

A Re-Cap: What Pentagon

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — The unprecedented constitutional confrontation between the press and the federal government over publication of classified Pentagon material on Vietnam was touched off Sunday, June 13 by The New York Times.

Before the week was out, the Washington Post was on to the story and other newspapers soon followed.

Here are highlights of some of the thus-far published material from the 47-volume Pentagon study tracing U.S. policy in Indochina from the end of World War II until May, 1968.

Times Tells Roles Of 3 Presidents

The Times, in its initial article, said the secret 3000-page analysis coupled with 4000 pages of official documents showed:

- That a Truman Administration decision to give military aid to France in her colonial war against the Communist-led Vietminh "directly involved" the United States in Vietnam and "set" the course of American policy.

- That an Eisenhower Administration decision to rescue a fledgling independent South Vietnam from a Communist takeover and attempt to undermine the new Communist regime of North Vietnam gave the administration a "direct role in the ultimate breakdown of the Geneva settlement" for Indochina in 1954.

- "That the Kennedy Administration, though ultimately spared from major escalation decisions by the death of its leader, transformed a policy of 'limited-risk gamble,' which it inherited, into a 'broad commitment' that left President Johnson with a choice between more war and withdrawal.

- "That the Johnson Administration, though the President was reluctant to take the final decisions, intensified the covert warfare against North Vietnam and began planning in the spring of 1964 to wage overt war, a full year before it publicly revealed the depth of its involvement and its fear of defeat.

- "That this campaign of growing clandestine military pressure through 1964 and the expanding program of bombing North Vietnam in 1965 were begun despite the judgment of the government's intelligence community that the measures would not cause Hanoi to cease its support of the Viet Cong insurgency in the South, and that the bombing was deemed militarily ineffective within a few months."

1964: An Agreement On Air Attacks

In the second article of its series, The Times reported on June 14 that "the Johnson Administration reached a 'general consensus' at a White House strategy meeting on Sept. 7, 1964, that air attacks against North Vietnam would probably have to be launched." The Times quoted one document as saying it was expected that "these operations would begin early in the new year."

This reported agreement was reached in the midst of Johnson's presidential campaign against Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) who at that time was calling for full-scale air attacks on the North. It also came less than a month after the reported attacks by North Vietnamese PT boats on two U.S. destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin, provoking air strikes over North Vietnam in reprisal.

In its third article, the last before it was restrained by a federal court, The Times published an account on June 15 of how the Administration decided to use U.S. ground troops for offensive action.

The newspaper said Johnson made the decision April 1, 1965, "because the Administration had discovered that its long-planned bombing of North Vietnam—which had just begun—was not going to stave off collapse in the South." It said the President wanted the shift in policy "given as little prominence as possible."

The Times recalled that six days later, on April 7, 1965, Johnson offered in his famous Johns Hopkins University speech to negotiate "without posing any preconditions" and proposed a \$1 billion economic development program for the Mekong Delta region of South Vietnam, inviting North Vietnam to participate in it.

Ike's Action To Stop Elections

The next month, the President announced a five-day bombing pause. The Times said the Pentagon study concluded the lull "seemed to be aimed more at clearing the decks for a subsequent intensified resumption (of bombing) than it was at evoking a reciprocal act of de-escalation by Hanoi."

On June 18, the Washington Post published the first of two articles in a series based on the Pentagon study, which was ordered in June, 1967, by then Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and prepared by between 30 and 40 government officials.

The Post said the documents showed that the Eisenhower Administration, "fearful that elections throughout North and South Vietnam would bring victory to Ho Chi Minh, fought hard but in vain at

the 1954 Geneva Conference" to prevent a call for such elections. It said "the chief architect of the American policy of opposition . . . was President Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles."

Dulles' Cable: No Election Now

In July, 1954, while the Geneva Conference was in session, the Post said, Dulles sent various U.S. diplomats a cable which said in part: ". . . Thus since undoubtedly true that elections might eventually mean unification Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh this makes it all more important they should be only held as long after cease-fire agreement as possible and in conditions free from intimidation to give democratic elements best chance. We believe important that no date should be set now . . ."

The conference later issued a declaration that "General elections shall be held in July, 1956." The elections did not take place.

On June 19, in its second article before coming under court orders to suspend publication of the series, the Post focused on the Johnson Administration's use of bombing pauses between 1965 and 1968.

The newspaper said the Pentagon study showed that Administration strategists "had almost no expectation that the many pauses . . . would produce peace talks, but believed they would help placate domestic and world opinion . . ."

