

White House Cable to Taylor On the Rolling Thunder Decision

Excerpts from cablegram from the State Department to Ambassador Taylor, Feb. 13, 1965, as provided in the body of the Pentagon study. The words in brackets are those of the study. The narrative says this message was drafted at the White House.

The President today approved the following program for immediate future actions in follow-up decisions he reported to you in Deptel 1653. [The first FLAMING DART reprisal decision.]

1. We will intensify by all available means the program of pacification within SVN.

2. We will execute a program of measured and limited air action jointly with GVN against selected military targets in DRV, remaining south of 19th parallel until further notice.

FYI. Our current expectation is that these attacks might come about once or twice a week and involve two or three targets on each day of operation. END FYI.

3. We will announce this policy of measured action in general terms and at the same time, we will go to UN Security Council to make clear case that aggressor is Hanoi. We will also make it plain that we are ready and eager for 'talks' to bring aggression to an end.

4. We believe that this 3-part program must be concerted with SVN, and we currently expect to announce it by Presidential statement directly after next authorized air action. We believe this action should take place as early as possible next week.

5. You are accordingly instructed to seek immediate GVN agreement on this program. You are authorized to emphasize our conviction that announcement of readiness to talk is stronger diplomatic position than awaiting inevitable summons to Security Council by third parties. We would hope to have appropriate GVN concurrence by Monday [Feb. 14th] if possible here.

In presenting above to GVN, you should draw fully, as you see fit, on following arguments:

a. We are determined to continue with military actions regardless of Security Council deliberations and any 'talks' or negotiations when [words illegible]. [Beginning of sentence illegible] that they cease [words illegible] and also the activity they are directing in the south.

b. We consider the UN Security Council initiative, following another strike, essential if we are to avoid being faced with really damaging initiatives by the USSR or perhaps by such powers as India, France, or even the UN.

c. At an early point in the UN Security Council initiative, we would expect to see calls for the DRV to appear in the UN. If they failed to appear, as in August, this will make doubly clear that it is they who are refusing to desist, and our position in pursuing military actions against the DRV would be strengthened. For some reason we would now hope GVN itself would appear at UN and work closely with US.

d. With or without Hanoi, we have every expectation that any 'talks' that may result from our Security Council initiative would in fact go on for many weeks or perhaps months and would above all focus constantly on the cessation of Hanoi's aggression as the precondition to any cessation of military action against the DRV. We further anticipate that any detailed discussions about any possible eventual form of agreement returning to the essentials of the 1954 Accords would be postponed and would be subordinated to the central issue. . . .