

Taylor Cable to Washington On Step-Up in Ground Forces

Cablegram April 17, 1965, from Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor in Saigon to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, with a copy to the White House for the attention of McGeorge Bundy.

This message undertakes to summarize instructions which I have received over the last ten days with regard to the introduction of third-country combat forces and to discuss the preferred way of presenting the subject to the GVN.

As the result of the meeting of the President and his advisors on April 1 and the NSC meeting on the following day, I left Washington and returned to Saigon with the understanding that the reinforcement of the Marines already ashore by two additional BLT's and a B4 squadron and the progressive introduction of IIAWPNPPP support forces were approved but that decision on the several proposals for bringing in more US combat forces and their possible modes of employment was withheld in an offensive counterinsurgency role. State was to explore with the Korean, Australian and New Zealand govts the possibility of rapid deployment of significant combat elements in parallel with the Marine reinforcement.

Since arriving home, I have received the following instructions and have taken the indicated actions with respect to third-country combat forces.

April 6 and 8. Received GVN concurrence to introduction of the Marine reinforcements and to an expanded mission for all Marines in Danang-Phu Bai area.

April 8. Received Deptel 2229 directing approach to GVN, suggesting request to Australian govt for an infantry battalion for use in SVN. While awaiting a propitious moment to raise the matter, I received Deptel 2237 directing approach be delayed until further orders. Nothing further has been received since.

April 14. I learned by JCS 009012 to Cincpac of apparent decision to deploy 173rd airborne brigade immediately to Bien Hoa-Vung Tau. By Embtel 3373, delay in this deployment was urgently recommended but no reply has been received. However, Para 2 of Doc 12339 apparently makes reference to this project in terms which suggest that is something less than as an approved immediate action. In view of the uncertainty of its status, I have not broached the matter with Quat.

April 15. Received Deptel 2314 directing that embassy Saigon discuss with GVN introduction of Rok regimental combat team and suggest GVN request such a force asap. Because of Quat's absence from Saigon, I have not been able to raise matter. As matter of fact,

it should not be raised until we have a clear concept of employment.

April 16. I have just seen state-defense message Dod 152339 cited above which indicates a favorable attitude toward several possible uses of US combat forces beyond the NSC decisions of April 2. I am told to discuss these and certain other non-military matters urgently with Quat. The substance of this cable will be addressed in a separate message. I can not raise these matters with Quat without further guidance.

Faced with this rapidly changing picture of Washington desires and intentions with regard to the introduction of third-country (as well as US) combat forces, I badly need a clarification of our purposes and objectives. Before I can present our case to GVN, I have to know what that case is and why. It is not going to be easy to get ready concurrence for the large-scale introduction of foreign troops unless the need is clear and explicit.

Let me suggest the kind of instruction to the AMB which it would be most helpful to receive for use in presenting to GVN what I take to be a new policy of third-country participation in ground combat.

"The USG has completed a thorough review of the situation in SVN both in its national and international aspects and has reached certain important conclusions. It feels that in recent weeks there has been a somewhat favorable change in the overall situation as the result of the air attacks on DRV, the relatively small but numerous successes in the field against the VC and the encouraging progress of the Quat govt. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that, in all probability, the primary objective of the GVN and the USG of changing the will of the DRV to support the VC insurgency can not be attained in an acceptable time-frame by the methods presently employed. The air campaign in the North must be supplemented by signal successes against the VC on the South before we can hope to create that frame of mind in Hanoi which will lead to the decisions we seek.

"The JCS have reviewed the military resources which will be available in SVN by the end of 1965 and have concluded that even with an attainment of the highest feasible mobilization goals, ARVN will have insufficient forces to carry out the kind of successful campaign against the VC which is considered essential for the purposes discussed above. If the ground war is not to drag into 1966 and even beyond, they consider it necessary to reinforce GVN ground forces with about 23 bat-

talion equivalents in addition to the forces now being recruited in SVN. Since these reinforcements can not be raised by the GVN, they must inevitably come from third-country sources.

"The USG accepts the validity of this reasoning of the JCS and offers its assistance to the GVN to raise these additional forces for the purpose of bringing the VC insurgency to an end in the shortest possible time. We are prepared to bring in additional US ground forces provided we can get a reasonable degree of participation from other third countries. If the GVN will make urgent representations to them, we believe it entirely possible to obtain the following contributions; Korea, one regimental combat team; Australia, one infantry battalion; New Zealand, one battery and one company of tanks; PI, one battalion.

If forces of the foregoing magnitude are forthcoming, the USG is prepared to provide the remainder of the combat reinforcements as well as the necessary logistic personnel to support the third-country contingents. Also it will use its good offices as desired in assisting the GVN approach to these govts.

"You (the Ambassador) will seek the concurrence of the GVN to the foregoing program, recognizing that a large number of questions such as command relationships, concepts of employment and disposition of forces must be worked out subsequently." Armed with an instruction such as the foregoing, I would feel adequately equipped to initiate what may be a sharp debate with the GVN. I need something like this before taking up the pending troop matters with Quat.