"Some strategists planned to use unproductive bombing pauses as a justification for escalating the war," the Post said. "This idea was first outlined privately by U.S. officials soon after the bombing of the North began in 1965. These planners regarded the lulls in bombing as a 'ratchet' to reduce tension and then intensify it, to produce 'one more turn of the screw' in order to 'crack the enemy's resistance to negotiations.'"

Kennedy Advised To Send Troops

The newspaper reported that throughout this period, "the most uncompromising U.S. planners insisted that the enemy would interpret the pauses in the bombing as a sign of American softness . . . consequently, the failure of the Communist side to make a conciliatory response to each bombing lull was used as an argument for escalating U.S. involvement, either in the air over North Vietnam, or on the ground in South Vietnam, and usually both."

The Boston Globe was the next newspaper to publish stories which allegedly were based on the Pentagon study. The newspaper reported Tuesday that Gen. Maxwell Taylor advised President Kennedy in 1961 to send an 8000-man task force of combat troops to Vietnam, but warned that the move could lead to increased world tensions and a wider war.

At that time, there were 1000 U.S. servicemen in Vietnam and Taylor was Kennedy's special adviser on Vietnam. By the time of his death, Kennedy had increased the U.S. force level in Vietnam to 16,000 and stepped up covert actions against North Vietnam, but he never committed the ground unit that Taylor recommended.

On Thursday, the Los Angeles Times and the Knight newspaper group published articles attributed to the secret Pentagon study.

The Los Angeles Times said former Secretary of State Dean Rusk in 1963 rejected a recommendation from a State Department expert to pull out of Vietnam because the United States could not win a war there. It said Rusk's decision was supported by McNamara and then Vice President Johnson.

The Times story was based on information in a document recounting discussion at an August, 1963, meeting of the National Security Council. The session was chaired by Rusk in President Kennedy's absence.

Rusk's Stand: 'Will Not Pull Out'

According to the Times story, the withdrawal suggestion came from Paul M. Kattenburg, then head of the State Department's Vietnam working group. The newspaper, quoting from a memorandum written by Marine Maj. Victor C. Krulak, described as the Pentagon's top counter-insurgency expert, said Rusk termed Kattenburg's position "speculative."

"It would be far better for us to start on the firm basis of two things — that we will not pull out of Vietnam until the war is won, and that we will not run a coup," Rusk was quoted as saying.

Three months later, South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated.

Knight Newspapers Inc., in an article carried by its 11 papers, said Thursday that McNamara battled "ardent opposition" from the Joint Chiefs of Staff after he recommended in the fall of 1966 that the bombing of North Vietnam be halted.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, was said to have called McNamara's proposal "an aerial Dien Bien Phu," referring to the defeat France sustained just before withdrawing from the war.

The Chicago Sun-Times also carried a story Thursday on U.S. policy in Vietnam, but said it was not based on the Pentagon study cited by the other newspapers.



The Sun-Times said South Vietnamese President Diem did not want U.S. troops in his country in 1961 and temporarily turned down a suggestion by then Vice President Lyndon Johnson that he ask for them. The paper said Diem changed his mind five months later "and made the solicited request."

McNamara Took A Gloomy View

On Friday the Sun-Times reported that the controversial Pentagon study and other "top secret" documents showed that President Eisenhower in 1958 established a national policy intended to loosen the Communist grip on North Vietnam and reunite the North with the South under a single pro-American government.

In another article based on official documents, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported Friday that McNamara told Johnson in October, 1966, that the pacification program in Vietnam was a "disappointment" and "has, if anything, gone backward" over the previous 18 months.

A copy of McNamara's memo, reprinted in the newspaper, said "in essence, we find ourselves — from the point of view of the important war (for complicity of the people) — no better and if anything, worse off."

An accompanying article written by the head of the Post-Dispatch bureau in Washington quoted McNamara as saying at that time that "I see no reasonable way to bring the war to an end soon."

The latest disclosures were published Saturday by the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Sun-Times.

The L.A. Times printed excerpts from the Pentagon study which said Johnson sent 3500 marines to Vietnam in 1965 to protect an Air Force base at Da Nang "without much planning" even though it was the first U.S. step into the land war.

The Chicago Sun-Times, again quoting secret government documents, said the Central Intelligence Agency advised the Nixon Administration in 1969 that "all of Southeast Asia would remain just as it is for at least another generation" even if all U.S. forces were withdrawn immediately.