

# NcNaughton Memo for McNamara On Anti-Infiltration Barrier Plan

Excerpts from a memorandum to Secretary of Defense McNamara, "A Barrier Strategy," as provided in the body of the Pentagon study. According to the narrative, the memorandum is unsigned but is by Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton, in whose handwriting the copy is marked "1/30/66" and "copy given to RSM 3/22/66." The study further says that the document is based on a draft memo of Jan. 3, 1966, "A Barrier Strategy," by Prof. Roger D. Fisher of Harvard Law School.

## B. Present Military Situation in North Vietnam.

### 1. Physical consequences of bombing

a. The DRV has suffered some physical hardship and pain, raising the cost to it of supporting the VC.

b. Best intelligence judgment is that:

(1) Bombing may or may not—by destruction or delay—have resulted in net reduction in the flow of men or supplies to the forces in the South;

(2) Bombing has failed to reduce the limit on the capacity of the DRV to aid the VC to a point below VC needs;

(3) Future bombing of North Vietnam cannot be expected physically to limit the military support given the VC by the DRV to a point below VC needs.

### 2. Influence consequences of bombing

a. There is no evidence that bombings have made it more likely the DRV will decide to back out of the war.

b. Nor is there evidence that bombings have resulted in an increased DRV resolve to continue the war to an eventual victory. [Fisher's draft had read "There is some evidence that bombings. . . ."]

## C. Future of a Bombing Strategy

Although bombings of North Vietnam improve GVN morale and provide a counter in eventual negotiations (should they take place) there is no evidence that they meaningfully reduce either the capacity or the will for the DRV to support the VC. The DRV knows that we cannot force them to stop by bombing and that we cannot, without an unacceptable risk of a major war with China or Russia or both, force them to stop by conquering them or "blotting them out." Knowing that if they are not influenced we cannot stop them, the DRV will remain difficult to influence. With continuing DRV support, victory in the

South may remain forever beyond our reach.

Having made the case against the bombing, the memo then spelled out the case for an anti-infiltration barrier:

## II. SUBSTANCE OF THE BARRIER PROPOSAL

A. That the US and GVN adopt the concept of physically cutting off DRV support to the VC by an on-the-ground barrier across the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the general vicinity of the 17th Parallel and Route 9. To the extent necessary the barrier would run from the sea across Vietnam and Laos to the Mekong, a straightline distance of about 160 miles.

B. That in Laos an "interdiction and verification zone," perhaps 10 miles wide, be established and legitimated by such measures as leasing, international approval, compensation, etc.

C. That a major military and engineering effort be directed toward constructing a physical barrier of minefields, barbed wire, walls, ditches and military strong points flanked by a defoliated strip on each side.

D. That such bombing in Laos and North Vietnam as takes place be narrowly identified with interdiction and with the construction of the barrier by

1. Being within the 10-mile-wide interdiction zone in Laos, or

2. Being in support of the construction of the barrier, or

3. Being interdiction bombing pending the completion of the barrier.

E. That, of course, intensive interdiction continues at sea and from Cambodia.

(It might be stated that all bombings of North Vietnam will stop as soon as there is no infiltration and no opposition to the construction of the verification barrier.)