of a long written document to be sent to the President of the United Nations Security Council and to be circulated to members of the UN.

1. Communist responses.

a. Hanoi would almost certainly not feel itself under pressure at any early point to enter into fruitful negotiations or to call off its activity in any way. They would denounce the continued air attacks and seek to whip up maximum world opposition to them. Within South Viet-Nam, they might avoid spectacular actions, but would certainly continue a substantial pattern of activity along past lines, probably with emphasis on the kind of incidents we have seen this week, in which Communist agents stirred up a village "protest"

against government air attacks, and against the US. Basically, they would see the situation in South Viet-Nam as likely to deteriorate further ("crumble", as they have put it), and would be expecting that at some point someone in the GVN will start secret talks with them behind our backs.

b. Communist China might supply additional air defense equipment to the DRV, but we do not believe they would engage in air operations from Communist China, at least up to the point where the MIGs in the DRV were engaged and we had found it necessary to attack Fukien or possibly—if the MIGs had been moved there—Vinh.

c. The Soviets would supply air defense equipment to the DRV and would continue to protest our air attacks in strong terms. However, we do not believe they would make any new commitment at this stage, and they would probably not do so even if the Chicoms became even more deeply involved—provided that were not ourselves attacking Communist China. At that point, the heat might get awfully great on them, and they would be in a very difficult position to continue actively working as Co-Chairman. However, their approach to the British on the Co-Chairmanship certainly suggests that they would find some relief in starting to act in that role, and might use it as a hedge against further involvement, perhaps pointing out to Hanoi that the Co-Chairman exercise serves to prevent us from taking extreme action and that Hanoi will get the same result in the end if a political track is operating and if, in fact, South Viet-Nam keeps crumbling. They might also argue to Hanoi that the existence of the political track tends to reduce the chances of the Chicoms having to become deeply involved—which we believe Hanoi does not want unless it is compelled to accept it.

2. Within South Viet-Nam the new government is a somewhat better one, but the cohesive effects of the strikes to date have at most helped things a bit. The latest MACV report indicates a deteriorating situation except in the

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extreme south, and it is unlikely that this can be arrested in any short period of time even if the government does hold together well and the military go about their business. We shall be very lucky to see a leveling off, much less any significant improvement, in the next two months. In short, we may have to hang on quite a long time before we can hope to see an improving situation in South Viet-Nam—and this in turn is really the key to any negotiating position we could have at any time.

3. On the political track we believe the British will undertake their role with vigor, and that the Soviets will be more reserved. The Soviet can hardly hope to influence Hanoi much at this point, and they certainly have no leverage with Communist China. In the opening rounds, the Soviets will probably fire off some fairly sharp statements that the real key to the situation is for us to get out and to stop our at-

tacks, and the opposing positions are so far apart that it is hard to see any useful movement for some time to come. We might well find the Soviets—or even the Canadians—sounding us out on whether we would stop our attacks in return for some moderation in VC activity. This is clearly unacceptable, and the very least we should hold out on is a verified cessation of infiltration (and radio silence) before we stop our attacks. Our stress on the cessation of infiltration may conceivably lead to the Indians coming forward to offer policing forces—a suggestion they have made before—and this would be a constructive move we could pick up. But, as noted above, Hanoi is most unlikely to trade on this basis for a long time to come.

4. In sum—the most likely prospect is for a prolonged period without major risks of escalation but equally without any give by Hanoi. If, contrary to our present judgment, the GVN should start to do better,

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